"Way too cool to ever be frozen":

Analyzing the Online Interactions of the Wendy's Roasting trend

Master's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tässä tutkielmassa analysoin amerikkalaisen ravintolaketju Wendy'sin roasting-trendiä, sekä roasting-diskurssia yleensä keskusteluanalyysin ja metaviestianalyysin avulla. Wendy's-ravinto-laketjun roasting-trendi oli sosiaalisen median trendi, joka alkoi vuoden 2017 alussa. Wendy'sin Twitter-tili osallistui heille twiitanneen käyttäjän kanssa keskusteluun, jonka lopuksi Wendy's pilkkasi käyttäjän tietämättömyyttä ja virheellistä ajattelua. Kyseinen twiitti keräsi paljon huomiota, ja johti Wendy'sin roasting-trendin syntymiseen, jonka aikana Wendy'sin Twitter-tili avoimesti pilkkasi heille twiittejä lähettäneitä käyttäjiä ja jopa muita bränditilejä. Trendin suosion ansiosta ravintolaketjun maine sosiaalisessa mediassa mullistui täysin, ja trendiä ylistettiin niin Twitterin käyttäjien kuin online-uutisalustojen kirjoittajienkin toimesta.

Tutkielman tavoitteena on tutkia roasting-diskurssia pääasiassa Wendy'sin roasting-trendin näkökulmasta. Tutkin trendin aikana tehtyjä keskusteluja käyttäen viitteenä Meredithin (2019) tutkielmassa esitettyjä kanssakäymisen keskeisiä ydinominaisuuksia. Analysoin myös metaviestien käyttöä trendin keskusteluissa ja eritoten trendin huumorissa. Analyysistä muodostamieni johtopäätösten avulla pystyin erottelemaan roasting-keskustelut kahteen eri ryhmään sekä muodostamaan mallin, jonka avulla pystyn kuvailemaan, miten roasting-keskustelut muodostuvat. Myös metaviestien käyttö ilmeni tärkeänä osana trendiä, erityisesti trendin humoristisissa puolissa, kun metaviestejä käytettiin hyväksi sarkasmin muodossa.

Analyysin jälkeisessä pohdintaosiossa tutkin myös sitä, kuinka tutkielmassa esitetyt taustatutkimukset voivat laajentaa analyysin tuloksia. Pohdinnan avulla sain selville, että roasting-keskustelujen väliset erot voivat johtua autenttisuuden tunteen saavuttelusta. Myös roasting-viestien tyyppejä on lukuisia, ja roasting-viestien määritelmä on huomattavasti muuttunut roasting-diskurssin perinteisestä määritelmästä. Pystyin myös laajentamaan roasting-keskustelujen mallia; malliin ei kuulu vain keskustelujen rakenteen kuvailu, vaan myös myös se, miten uusia käyttäjiä voidaan innostaa osallistumaan roasting-trendiin. Metaviestien rooli ei myöskään rajoitu pelkästään trendin huumoriin, mutta on myös tärkeä osa roasting-diskurssin tulkintaa.

Asiasanat – Keywords wendy's, brand identity, conversation analysis, online discourse analysis, roasting, online interaction, social media

Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Wendy's fast food restaurant chain has been a part of American fast food culture for over 50 years as of November 2019. Known primarily for its square-shaped hamburgers, the chain has become the third largest hamburger fast food chain in the world, with over 6,700 locations around the world. While the restaurant chain and its associated brand are quite well-known and popular in the US and other countries where the company has restaurant locations, Wendy's gained significant attention worldwide due to a rather unique phenomenon that was a major part of their Twitter presence for a good part of 2017: the so-called "Wendy's roasting" trend. The phenomenon involved a brand using an unusual, informal form of discourse to capture the attention of the Internet. Even over three years later, it is still a part of the brand people remember and like to discuss. The Wendy's roasting phenomenon has been discussed casually in online news publications by authors like Covucci (2017) and Peteraityt (2018), and there has been one academic study conducted on the humor of the trend, by Dynel (2020). However, roasting itself and the ways language is used for the sake of roasting has not been studied deeply on an academic level, as far as I was able to discern in my research. For the sake of understanding how companies and brands use language and unusual forms of discourse on social media to their advantage, this topic is worth investigating.

In the present thesis, my main aim is to study Wendy's Twitter interactions during the roasting trend of 2017, including what types of interactions they had with different users, as well as how the interactions and the related "roasts" are constructed. The study is about how they used this very informal and even somewhat rude form of online discourse, and how they turned into a social media marketing strategy that brought their brand significant attention on Twitter. The analysis first begins by making initial linguistic and structural observations on the roasting tweets and interactions involving the Wendy's Twitter account. After that, I analyze the discourse of the tweets and interactions using conversation analysis and metamessage analysis. After that, various terms and theoretical concepts related to marketing and promotion, and their relations to the discourse and the phenomenon itself, are analyzed and discussed to form connections between the various aspects of online marketing and the linguistics features of the roasting discourse, to further explain how the phenomenon was functionally a marketing strategy that was used to bring attention to the brand.

My reason for choosing this specific topic is because the subject of roasting, as far as I could discern from my own research of various works and papers, has not been studied in many publications before. There is one dedicated study about the roasting trend, the aforementioned paper by Dynel (2020), which aims to examine the ways in which Wendy's uses roasts and similar types of humorous messages on their Twitter account for different purposes and effects. This study is further explained and explored in the third chapter, but on a general level, Dynel's (2020) paper focuses on analyzing how Wendy's uses these messages and the humor contained within them from a metapragmatical perspective. Comparatively, the present study aims to analyze the trend, as well as roasting discourse in general, from the viewpoint of conversation analysis and metamessage analysis. Apart from Dynel's (2020) study, however, the Wendy's roasting phenomenon, and roasting in general, have not been extensively studied before in a truly dedicated manner, least of all from a more purely linguistic standpoint. Furthermore, the Wendy's brand is very active on social media, using platforms like Twitter actively for the purposes of marketing and promotion. Thus, by looking into this unusual Twitter phenomenon from a linguistic perspective, and analyzing how a massive brand that is known for being active in the field of online marketing used this phenomenon to their advantage, one would be able to gain a deeper understanding of how brands and companies use these casual and unusual forms of discourse, and how they are able to use these discourse forms to their advantage. In the age of social media marketing, where competing for attention is an everyday ordeal and companies and brands are employing increasingly creative strategies to gain attention for themselves, understanding this form of discourse and its linguistic basis in contexts of using it for marketing will be useful for understanding how companies are able to use them for those purposes.

