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4. Simultaneous Support for and Opposition to Brands: A Study on Brand Love and Hate—The Two Poles of Brand Polarisation

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Abstract: This chapter discusses the drivers of brand polarisation (i.e. simultaneously loving and hating a brand). Despite its relevance for brand managers and public relations executives, brand polarisation remains heavily understudied among scholars. This study addresses the focal phenomenon by examining consumers and the role of social media within the research context. The key theoretical concepts introduced in this chapter include brand polarisation, brand attitude, brand relationships, brand love, brand hate, brand experience and social media brand communities. Using ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews, 36 loved and/or hated brands were discussed by the study participants. The findings demonstrate how polarised consumer opinions towards brands are shaped and how social media affect this matter. Finally, this chapter combines the theoretical and empirical findings into a conceptual model to illustrate the development of brand polarisation through its distinct drivers.

Keywords: Brand polarisation, brand attitude, brand relationships, brand love, brand hate, brand experience, brand communities

Introduction

Brands that provoke largely divided attitudes, traversing from love to hate, are regarded as polarising (Osuna Ramírez, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2019). Brand polarisation

can be distinguished when objective feelings shift to extremes in consumers' relationships with brands or when large groups of people simultaneously express both love and hate towards the same brand (Osuna Ramírez *et al.*, 2019). Researchers suggest that further comprehension of the phenomenon is needed to acknowledge the potential for co-existing consumer positivity and negativity towards specific brands (Luo, Wiles and Raithel, 2013). Furthermore, it is crucial for brand managers to acknowledge and consider both extremities of consumer opinions when composing brand strategies (Mafael, Gottschalk and Kreis, 2016).

The existing research on brand polarisation often does not properly define it (Osuna Ramírez *et al.*, 2019); thus, brand polarisation is often defined and operationalised via concepts of other disciplines, indicating some overlap within the phenomenon. For instance, prior scholars have inspected brand rivalry and brand attitude to better comprehend brand polarisation (Mafael et *al.*, 2016; Osuna Ramírez *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the selected key concepts for further conceptualisation of brand polarisation in this study are polarisation, brand attitude, brand relationships (with a particular focus on brand love and hate), brand experience and brand communities. Each of these concepts strongly connects with the focal phenomenon.

What reinforces the appeal of researching brand polarisation is the phenomenon's relevance, especially for brand managers, who are commonly responsible for brand-related public relations (PR). As stated by Mikáčová and Gavlaková (2014), adequately handled PR is imperative in terms of communicating a brand's value and prestige to its target audiences and stakeholders. Moreover, scholars argue that managers need to pay closer attention to brand polarisation (Mafael *et al.*, 2016), as it also allows for the

deployment of more focused marketing actions and approaches for brands (Osuna Ramírez *et al.*, 2019). For instance, marketers may use polarisation as differentiation, segmentation and positioning strategies (Luo *et al.*, 2013).

Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to identify the distinct drivers of brand polarisation from the consumers' perspective to advance our understanding of simultaneous extreme consumer opinions towards brands. To clarify the main objective, the primary research question is as follows: What are the drivers of brand polarisation from consumers' point of view? A secondary research question, which was created to assist in conceptualisation of the phenomenon, is as follows: What meanings do consumers give to brand polarisation? In the next section, the key theoretical concepts selected to further explicate brand polarisation are examined, followed by a presentation of the research model, which binds the theoretical disciplines and objectives of the study.

Literature review

Polarisation and brand polarisation defined

Myers and Lamm (1976) stated that in common use, polarisation demonstrates division inside a group of people and is a transference towards a favoured direction. According to Leone (1996), a polarised attitude results from a developed schema, which is a mental structure that serves as an originator for attitude-associated perceptions. Evans (2017) mentioned that the online environment offers especially favourable surroundings for polarisation to escalate. Dandekar, Goel and Lee (2013) stressed that, along with radio and news broadcasts, the growth of the internet's popularity has increased polarisation; the amount and versatility of information sources combined with their personalising and targeting capabilities compose 'echo-chambers', where views tend to polarise.