The next chapter will cover the background of the Wendy's roasting phenomenon, how the roasting trend was discussed in online news media, as well as the definition and background of roasting. The reason for starting with this chapter is to give all readers an overview and general understanding of the phenomenon, as not all readers are guaranteed to know about the roasting trend or roasting discourse. Following that, the third chapter introduces the core theoretical background relevant to the present thesis, including the present thesis' core concepts and related previous research. The following fourth chapter will introduce the data, research methods, and the research questions, and the fifth chapter will focus on the analysis of the data. The sixth chapter

will be used to discuss the findings as they relate to the background theories and concepts, and the seventh chapter will present the conclusions and possible ways this line of research could be continued in the future.

2 BACKGROUND OF WENDY'S AND ROASTING

In this chapter, I provide some background information about the history of Wendy's roasting phenomenon and outline its progression. While the Wendy's roasting trend gained a considerable amount of attention at the time and eventually became a memorable part of the brand's history, the origins of the trend may be unclear to most people, and people who did not spend time on Twitter during the trend's peak period may not know about the trend at all. Thus, this chapter is included before the theoretical framework to give all readers a general understanding of the Wendy's roasting trend, as well as roasting discourse itself. The first section describes the background behind the phenomenon as well as the general response from social media users and online news outlets. The second section explains the concept of "roasting" in the context of online discourse.

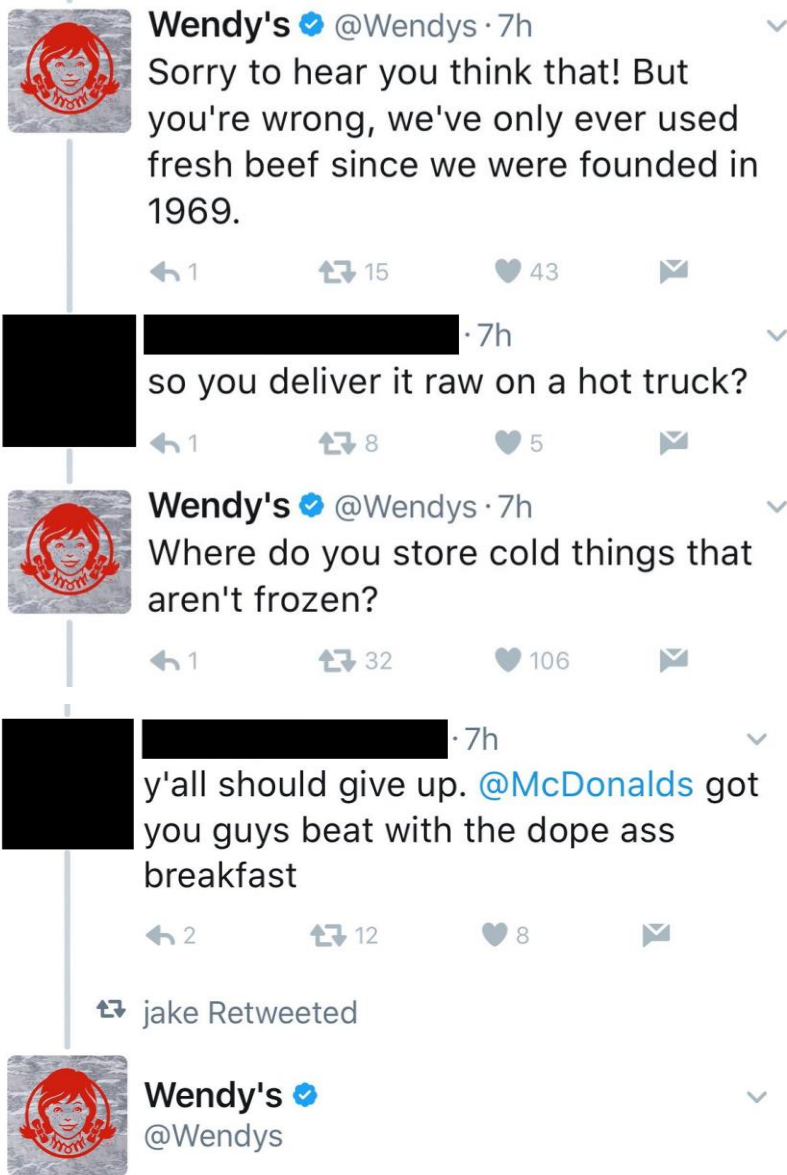## 2.1 Background of the Wendy's roasting phenomenon

In this section, I explain the origins and progression of the roasting trend. I describe how the trend began, how it progressed from its starting point, and how it is present on Wendy's Twitter account now.

The origins of the Wendy's roasting phenomenon were documented by Covucci (2017) and an article on the wiki site Know Your Meme, where the article was first created in 2017. The origins of the trend go all the way back to late 2016, when the Wendy's Twitter account begun to have unique interactions with its consumers. The beginnings of the first documented exchange in what would start the trend occurred on December 30, 2016, when the Wendy's Twitter account tweeted "Our beef is way too cool to ever be frozen.", promoting the fresh nature of their beef patties. On January 2, 2017, a certain Twitter user – whose account has since been deleted, but whose interactions with the Wendy's Twitter account remain documented – replied to this tweet and accused Wendy's of being dishonest, arguing that they do, in fact, freeze their beef patties.

In the ensuing exchange with the Twitter user, the Wendy's Twitter account continued to deny the accusation, eventually quipping with: "You don't have to bring them [McDonald's] into this just because you forgot refrigerators existed for a second there."

Fig 1. The start of the interaction that started the Wendy's roasting trend. Screenshot retrieved from the article by Covucci (2017).

Wendy's ✓ @Wendys · 7h
Sorry to hear you think that! But you're wrong, we've only ever used fresh beef since we were founded in 1969.

↩ 1   ⟳ 15   ♥ 43   ✉

·7h
so you deliver it raw on a hot truck?

↩ 1   ⟳ 8   ♥ 5   ✉

Wendy's ✓ @Wendys · 7h
Where do you store cold things that aren't frozen?

↩ 1   ⟳ 32   ♥ 106   ✉

·7h
y'all should give up. @McDonalds got you guys beat with the dope ass breakfast

↩ 2   ⟳ 12   ♥ 8   ✉

⟳ jake Retweeted

Wendy's ✓
@Wendys

Replying to Thuggy-D

You don't have to bring them into this just because you forgot refrigerators existed for a second there.

1/2/17, 11:31 AM

Fig 2. The remainder of the interaction that started the Wendy's roasting trend. Screenshot retrieved from the article by Covucci (2017).

After the aforementioned tweet was posted online, the exchange started to gain attention. The initial attention came from the tweets of other Twitter users who had taken screenshots of the original exchange and then posted the screenshots to their Twitter accounts. Soon after, users found the original aforementioned tweet by Wendy's and began liking and sharing it instead of the screenshotted exchange. As the exchange gained more and more attention over the following days, the Wendy's Twitter account's responses to consumers' tweets, especially to tweets ridiculing the restaurant chain's food or other aspects, became very bold and even rude, snapping back at the criticism with their own insults. The original exchange and the positive attention gained from this unusual social media strategy was detailed in a multitude of online media outlets, such The Daily Dot, BoredPanda and AV Club. Eventually, the phenomenon became known as the aforementioned Wendy's roasting trend.

The trend was at its peak in the early months of 2017, and continued with considerable frequency throughout the year. Eventually, as the year changed into 2018, the "roasting" tweets started to appear less, until by the end of the year, the posting of roasting tweets had become rather rare. However, the phenomenon remains remembered, and was briefly brought back two times for the "National Roast Day" event in January 2018 and 2019, where the Wendy's Twitter would roast anyone wanting to get "roasted". Apart from these events, the trend has not seen any notable continuation on behalf of the official Twitter account or the consumers engaging with it, so it has, for all intents and purposes, been retired.

2.2 Discussions of the trend in the media
In this section, I present the ways in which the Wendy's roasting trend was discussed in the media and news outlets. Due to the fact that the trend took place purely online, all of the notable news articles that handle the trend are also from purely online news publications.

The earliest articles concerning the roasting trend were published in the beginning of 2017, with some articles being published in 2018. Overall, there is an overwhelmingly positive attitude in the various publications towards the trend itself and how Wendy's interacted with other accounts. Comments such as "hilarious" (Peteraityt 2018) and "savage" were the most common in a majority of these articles. In this of context, "savage" refers to the sharp, exceptionally cheeky nature of the various roasts that Wendy's posted during the trend. In summary, it is a compliment

meant to highlight Wendy's ruthless but clever use of language. The "savage" compliment is repeated across many articles, either in titles themselves or the main text, like in Travis' article *The 16 Most Savage Wendy's Roasts Ever* (n.d.) or in the article by Peteraityt (2018), according to whom Wendy's "has gone viral over the last year for their absolutely *savage* roasts". Other more specific comments include saying that "Wendy's social media team is always fresh.", as written by Covucci (2017), and calling the entire phenomenon in general "just too funny", as written by Gouldbourn (2017). In summary, the overall outlook on the roasting trend on the media's behalf is generally positive. Journalists prefer to highlight how funny the phenomenon is and how people have generally accepted it positively.

Certain subjects and discussion points, as well as types of articles, are very common in publications about the roasting trend. For instance, a great number of articles include the authors' own comments on the various roasts. For example, the various articles published on BoredPanda have numbered titles for each Twitter exchange presented in the article, like "#5 Friendship Goals By Wendy's" (Peteraityt 2018), "#20 Nothing Fazes Wendy's" (Peteraityt 2018), and "#14 True Cost Of A Big Mac" (Gouldbourn 2017). These titles offer either a short description of the exchange, or a short comment about it. Other writers, like Travis (n.d.) have more substantial comments about each roast. Travis calls one exchange "a much-needed lesson" (n.d.) for the individual being roasted; another roast is accompanied by the comment "Yeah, there's no coming back from that one." (n.d.), and another one has a simple comment of "Ohhhhhhh snap!" (n.d), which is an exclamation conveying disbelief, surprise, or joy. Regarding the most common article types, some of the articles that concern the topic of the "Wendy's roast" trend go into detail about the origins of the trends, such as Covucci's (2017) article published by The Daily Dot. Another similar publication, which briefly explains some of the origins of the trend, was written by Peteraityt (2018). It explains the starting point of the trend and even introduces the Wendy's social media manager responsible for it. These articles were most likely made for the purpose of compiling and spreading information. Many other articles, on the other hand, function as a showcase of the "best" or "most savage" roasting interactions. These articles include the aforementioned publication by Peteraityt (2018), the article by Travis' (n.d.) and the one by Gouldbourn (2017). These showcasing articles are, in fact, the most common type of article about the Wendy's roasting trend that I was able to find. These articles were likely made to quickly and easily capitalize on the popularity of the trend at its peak. Because the various tweets were relatively easy to find at

the time and compile into a list, articles of that type were likely an easy way to profit off of the roasting trend.

2.3 The background of "roasting"

An important part of the Wendy's roasting phenomenon was the utilization of a form of discourse called "roasting". While this form of discourse has been a part of social media discourse for a considerable amount of time already, and did gain even more attention with the aforementioned trend that Wendy's started, it is not a form of discourse that has been commonly used by official marketing teams of any brand for promotional purposes of any kind. Hence, it is rather important to explain the nature of roasting and its brief history as a form of online discourse, as it is the central point of the present study.