Brand polarisation can, in turn, be defined as the extremisation of emotions in consumers' demeanours towards a brand (Osuna Ramírez *et al.*, 2019). In a bimodal fashion, brand polarisation creates a plain distinction between people who love or hate a specific brand (Osuna Ramírez *et al.*, 2019). From a managerial perspective, brand polarisation simplifies the recognition of individuals who love a brand, which allows the strengthening of consumer–brand relationships with brand lovers. In addition, it allows the brand to more effectively react to critics of the brand (Luo *et al.*, 2013; Osuna Ramírez *et al.*, 2019). Due to their polarised positioning, polarising brands achieve clear benefits in terms of grasping consumer groups and consumers individually, especially if '*all publicity is good publicity*' (Osuna Ramírez *et al.*, 2019). Publicity is considered a key component of PR because it makes companies more visible (Apuke, 2018); therefore, understanding brand polarisation is consequential, particularly for people who work in the PR field.

Brand attitude

Brand attitude comprises the linked expectations and persistent beliefs people have about brands (Nayeem, Murshed and Dwivedi, 2019). Scholars have argued on behalf of brand attitude's importance by stating that it entails the combined characteristics and benefits that determine the significance of a brand and by suggesting that brand attitude is of assistance for consumers when judging brand choices (Keller, 1993; Liu *et al.*, 2020). According to Kudeshia and Kumar (2017), the encouragement of positive user-generated (UGC) content and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) should be pursued by marketers because these may convert to more favourable brand attitudes amongst customers. Bao (2017) added that UGC produced by online communities significantly influences not only brand communication but also consumers' attitudes regarding brands. Based on these definitions, discoursing the concept of brand attitude becomes important for identifying

the drivers of brand polarisation, which overlaps with the essence of the focal phenomenon in several respects.

Brand relationships

A brand relationship is a mental bond uniting a consumer and a brand (Alvarez and Fournier, 2016). When showing a loyal attitude towards brands, consumers expect devotion and fostering of their own well-being from the brands in return (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012). Ma (2020) stated that one central goal of PR in organisations is the forming of positive, long-term relationships with people. Fetscherin *et al.* (2019) argued that consumers' emotions determine their thinking, attitudes, perceptions and general tendencies of either supporting or avoiding brands. Moreover, a person's strongly positive consumer–brand relationship can induce other customers to disseminate positive WOM to manifold audiences through diverse channels of communication (Karjaluoto, Munnukka and Kiuru, 2016; Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony, 2014). Given that brand relationships involve connections and interactions between consumers and brands, this concept emerges as critical for review when studying brand polarisation.

Brand love and hate

Brand love encompasses passionate and attached feelings, positive evaluations and emotions and assertions of love towards a brand (Albert, Merunka and Valette-Florence, 2013). According to Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi (2012), preceding academic studies addressing brand love have acknowledged that it is firmly affiliated with positively inclined WOM, the desire to pay a premium charge, brand loyalty and the readiness to forgive brand failures. Conversely, brand hate can be identified as a drastically negative emotional state a consumer has in relation to a brand (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016). It is a form of powerful resistance, severe negative sentiment or an excessive affectual response

that surpasses mere disliking of brands (Ahmed and Hashim, 2018). Platania, Morando and Santisi (2017) underlined certain behavioural consequences of brand hate amongst consumers: exiting and rejecting, negatively oriented WOM, public criticism on the web, revengeful complaints and aggressiveness on a commerce platform. As the two extremities of consumer emotions concerning brands, brand love and hate become central when exploring the brand polarisation effect.

Brand experience

According to Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010), modern consumers are no longer eager to purchase products for their functional advantages but are rather interested in experiential features. Diverse motivations are involved in people's interaction with and evaluation of brands, the need for co-creating experiences and influencing others' perceptions about brands (e.g. sharing stories is typical amongst consumers) (Veloutsou and Delgado-Ballester, 2018). Moreover, a positive online brand experience has an essential role in establishing stronger consumer–brand relationships in the virtual environment (Simon, Brexendorf and Fassnacht, 2013). Given that brand experience involves '*behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli*' (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009, p. 53), it is a fitting concept for outlining the drivers of brand polarisation.

Brand communities

Brand communities serve as platforms for value creation and co-creation for both members and guests of the community (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Consumers' purchase decisions are increasingly influenced by a networking society in which other people's opinions, WOM and recommendations are well regarded; thus, brand communities have grown into central places for consumers to find information about brands, look for products and communicate interactively with one another (Bao, 2017). Prior studies have

also stressed that online discussions run by active users of social networks heavily influence PR in modern companies (Gillin, 2008; Gregory and Halff, 2012). Considering that '*people's passion towards polarising brands drives them to form community-like bonds'* (Osuna Ramírez *et al*., 2019, p. 626), exploring the concept of brand communities also offers promising applicability for uncovering different drivers of brand polarisation.