While the Wendy's roasting trend is a reasonably recent phenomenon, "roasting", on the other hand, had been an existing phenomenon and a known form of discourse used on various social media platforms before Wendy's began to participate in it on their Twitter account. In modern social media contexts, "to roast" refers to the act of subjecting someone to "severe criticism or ridicule" (Merriam–Webster n.d. [online]). It is typically a ridiculing or even mean response to another's person's complaints or criticism about the roaster. The main point of this style of exchange is to one-up the other person with an insult so severe, the other person is unable to reply back to the insult. Earliest entries about roasting and roasts on Urban Dictionary (n.d. [online], an online dictionary dedicated to collecting Internet slang and jargon, date back to 2005. This form of interaction has since become a rather well-known and well-used form of online discourse in the latter half of the 2010's, especially on microblogging sites like Twitter.

While it is a form of interaction usually used by individual people casually interacting with each other, the Wendy's roasting trend is a phenomenon where a major brand used this form of discourse actively and deliberately on their public social media account, and gained great amounts of positive attention around the world because of it. Many online news articles used positive language when discussing the trend, such as the Daily Dot. One of their articles referred their social media team as "always fresh" (Covucci 2017), and further told how other Twitter users responded to the original roast "with unbridled enthusiasm" (Covucci 2017). Twitter users' responses were, indeed, enthusiastic; a number of users made fun of the Twitter user who argued

against Wendy's for seemingly forgetting about the existence of refrigerators, and another tweeted how they would go "to Wendy's because of [their] tweets". Another user even complemented Wendy's for their roast, stating "well done". So, it can be said that Wendy's did indeed gain a notable amount of positive attention from Twitter users, as well as the news outlets who reported on them.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I explain the relevant theoretical background for the present study. The first two sections are structured around key concepts in order to present important ideas related to the roasting phenomenon, as well as theoretical works presented later in the chapter, in a clear way. In the first section, I define some important terms and concepts important for the purposes of the study, related to the topic of marketing. In the second section, I define important terms and concepts related to social media communications. In the final section, I cover the previous research related to the subject of the current thesis, including the previously mentioned publication by Dynel (2020), works about marketing and online discourse, individual studies about brands and companies on social media, and other similar subjects with relevance to the subject of the present thesis.

3.1 Brand management

This section gives an overview of the important central terms and concepts related to brand management that are important for the purposes of the study and which require some explanation for the sake of clarity in the study and analysis. Brand management is defined by Chunawalla (2009: 22) as "the process of managing an organisation's brands so as to increase their brand equity". Brand equity refers to the "commercial value of a brand emanating from associations, expectations, experiences and perceptions of a brand" (Chunawalla 2009: 25). The connections of these terms to the Wendy's roasting trend and its use of discourse are discussed further in the discussion chapter.

The first important term for the purposes of this study is "brand image". This term is important to the present study, because the roasting trend became crucially associated with the Wendy's brand

image. To put it simply, a brand image is the public image of the brand, or in other words, what consumers think of the brand and what they associate with it (Pahwa 2019). Having a positive – or in the very least, a unique or well-known – brand image is crucial for any kind of company or brand, and can be influenced using a variety of methods. The most fundamental thing the company or brand itself can do in order to change the image of its brand is to reshape their marketing and advertising to involve more desirable aspects of the brand in question. By focusing the marketing of the brand or its products around positive things and emotions, it is possible to make consumers associate the brand and its products with the positive concepts on which the marketing and promotion focuses (Pahwa 2019). A brand image can also be used to create recognition, according to Thimothy (2016) on Forbes. According to Thimothy (2016), creating a recognizable image is not just about a brand's logo or marketing slogan, but that interactions with consumers are also important to a recognizable brand image. Thimothy (2016) states that every interaction that a consumer has with a brand has to uphold the brand image and the values associated with the image; if that cannot be achieved, it will be very difficult to maintain a recognizable brand (Thimothy 2016).

Another crucial term, which is fundamentally connected to the concept of a brand image, is "brand story". Brand stories are a way brands use to build themselves; it is, essentially, a narrative built to encompass the facts and feelings the brand is supposed to evoke in the consumer (Hope 2018). According to an online article by Jiwa (n.d.), this narrative of the brand will exist whether or not is it planned, but it can be influenced by the brand's products, its history, the experience of the consumers interacting with the brand, the visual aspects of the brand's design, the people hired to work for the company or brand (Jiwa n.d.) and most importantly, what consumers say about the brand. The reason that the concept of the brand story is closely connected to the concept of the brand image is that the brand story and the way it is told can crucially affect the brand image itself. The existence of a brand story is important for the sake of marketing, as it can help a brand stand out in the market and build something consumers care about and in which they want to invest their money (Jiwa n.d.). Thus, by presenting the brand in a certain way, promoting certain aspects of the brand, and making sure people talk about the brand in a certain way, the brand story can be manipulated by the brand itself to a rather effective degree. In short, by manipulating the brand story, even the brand's image can be affected.

Another key term that has a close relation to the ideas of a brand image and a brand story is "brand identity". In general terms, a brand identity concerns the visible elements of the brand – for example, the logo, the brand's name, and the language used in its advertisements – that are used to make the brand easily recognizable to consumers (Tarver 2019). According to Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins and Wiertz (2013), this aspect of the brand "consists of carefully selected attributes, benefits, and attitudes that are communicated to consumers through purposeful marketing activities, such as brand stories told through advertising" (Gensler et al. 2013: 243). While a brand's brand identity can be affected through marketing and presentational choices similarly to a brand's brand identity, the two concepts are still different. The brand identity does not concern consumers' personal opinions and experiences of the brand. Instead, a brand's identity covers only the deliberately chosen elements through which the brand is visually represented, and these elements are showcased in the brand's marketing, promotion, and visual design. A brand's identity is thus a factor of the brand that can be used to reshape and maintain its image. The brand story can also be considered a major part of a brand's image, as it is an aspect of image that, while capable of changing in the minds of the consumers, can be tightly controlled by the brand managers to suit the official identity of the brand. However, for the present study, the brand story will be treated as a separate concept for the sake of clarity, and the focus for the brand identity aspects of the study is on the use of language in promotions and advertisements. While the visual aspects of the brand identity are often the main focus when talking about the subject, the present study handles purely linguistic and text-based data. The linguistic aspects of a brand's promotion are also as important as the visual aspects. Depending on the language used and how the brand "talks" about itself, the other aspects of the brand identity can be complimented in different ways, and additionally, the public's image of the brand's personality can change based on what kind of language they use.