Research model

To better define the purpose of this study, a spherical research model (Figure 4.1.) was constructed to specify the threefold research objectives: 1) filling the research gaps through answering the primary and secondary research questions, 2) extending the conceptualisation of brand polarisation and 3) providing managerial implications for the topic.

<FIGURE 4.1. HERE>

Methodology

Qualitative research

To reach this study's primary objectives, a qualitative research approach was pursued, as it is adequate for reaching an understanding and further interpretation of a research problem (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). As stated by Metsämuuronen (2011), a qualitative research approach is especially suitable when exploring the meaning structures or detailed settings of occurrences. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) added that a qualitative strategy is especially applicable when the preceding knowledge about the phenomenon under examination is limited.

Semi-structured interviews

The empirical data of this study were gathered via semi-structured interviews, which usually include a 'road-map' of guiding questions that steer the interview (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014). This type of interviewing does not contain ready-made response alternatives (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2018) but rather pursues a dialogical and informal approach (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). The interviews included six guiding themes, which were designed based on the key theoretical concepts. In the results chapter, they were converted into six overarching themes to demonstrate the different drivers of brand polarisation. The interview themes and guiding questions are exhibited in Table 4.1.

<TABLE 4.1. HERE>

Sampling method and sample overview

Non-probability sampling was used, meaning that no random selection was involved; participant selection relied entirely on the researcher's judgement (Alvi, 2016). The selected participants were individuals who claimed to have strong positive and negative feelings about their selected brands. In total, the respondents discussed 20 brands that they found strongly positive and 16 brands that they perceived strongly negative. In this study setting, the respondents were allowed to discuss any brand types they desired (e.g. company brands, human brands, etc.). The relevant background information on the sample and selected brands, communication methods and interview durations are shown in Table 4.2.

<TABLE 4.2. HERE>

Data analysis

The conducted interviews were analysed via thematic analysis, which recognises, analyses and outlines themes from the research data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Hazée, Delcourt and Van Vaerenbegh (2017) described thematic analysis as a repetitive procedure of evaluating and determining surging themes, which are useful for characterising and arranging the obtained research data in a detailed manner. As a complementary analysis method, interpretation was adopted into this research protocol to provide more insightful explanations about the central phenomenon of the research in an intuitive and subjective manner (Spiggle, 1994). In addition, analytical generalising was utilised to profoundly integrate and reflect the interpretations and findings into the theoretical background of this research. In analytical generalising, certain theoretical concepts are commonly utilised to provide a more generic perspective on the specified patterns found in the data (Halkier, 2011).

Results

This chapter presents the key findings of the study under six overarching themes as different types of drivers that influence the development of brand polarisation amongst consumers. For the specific interview questions, see Table 4.1.

Conventional drivers

The first interview theme, which asked questions about the respondents' selected loved and hated brands, was converted into *conventional drivers* because the respondents were encouraged to describe reasons for their subjective brand love and hate in a rather conventional manner at this stage of the enquiry. The findings revealed that the general reasons for positive and negative polarised consumer opinions were often primarily facilitated by three different sources: 1) the brand itself, 2) individual personal reasons or

3) the media. Based on the interviews, the brands could facilitate brand love amongst consumers by providing great quality and service, positive content marketing and dialogical communication and by supporting sustainability. Brand hate, in turn, could be triggered through unethical activities, poor-quality products and services, lying or provoking brand communication. Furthermore, brand love and hate could also be elicited by personal associations, such as positive or negative personal experiences or positive/negative eWOM from others. The findings also showed that positive and negative reports about brands from news media contributed to both brand love and brand hate amongst consumers.

Attitudinal drivers

The second overarching theme—*attitudinal drivers*—aimed to specify the role of brand attitude in instances where consumers' opinions about brands had become polarised. For instance, this theme explored which factors in the online environment (i.e. social media channels) influenced the respondents' brand attitudes. The findings primarily showed that especially positive comments and likes on social media platforms and reviews and ratings online were found to be influential, specifically if they were high in number. Furthermore, targeted advertisements that created mental images with strong visuality, generated positive eWOM or demonstrated brands' online behaviour (e.g. posts about supporting minorities or sustainable causes) affected respondents' brand attitudes positively and significantly contributed to their brand love. By contrast, deficiencies in the aforesaid areas increased the respondents' negative brand attitudes, thereby facilitating brand hate in many cases.