The final concept related to brand management is "brand community". This concepts is important, because the roasting trend helped foster a community around the Wendy's brand. Brand communities are, essentially, communities of consumers where they connect and identify with one another through the consumption of a certain brand (Masyarakat 2017). The significance of brand communities has become greater with the advent and increased popularity of social media platforms, where people can share their experiences with a company or brand instantly. However, instead of simply sharing their experiences, consumers are also more inclined to look for

the information they want to find out using social media (Masyarakat 2017). According to Godey, Manthiou, Pederzoli, Rokka, Aiello, Donvito, and Singh (2016: 5834), social media outlets provide great opportunities for reaching consumers within their communities, as well as building more personal relations with the consumers. In other words, social media platforms can be used by brands to reach their own brand communities and gain great benefits with great ease. When people are often to directly message a brand's social media account, there is much more interaction with the brand, which will lead to changes in the level of consumer engagement. Most significantly, the ways the brand engages with its community can affect the brand image itself (Masyarakat 2017); as people are sharing their experiences with brands and looking information about the brands they consume online, businesses have to make sure that their social media outlets show their brand in a positive light. While the Wendy's roasting trend did not necessarily center around or even involve consuming Wendy's products, the amount of engagement they received on Twitter did create a great amount of discussion and news articles, so it could be said that a significant community did indeed form around the trend.

The importance of online brand communities is re-enforced in the sentiments of a research paper by Brogi (2014). In the current Internet environment of Web 2.0, social media platform and other social sites are full of "participation-based Internet communities" (Brogi 2014: 387). Various different sites encourage their users to share or like content, making even minor forms of active participation an integral part of modern brand communities. Even if users only like posts, it is a form of participation that plays into the social nature of most social media platforms, and more often than not, further participation like sharing and commenting is encouraged.

3.2 Online discourse and interactions

This section covers key terms and concepts related to social media discourse and social media interaction. These terms were selected due to their importance to marketing on social media, as well as their relevance to the roasting trend. As with the terms and concepts related to brand management, the deeper relevance to the roasting phenomenon is further discussed in the discussion chapter.

The first key concept is "Web 2.0". Web 2.0 is not necessarily a concept that applies strictly to social media platforms, but is rather a term that is used to describe the state of the internet that

allowed for the birth of social media platforms in general. The term describes the current state of the web, according to Kenton (2018), "with more user-generated content and usability for end users, compared to its earlier incarnation". The nature and state of the Internet as Web 2.0 is greatly different from the days of Web 1.0, where only people with great amounts of technical know-how and HMTL knowledge were able to produce content online. However, in the current state of Web 2.0, it is possible for anyone with an internet connection to create and post their own content using different types of sites like wikis, blogs, and even social media sites. All of these kinds of sites allow for its visitors and users to create and post their own content, as well as engage and interact with the posted content through likes and post sharing. According to Kenton (2018), Web 2.0 has also led to the creation of "a world of collaboration", as multiple people from all over the world can post content and contribute to each other's content. Hoffman and Lutz (2013) highlight how social media platforms especially have made it easy for different kinds of non-professional users to create and share their content, which has led to a more equal chance for everyone to affect the "public agenda" (Hoffman and Lutz 2013: 5).

On the topic of blogs, the next important term is "microblogging". According to Nations (2019), microblogging sites are "a combination of blogging and instant messaging that [allow] users to create short messages to be posted and shared with an audience online". These messages can also include pieces of media like images and videos in addition to text. Twitter as a platform is a microblogging site; the messages written on the site can only be up to 280 characters long and the structure of the site encourages long chains of posts that are akin to instant messaging logs. According to Nations (2019), microblogging platform have certain benefits over typical blogging platform where longer text pieces are the norm. For example, it takes less time to develop and consume individual posts and other pieces of content, making microblogging an efficient channel for brands and companies to produce high amounts of content in a faster rate.

The next key concept is "engagement". As a concept, it is very important to modern social media platforms, including microblogging sites like Twitter, due to the way most of them function and recommend content to their users. Ecommerce resource site BigCommerce (n.d.) defines engagement as a "metric" for evaluating a brand or company's performance on social media, and it measures how much likes, shares, and comments a social media account has received on its posts

(BigCommerce n.d.). While engagement is measured through different means on different platforms, Twitter uses re-tweets and follower count increases to measure the amount of engagement an account receives. While it is functionally impossible for me to find out how much the follower count of the Wendy's Twitter account increased during the trend's peak period, the amount of retweets that a tweet receives is easy to follow, and many of the roasting tweets earned up to hundreds of retweets and likes. Furthermore, Dolan, Conduit, Fahy, and Goodman (2016) highlight a number of social media engagement behavior typologies, or forms of behavior as which engagement can appear on social media. Importantly, some of these typologies can be used by brands and companies to their advantage when consumers engage with their accounts. While basic positive contributions include liking and sharing an account's content (Dolan et al. 2016: 267), the highest level of active positive engagement involves actively initiating positive contributions and interactions with the brand and other contributing users, as well as "co-creating" content for the social media page (Dolan et al. 2016: 266). Thus, the roasting trend could be interpreted as a result of highly positive engagement behaviors.

The next term is "audience". In terms of social media, an audience refers to the group of people that accounts are able to reach with their posts and content (Gollin 2020). A related term is "target audience", which are groups of people that are often used by brands to more clearly define their social media communication and marketing strategies. These groups are defined and differentiated from each other by demographic information, such as age, gender or location (SproutSocial n.d.), and chosen deliberately by a marketing team to be the target of the communications or marketing. For example, different age groups use different platforms more and in certain ways that are often unique to each age range, and women are often drawn in by different forms of communication than men, so the choice in target group will greatly affect other communication decisions. Furthermore, according to Castronovo and Huang (2012: 117), social media platforms are helpful to even small companies, as they give them the ability to communicate their messages to their desired target audience, as well as the ability to build meaningful connections with their audience. Overall, social media sites have allowed brands and individuals alike to reach massive global audiences, and have allowed the audience to engage brands in brand new ways.

The next term is "shareable content". According to Gollin (2020), shareable content is "content that's likely to get users to share it with their networks". In simpler terms, it is online content –

the format of this content can be anything from images to videos to pieces of text – that is easy to consume and easy to share around. In the modern social media landscape, content that is easily shareable is extremely valuable. Furthermore, Gollin (2020) explains that pieces of content which evoke strong emotions and reactions in users are more likely to be shared. These feelings can be anything from joy to outrage and sadness, so a specific feeling does not need to be evoked; as long as the people who view the content feel strongly about the content in some way, said users are more likely to share it forward. Adams (2015: 14) further highlights how brands are facing an increasing need to create more and more shareable content, considering how digital platforms are constantly expanding, and how "millennials", or the core generation that uses social media platforms, have a high level of social connectivity. Because multiple different brands are competing for the attention of consumers on social media, and more brands are joining social media every day, it is important to produce content that catches the attention of users in order to bring attention to one's own brand.

Related to shareable content, the next term is "viral". The term refers to content that "spreads exponentially on social media" (Gollin 2020), or in other words, is shared and redistributed by a great number of users. As shareable content is, by its nature, made so that users are more likely to share it, it is the kind of content that is most likely to go viral. This is usually caused by a great number of people sharing a piece of content, whose followers then share the content forward, and so on. This creates a kind of snowball effect where the amount of people grows exponentially with each person who shares the piece of content. According to Gollin, creating a piece of content that ends up going viral is "the holy grail of social media marketing" (Gollin 2020), because the company or brand is able to gain an enormous audience and increase their reach substantially without spending any money.

3.3 Previous research

This section introduces previously conducted research and studies that are relevant to the overall subject of the present thesis. A portion of the studies and research presented here are related to brand management, marketing, and promotion on social media, while other studies and research presented are about social media discourse and the different ways to use of language on social media. The relevance of each chosen study or research to the topic of the present thesis is also explained in this section.

While the Wendy's roasting phenomenon itself has not been under particularly extensively study in the past years since its emergence on Twitter, there is at least one publication that aims to examine Wendy's habit of Twitter roasting. The paper by Dynel (2020) was published after work on the present thesis had already started. Dynel (2020: 2) refers to Wendy's use of roasting on Twitter a "promotional campaign", and explains how Wendy's has used the success resulting from the original roasting exchange for the past 3 years to gain further social media attention for themselves, mainly with the annual National Roast Day events (Dynel 2020: 2). Dynel mainly aims to study how the company uses humor on their Twitter account and to "give a formal account of the various types of Wendy's tweets metapragmatically labelled "roast(ing)" by language users" (Dynel 2020: 2), meaning that the entire "promotional campaign" is explained through pragmatics and metapragmatics. In the paper, Dynel also goes onto explain and conceptualize roasting in an academic manner, referring to it as "a traditional American ritual" (Dynel 2020: 2). This is due to the fact that, in Dynel's (2020) observations, directing humorous or witty insults towards others is rather popular in the US in particular, which would explain why an American fast food chain would use it in promotional work more easily than chains from other countries. In the analysis, Dynel (2020) demonstrates the different types and distribution of humorous messages found in Wendy's tweets. Overall, roasts make up 46 percent of the total, while retorts make up another 48 percent of the total distribution of humorous messages. (Dynel 2020: 6) While the data used in the study is not limited to just the tweets from the roasting trend's peak time period, it is clear that Wendy's uses, and has used, roasting a great deal in their Twitter interactions.

Dynel (2020) also examines the differences between roasting individual people and roasting other brand accounts. Dynel deposits that the roasting of other brand accounts is done for the sake of promotional intentions. There is a great deal of merit behind this, as other brand accounts have been very actively participating in the National Roast Day events in both 2018 and 2019, but it is important to note that other brand accounts were not central participants during the original trend. In fact, most of the examples that Dynel (2020) uses are from outside of the timeframe of the original trend, but a number of the points she makes can be applied to the present thesis. Firstly, there are a number of different types of tweets that are considered as "roasting", but are differentiated by Dynel to their own types. According to Dynel's (2020) analysis, 46 percent of

the "humorous tweets" studied for the paper are so-called "proper" roasts as defined by the author in the second chapter. Specifically, Dynel uses a "traditional" definition of roasts and roasting, which defines the practice as "creative jocular insults […] that rest on benign humorous disparagement, for the sake of collective humour experience" (2020: 4). Dynel also elaborates that roasts are meant to be free of genuine malice and spite, and are understood by all participating parties as humorous interactions that are not meant to cause genuine offence (2020: 4). Meanwhile, 48 percent of Wendy's responses are classified as "retorts", and the remaining six percent of responses are categorized as miscellaneous jibes and "residue" (Dynel 2020: 5–6). According to Dynel, these different types of messages are metapragmatically labeled as roasting (2020: 6), so for the purposes of the current thesis, I treat all of Wendy's responses as roasts. While the paper brings up good points and information about the trend, it is important to note that the core research goals are different from the present thesis. While Dynel's study aims to examine the roasting trend from the viewpoint of pragmatics – metapragmatics in particular – and how Wendy's uses humor on their Twitter account as a promotional tactic, the present study aims to linguistically examine the structure and features of roasting as it relates to the Wendy's roasting trend. Dynel's study (2020) primarily covers roasting interactions from outside of the original trend's timeframe, such as the National Roast Day events of 2018 and 2019. While the points brought up in examining these exchanges outside of the main trend's timeframe can mostly be applied to the present study, I aim to only focus on exchanges that took place during 2017, the peak popularity point of the original trend.

Apart from the Wendy's roasting phenomenon and roasting discourse itself, online discourses and social media marketing in general have been researched substantially over the past decade. For example, a paper by Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, and Wiertz (2013) argues about and discusses the participation of consumers with brands in social media platforms, and the consumers' role in creating brand stories through their interactions. As the participation of the consumers was a major part of the Wendy's roasting trend and its spread across the internet, the study and its viewpoints are relevant for the purposes of the present thesis. The authors argue that "consumers are becoming pivotal authors of brand stories due to new dynamic networks of consumers and brands formed through social media and the easy sharing of brand experiences in such networks". (Gensler et al. 2013: 242). Individual consumers use brands as a way to construct and express their own identities, and may even end up changing and customizing them to

fit their own identities and needs (Gensler et al. 2013: 244).