Relational drivers

The third interview theme aimed to determine how the personal brand relationships of the respondents contributed to their polarised views regarding brands. Hence, the findings under this theme were labelled *relational drivers.* The key findings showed that consumers maintained their brand relationships with their loved brands through liking, sharing and commenting on the brands' activities in social media channels. Additionally, some respondents stated that they showed their positive brand relationships through endorsing their own good brand experiences to others. Other initiatives mentioned were communicating with brands through their websites and via emails. The brands cultivated relationships through content, such as interesting posts and stories on social media channels. Moreover, personal calls to consumers, different marketing gimmicks and small surprises, such as personal discount codes or thank you notes, were noted as welcome acts from loved brands. The findings also indicated that merely maintaining high-quality products and services was a way for brands to foster positive brand relationships with consumers. In turn, the respondents who had experienced negative brand relationships with their hated brands frequently avoided consuming any products or services from those brands. Some actions taken by hated brands that had caused negative brand relationships included irrespective interaction, lying and provoking posts displayed on different social media channels.

Experiential drivers

The fourth interview theme—*experiential drivers*—asked the respondents to specify the role of their personal brand experiences in relation to whether they loved or hated a brand. The findings showed that in relation to, for example, sports brands, the respondents described fan experiences, cheering for their favourite teams, social gatherings and relaxing viewing experiences as the most meaningful contributors to their brand love.

Other key experiences were learning new things with the brands' products, feelings of inspiration when using the brands' products, making a difference/acting responsibly through consumption choices and experiencing joy at social events that were established around their loved brands. In terms of brand hate, the respondents had commonly experienced incoherent communication as well as severe disappointment with the brands' actions. On social media platforms in particular, a good visual brand design, fluent usability of brand pages and meaningful content purpose were significant contributors to positive online brand experiences. By contrast, brands that failed in these aspects elicited negative brand experiences.

Communal drivers

The fifth theme, which aimed to discern how brand communities shape brand polarisation amongst consumers, was labelled *communal drivers*. The key discoveries regarding brand communities were that they offered new information to the participants, affected people's purchase decisions, provided tips and help for users, offered discussion platforms about brand features, enabled the sharing of personal experiences, offered a sense of belonging, fellowship and produced entertainment. In turn, so-called 'anti-brand communities' contained anonymous and faceless negativity towards brands, public criticism of brands' values, insults towards rival brands' fans, aggressive behaviour, ironic comments, inappropriate and unfounded rumours and visible opposition of the unethical and non-sustainable nature of certain brands. Based on the findings, some of the most visible community and anti-community behaviour was witnessed on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Divisive drivers

The last interview theme—*divisive drivers*—focused on elaborating which meanings the respondents gave to brand polarisation in the literal sense of the term. As exhibited in Table 4.1., the interview questions enquired about the meanings and benefits of and risks for polarising brands from the respondents' viewpoints. The findings showed that common attributes of truly polarising brands were controversy, possessing specific values, sharp marketing strategies, unwillingness to compromise, distinctiveness and wide recognition. In terms of the benefits, the respondents noted that polarised brands are able to evoke reactions and thereby attract immense public interest. Other mentioned benefits were increased awareness and visibility for the brand, free promotion through a media presence and occasionally increased growth and revenues due to wider awareness. The key risks were that polarising brands tend to attract negative eWOM from people who dislike them. Additionally, a poor public reputation negatively affects sales and revenues. Other mentioned risks of polarising brands were difficulties in enticing professional employees and controlling the brand's public image.

Discussion

Theoretical contributions

This research explored the topic of brand polarisation—a growing phenomenon that requires recognition and monitoring—amongst brand managers and modern PR executives. The study's findings revealed that the various reasons for brand love and hate could be linked to significant underlying drivers of brand polarisation amidst consumers, with polarised brands capturing brand lovers and haters and seizing their feelings and reasoning (Osuna Ramírez *et al.*, 2019). The interview data implied that either the brand, the individual or the media can facilitate brand polarisation in differing ways. The

findings also showed that modern social media channels induce wide-scale drivers of brand love and hate. For instance, brands' communication and marketing strategies, which are now heavily pursued online, play a key role in steering consumers' impressions of brands, for better or for worse.