Brands can also form large, if not even global communities around themselves by providing a "source of group identification" (Gensler et al. 2013: 244). This idea essentially means that if there is something about the brand with which consumers can identify, consumers will become more attached to the brand because of it, and it can help bring together a close, loyal community around the brand. Considering the amount of attention Wendy's was able to to obtain for themselves with the roasting trend, this can be considered a valuable viewpoint for the purposes of the present thesis, as there certainly was a considerable about of talk about the trend of various forms of social media. Numerous news articles were also written about the roasting trend, most of which discussed Wendy's and what they did in a positive light. Articles about the trend mention how their responses were "hilarious" (Peteraityt 2018) and how Wendy's has "basically won the social media game" (Travis n.d.), framing this atypical and even somewhat confrontational approach in a positive manner. People gathered together around the Wendy's roasting trend, shared their opinions and experiences, and created further discussion about it within and even outside of Twitter.

Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, and Wiertz also created a "conceptual framework" of the impact of social media on brand management for the purposes of their study (Gensler et al. 2013: 244). The framework shown in the paper explains that brand stories generated by firms and companies on their own, by teams of professionals and the like, are fundamentally and always expanded on by consumer-created brand stories. These stories are told through many channels, and can either add to the intended meaning of the brand story, or create entirely new meanings. In other words, they ways consumers view and experience the brand for themselves (Gensler et al. 2013: 244) greatly affect the brand-constructed brand story and can greatly expand upon it. They have become "pivotal authors of brand stories" (Gensler et al. 2013: 244). However, according to the framework, companies are not limited to just listening to and observing consumer-generated brand stories, but can also use them to their advantage. They can promote and bring attention to positive consumer-generated brand stories that benefit them in the right ways, and also react to brand stories that are negative and harmful. Thus, consumer-generated brand stories can become valuable tools for companies that can allow them to create even better stories for their brands. This notion of the importance of the brand story is supported by Wenzl (2019); according to

Wenzl, brand stories and storytelling are crucial when brands want to increase their awareness and attract new customers. Thus, by attracting more customers with a well-constructed brand story, the new customers will develop and spread the brand story even further.

Furthermore, in the study, social media in particular is named a key factor in how brand stories are formed in the current age of marketing and promotion. The unique types of dynamic networks that social media sites provide allow for easy sharing of consumers' brand experiences. Their experiences can be shared to a wider audience than they could have been before, which allows for consumers to gain a presence that brand managers cannot ignore, even if a particular brand does not have a presence on social media (Gensler et al. 2013: 243). The modern social media environment has also lead to the blurring of boundaries between consumers and brands' social networks (Gensler et al. 2013: 250), leading to more frequent interaction between the two parties. While brands most often use these new social dynamics to spread messages and develop new products by using consumers' personal social networks that include their family and friends, they have also begun to communicate with individual consumers at a much more personal level than before. They use the consumers' own brand stories as a stepping stone to engage with them as if the brand itself was another individual. This is clearly what we saw with the Wendy's roasting trend; the Wendy's Twitter account was engaging with consumers very casually through the discourse of roasting, and consumers were either starting exchanges or contributing to them in a similar manner.

Moving onto the topic of online discourse itself, Beaulieu, Sarker, and Sarker (2015) approach the topic of general online discourse from the perspective of discourse analysis. According to the authors, the increased amount of interactivity that modern "electronic forums" – in other words, modern internet services and sites – have has created forms of communication that impact the success of online marketplaces, internet communities, and many others (Beaulieu et al. 2015: 1–2). The interactive nature of the modern online environment is crucial to everything that takes place on the Internet, and things that happen online have a much greater impact on things in the physical, "real" world, which is why understanding online discourse has become increasingly important. This is, in my view, highly relevant to the present study, as Wendy's is not just an account on a social media site, but a restaurant chain with real-life locations. In addition, the authors note that online discourse can be particularly difficult to study, due to the fact that online

communication is very different to communication in other formats like traditional text and pure speech. Unlike traditional written text, things like emoticons and the various ways of using uppercase and lowercase letters can be used to create special meaning in online texts (Beaulieu et al. 2015: 3). Sentences that are written in only uppercase letters can be interpreted as the writer yelling out the message, and using emoticons – or emoji – are meant to be seen as the writer themselves doing the expression or gesture that the emoticon is conveying. Discourse occurring online is, in fact, often considered as "written talk", which means that the text is interpreted as if the writer was actually speaking the text they've written out loud. There is also the fact that modern online discourse is largely formed of "disjointed sequences and multiple overlapping conversations" (Beaulieu et al. 2015: 1). In other words, online conversations can take place across multiple platforms and in disjointed, separate pieces across several spread-out points in time. This technically applies to the Wendy's roasting trend, as the trend is comprised of dozens of individual exchanges between individual Twitter users and the Wendy's brand account over the course of multiple months, mainly in 2017. However, all of these interactions focus around and culminate in one specific type of online discourse: roasting. While the authors of the aforementioned paper are attempting to create a visualization approach with which to better understand communication patterns present in all online communication environments, my goal for the present thesis is to analyze and discuss one specific kind of online discourse. So, while this paper presents a number of interesting ideas, some of the concerns related to its specific topic are not directly related to my thesis.

Twitter discourse in general has also been studied by Zappavigna (2012). The book discusses forms of discourse used on different kinds of social media, and has a dedicated chapter to the language of microblogging. As explained before, microblog services, like Twitter, are blogging sites and platforms dedicated to sharing short messages. As the Wendy's roasting phenomenon took place exclusively on Twitter, this work is certainly relevant to the present thesis. Zappavigna (2012) describes how Twitter, as a form of microblogging, functions as a form of conversation. The way how Twitter invites users and businesses alike to "follow the conversations" and to "be where the conversations are" (Zappavigna 2012: 30) reinforces this idea, but is also a rather commercialized take on the concept of conversation. This outlook views microblogging interactions as something used to develop a form of personal branding, share professional publications

and promotions, and in general, to create attention around something for the sake of profit (Zappavigna 2012: 31). This can certainly be seen as relevant to the Wendy's roasting trend; Wendy's created so much attention with their social media interactions that the trend and the Twitter exchanges were written about in several online news publications, and even to this day, consumers online remember the roasting trend and associate it with the Wendy's brand. Thus, not only did they create a significant amount of attention for themselves, the roasting trend also became a part of their brand with which they are associated to some degree to this day.