This study also sought to elaborate brand attitude's role in the brand polarisation effect because the concept strongly affiliates with brand-related judgements and behavioural consumer desires (Mafael *et al.*, 2016). The findings showed that the attitudes of friends and relatives were particularly able to shape consumers' brand attitudes towards more negative or positive ends. Similar observations were also noted by Howard and Gengler (2001, p. 198), who argued that other people's emotions can affect the judgements of a person through '*attitudinal biasing via contagion effects'*, and by Burton, Coller and Tuttle (2006), who claimed that interpersonal comparisons are strongly influential drivers of attitude shifts in specific surroundings. The findings further indicated that social media's influence on consumers' brand attitudes was apparent. For instance, loved brands that displayed responsible acts and efforts to improve their sustainability via social media posts could seemingly solidify consumers' positive brand attitudes.

When the connection between brand relationships and brand polarisation was examined, it revealed that brands that did not foster their relationship with consumers at all were at risk of receiving brand hate and that some respondents tended to endorse their loved brands to others based on their personal positive relationships. This corresponds with prior studies claiming that strong positive brand relationships can induce customers to disseminate positive WOM to manifold audiences through diverse communication channels (Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2016; Wallace *et al.*, 2014). The study findings also indicated

that the nurturing of consumer–brand relationships frequently occurs through social media platforms: consumers signal their excitement, interest and attachment towards brands through functions such as liking, commenting and sharing. Conversely, some respondents claimed that they intentionally avoid clicking or visiting webpages of brands with which they have negative relationships.

The next key concept within brand polarisation is brand experience. As an example, one respondent expressed hate towards a brand due to its unclear policies regarding users' personal information and the fact that the brand could no longer offer any experiential stimulus for the respondent. This finding corresponds to the statement that experiences have become key components for interpreting how consumers view, evaluate and react to brands (Veloutsou and Delgado-Ballester, 2018). Moreover, in social media channels, certain factors, such as consumer–brand interaction, visual distinctiveness, educational content, clarity and fluency of brand pages, particularly advanced consumers' positive online brand experiences.

The research also explored how brand communities affect the formation of brand polarisation amongst consumers. The study revealed that brand hate could be especially triggered by online discussion forums, when brands are discussed in a negative tone by so-called 'anti-brand communities' (as was the case with one respondent). Both positive and negative brand information are widely disseminated within formal and informal brand communities, which steers consumers to reflect their personal opinions about brands. This effect was also underlined by Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas (2015), who stated that one outcome of online brand community engagement is the absorption of content, activities and information that are shared within the community.

The study also showed that community-like behaviour towards brands is strongly present in social media channels like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. As noted by Bessi *et al.* (2016), users' content selection on social media channels is driven by confirmation bias, which may ultimately create polarised communities. In sum, because other people's opinions, eWOM and recommendations are received free of charge and may spread swiftly inside and outside the boundaries of brand communities (Brodie *et al.*, 2013), this study affirms that online brand communities can have a prominent effect on the development of brand polarisation. Hence, the actions and behaviour of brand or anti-brand communities should be closely monitored and considered by brand managers and PR professionals.

Interpretive synthesis of the identified drivers of brand polarisation

As a result of the discussion, the empirical and theoretical findings were synthesised into a conceptual framework to illustrate the formation of brand polarisation through its distinct drivers. The interpretive synthesising approach, which Drisko (2020) described as a technique that commonly looks to reinforce or improve preceding theories and conceptualisations, was used in this study (Figure 4.2.).

<FIGURE 4.2. HERE>

Conclusions and implications

A familiar expression that surfaced in prior research about brand polarisation by Osuna Ramírez *et al.* (2019), as well as in the interviews of this study, was that '*all publicity is good publicity*'. In many ways, this phrase encapsulates the essence of brand polarisation: Although polarising brands may attract opposition from the public, the by-products that this phenomenon may offer for brands (such as increased awareness and media exposure)

are undoubtedly beneficial for any brand aiming to grow. Hence, while it is fair to acknowledge that brand polarisation entails higher risks when it is used as a branding strategy, it also has the possibility of reaching high rewards, as prior studies have demonstrated (Luo *et al.*, 2013). Managers who oversee a polarising brand may use their brand's polarising status to either capture the interest of specific customer segments or simply for the purpose of causing a rift in the market (Luo *et al.*, 2013). However, this study underlines that without close evaluation of their actions, they possess a higher risk of losing customers, sales and potential recruits. Despite having benefits in terms of brand strength and positioning (Osuna Ramírez *et al.*, 2019), this study implies that brand polarisation is not a risk-free aspiration for brands from a managerial or PR viewpoint.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. More data from a larger sample group is required before the key findings can be generalised into this field of study more reliably and convincingly. Additionally, the findings mainly represented the views of people from a specific age group and nationality and were derived from each respondent's subjective view of reality. Thus, instead of pointing out firm, measurable facts, this study focused on offering interpretive, extended comprehensions of the phenomenon under investigation.

Key lessons for future research

- Future scholars could further examine what the outcomes have been for brands that have intentionally reinforced their brand's polarising status as a strategic manoeuvre (e.g. how it has influenced the financial state, visibility, media exposure and other performance metrics of such brands).

- More meanings of brand polarisation should be obtained from people with differing cultural, demographic and geographical backgrounds to enrich the knowledge of the subject.
- The research on brand polarisation should be fostered with a broader range of methods by future scholars, as the phenomenon still remains rather scarcely discoursed in academic publications.
- The ability to handle and control polarised views of consumers is becoming increasingly important for social media and PR professionals in the modern era and thus should be considered further.

Disclaimer

The research presented in this chapter was collected for my University of Jyväskylä (JYU) master's thesis 'Identifying drivers of brand polarisation from the consumer perspective' (2021). The copyright for this JYU thesis belongs to me, Jussi Tornberg, as the author. The research presented here has not been otherwise previously published.

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Figure 4.1. Research model

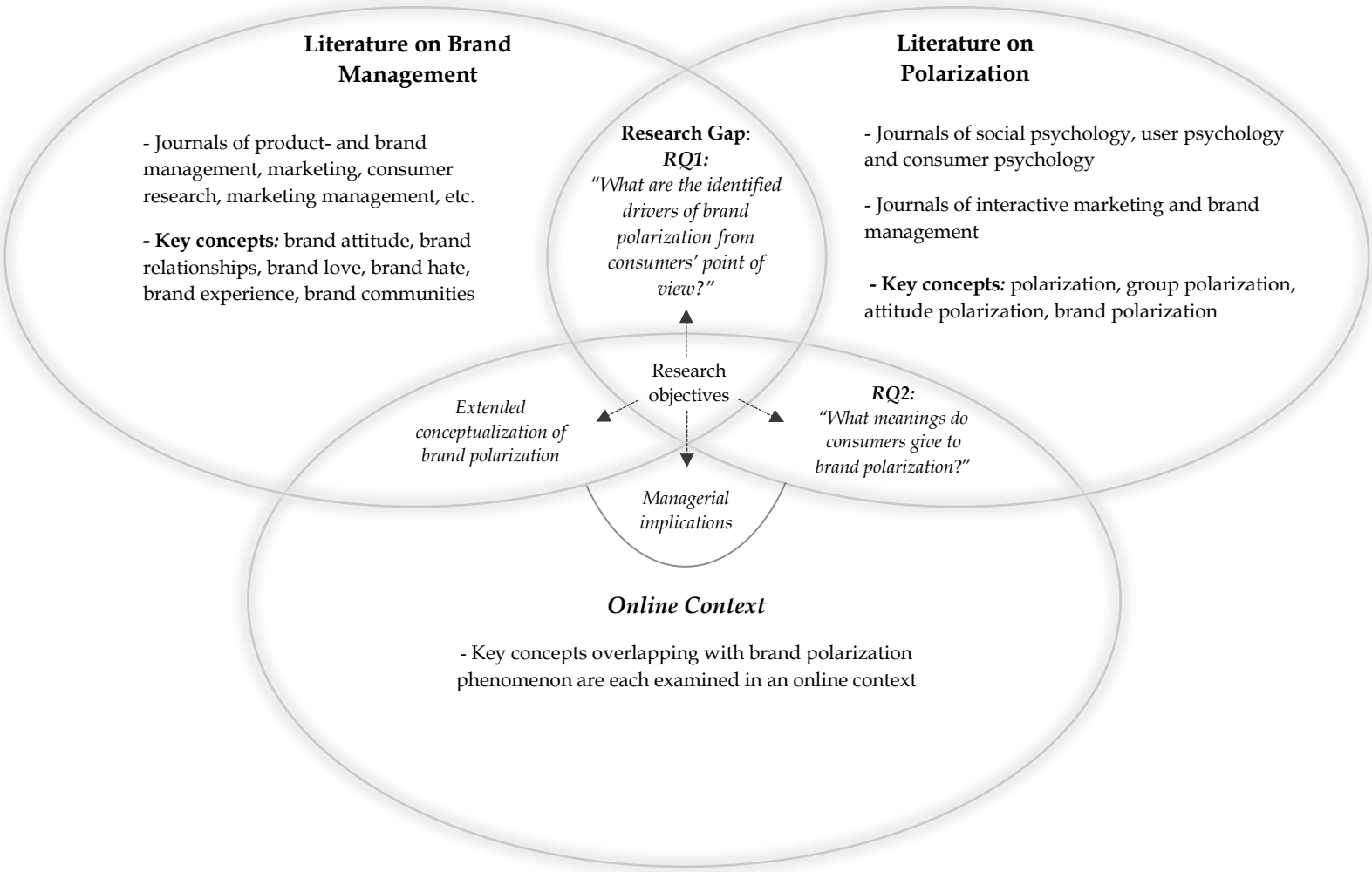

Figure 4.2. Interpretive synthesis of the identified drivers

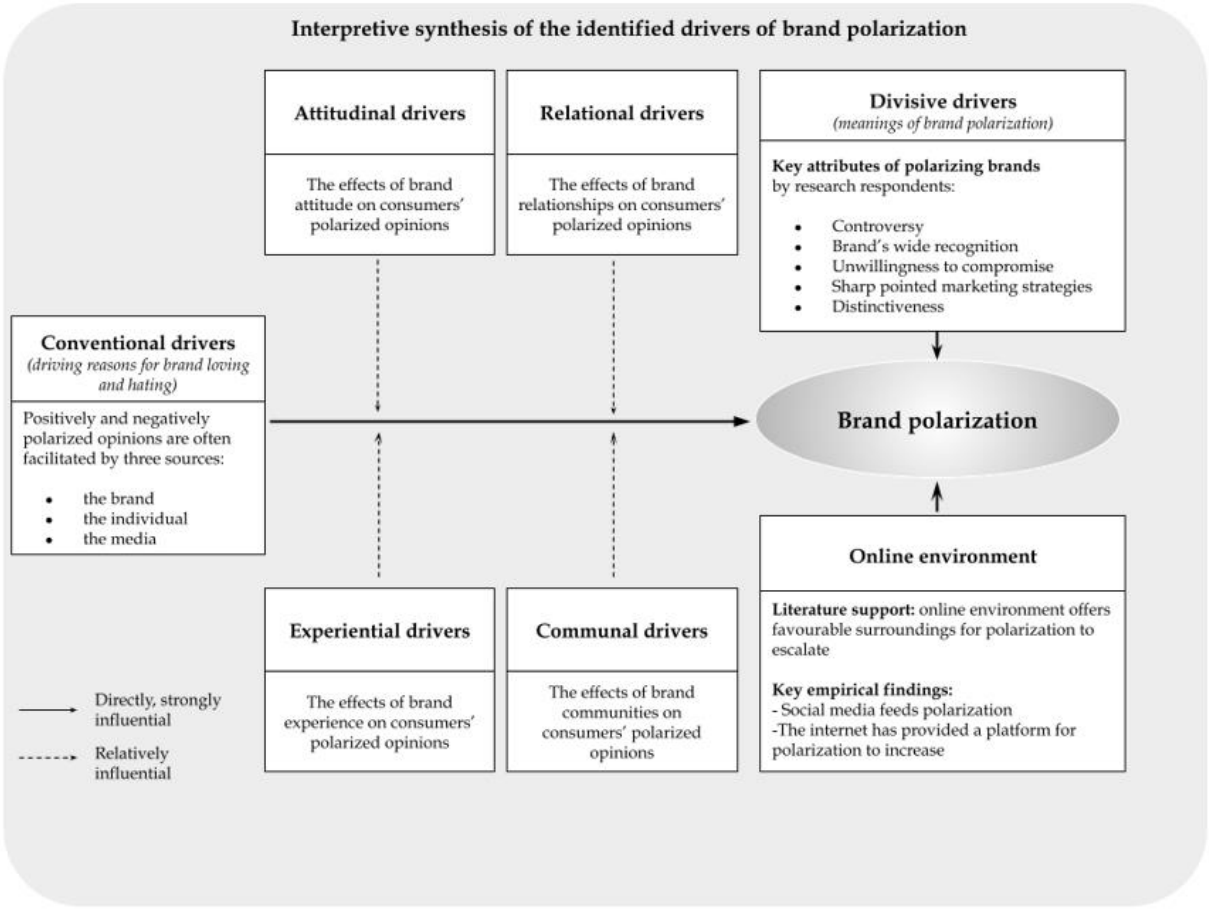

Table 4.1. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews for study participants	
Interview themes (= the caption of overarching themes)	Interview questions and structure
Theme 1: Brand love and hate (=conventional drivers)	• Could you describe your selected loved brands, and the reasons for your positive feelings? • Could you describe your selected hated brands, and the reasons for your negative feelings? • Which reasons can you think of that may cause such intense brand loving or brand hating towards these brands? • How do you feel that other people or their presence can affect either brand love or brand hate of individuals? • Which factors in online channels (e.g., social media) may affect a person's brand loving or brand hating in your experience?
Theme 2: Brand attitude (=attitudinal drivers)	• When it comes to your selected loved brands, how would you describe your attitude towards them? • In turn, how would you describe your attitude towards your selected hated brands? • Can you describe your attitude towards your loved brands when they do something well? What about when your loved brands do something poorly? • Can you describe your attitude towards your hated brands when they do something well? What about when your hated brands do something poorly? • How do you think that other people's attitudes affect your personal brand attitude? • Which factors in online channels can affect your brand attitude?
Theme 3: Brand relationships (=relational drivers)	• How would you describe your relationship with your selected brands as a consumer? • Could you describe reasons that can cause brand love and hate in consumers, if you specifically think about: 1) company-related reasons? 2) customer service-related reasons? 3) product-related reasons? 4) consumer-related reasons? • Which emotions are your loved brands evoking in you, and why? • Which emotions are your hated brands evoking in you, and why? • How would you describe the influence of other people's actions online on your personal brand relationships?
Theme 4: Brand experience (=experiential drivers)	• Can you describe what kind of experiences your selected loved brands provide you with? • Can you describe what kind of experiences your selected hated brands provide you with? • Could you describe how the following factors affect your personal online brand experience? 1) usability 2) brand's visual design 3) purpose of content 4) interactivity 5) communality
Theme 5: Brand communities (=communal drivers)	• When you consider your selected loved and hated brands, are there any communities or noticeably strong supporters formed around them? In turn, are there any anti-communities or strong opposers formed around your selected brands? • What kind of behaviors or actions have you witnessed in brand communities or anti-communities? • Can you describe how these communities or anti-communities affect your personal opinions about your selected brands? • In your experience, do these communities or anti-communities have different influence on different online channels? For instance, where is the influence strongest in your experience?
Theme 6: Meanings of brand polarization (=divisive drivers)	• Could you describe in your own words what creates a "polarizing brand" that receives both love and hate from many people simultaneously? • What do you think a polarizing brand can achieve or benefit with such divisive status? • In your opinion, what are the risks of being a brand with a polarizing nature? • Do you have anything to add to the discussion about such phenomenon where modern brands are receiving both love and hate simultaneously from consumers?

Table 4.2. Information table of interviewees

Respondent	Gender	Age group	Nationality	Strongly positive/ loved brands	Strongly negative/ hated brands	Contact method	Interview duration (min.)
R1	Male	25-36	Finland	ENCE eSports	ENCE eSports *(on a certain period)* Valve	Zoom	59:59
R2	Female	25-36	Finland	Disney Finlayson	Nestlé	Zoom	51:26
R3	Female	25-36	Finland	Apple Adidas	Oatly Donald Trump (*human brand*)	Zoom	54:53
R4	Male	25-36	Finland	Patagonia Haglöfs	Zara Vladimir Putin (*human brand*)	Zoom	40:08
R5	Male	25-36	Finland	Nordea Fingersoft	Facebook Robinhood	Zoom	48:51
R6	Male	25-36	Germany	The nu company SV Werder Bremen *(football team)*	McDonald's	Zoom	42:19
R7	Male	25-36	Finland	Volkswagen FC Bayern München *(football team)*	Huono Äiti *(ready meal)*	Zoom	34:10
R8	Male	25-36	Finland	YouTube Waves	Electronic Arts (EA)	Zoom	43:29
R9	Female	25-36	Finland	Apple Fazer	Maria Nordin (*human brand*) Päivän Byrokraatti (*online publication*)	Zoom	43:42
R10	Female	25-36	Finland	Jungle Juice Bar Halla x Halla Foodin	Sara Sieppi (*human brand*) HK	Zoom	51:52
Total:	10	-	-	20 brands	16 brands	-	468 min