Zappavigna (2011) has also studied the linguistic aspects of Twitter. The article explores and discusses how Twitter is used to build communities, specifically on a linguistic level. In the beginning, Zappavigna (2011) mentions the cultural shift from simply searching content on a specific subject on social media, to searching what others are saying and discussing the subject with others. This shift has resulted in the emergence of what Zappavigna refers to as "searchable talk" (Zappavigna 2011: 789), a form of online discourse where the main function is "findability", the ability for users to easily find information about a specific topic or discussions about a specific topic. This involves the use of specific types of punctuation and metadata like hashtags, which are keywords that Twitter users can use to search for tweets with the same hashtag. Another form of punctuation that facilitates findability is the "@ mentioning", a feature of Twitter where putting an @ symbol before a username will notify said user that they have been mentioned in a tweet. This means that not only the mentioned user, but the people who follow the user, are more likely to see the tweet in their feed (Zappavigna 2011: 790). This form of punctuation could have been used as a way to get the Wendy's roasting trend more attention. Since the tweets directed to the Wendy's account always used the "@ mentioning" form of punctuation to ensure that the Wendy's account was more likely to notice the tweet, these chains of tweets would have been easy to find at the height of the trend. Furthermore, since the reply tweets from Wendy's also use the "@ mentioning" feature, as is the standard when replying to someone's tweet, the followers of the person engaging with Wendy's would also be likely to notice the reply tweet, and thus, the trend would also gain more attention that way.

Thurlow and Mroczek (2011) also focus on the use of discourse in social media and other digital platforms. The authors discuss microblogging as a literary device and how it is a part of a field called "new literacies", which explores how new digital technologies, such as social media sites,

are shaping and changing the nature and even meanings of text, writing and reading (Mroczek and Thurlow 2011: 112). According to Thurlow and Mroczek (2011: 112), most of the research about microblogging sites focuses on Twitter, and with the advent and proliferation of the use of social media platforms in general, all kinds of text from traditional print to web texts are becoming more and more multimodal, incorporating other modes of representation like images and sound to text to add a further layer of meaning. This can certainly be seen in certain tweets by the Wendy's Twitter account that involve images, but most importantly, the authors discuss the nature of status updates as communicative texts. Users use status updates on sites like Twitter to share their feelings and opinions, but also adapt texts and materials from all kinds of different social media platforms for whatever purpose they are needed. Microblogging and status updates, in fact, are a mix of genres from "IM to texting and blogging" (Mroczek and Thurlow 2011: 123), and different genre conventions are employed for situations that need them. Thus, it is possible that the Wendy's Twitter management team decided to adopt a very casual type of genre for their Twitter strategy – in this instance, a form of informal interaction called roasting – and manipulated it into an online marketing tactic.

Like Mroczek and Thurlow (2011), Trester and Tannen (2013) have also examined the use of language in the new media environments of the Internet. However, instead of a more technical approach as seen with Thurlow and Mroczek (2011), Trester and Tannen (2013) examine new media from the viewpoint of how language is used in the. They discuss the idea of Web 2.0, a concept discussed previously in the present thesis, and its effect on how language is used. The authors mention how certain online platforms are focused around social interaction, and that the various forms of content hosted on these sites, including videos, text, and images, are all types of "human discourse" (Tannen and Trester 2013: 1). This, of course, applies to sites like Twitter, where the primary purpose of the platform is to share one's thoughts and participate in conversations with other users. Regarding the topic of conversational styles in the new media interaction environment, the authors discuss how interactions are full of metamessages – additional or underlying meanings of messages that are separate from the literal meanings of the words used. Messaging in the new media environment involves metamessages to a degree, in the form of markers (Tannen and Trester 2013: 104). These are features or other aspects of the message, most often related to the use of punctuation, which can signify the emotional tone of the message. For example, there are markers that signify enthusiasm in a message, and there are other

markers that signify sarcasm. While metamessage theory does not provide direct information to explain the roasting trend or why it may have occurred, this analysis style of new media interactions is a valuable viewpoint from which to examine the language used in Wendy's various roasting tweets, considering the nature and interactional approach of the Wendy's roasting trend. After all, roasts are often not pure insults or rude statements, but often involve the use of sarcasm, back-handed compliments, or other similar tricks of language.

Moving onto marketing on social media, van den Bergh and Behrer (2016) have studied modern social media marketing and modern marketing tactics in general. Their work explicitly discusses marketing strategies and aspects that can be used to entice younger generations of consumers into buying products or services, such as strategies on social media. One of the subjects that the work discusses is the role of authenticity in brand management, and how brands can portray being authentic. One of the mentioned ways of upholding perceived authenticity is consumer immersion (Behrer and van den Bergh 2016: 111). To summarize, immersing consumers is described as "brands absorbing their surroundings to inspire breakthrough innovations" (Behrer and van den Bergh 2016: 111). With a typical company or brand, this could usually mean launching a new product or service based on customer feedback, but in the world of social media, the same immersion principle could be used for something completely different, such as using a form of discourse that individual consumers on the platform use when engaging in casual interactions, and utilizing said discourse to create a new kind of marketing campaign to gain publicity. Consumer immersion is expanded upon by Cobb (2019). According to Cobb (2019), depending on what the brand's goals are, consumer immersion should be implemented differently. If the goal is to establish better communications, then consumer immersion should be used to provide empathy to the consumers and their experiences based on proper events from their own lives (Cobb 2019), and should be provided "with real language that can help [the] message truly connect to people" (Cobb 2019).

As mentioned previously, the concept of consumer immersion is a part of a larger brand management concept: brand authenticity. Van der Bergh and Behrer describe brand authenticity as creating an image of "being of an established authority or being genuine, not corrupted from the original, or truthfulness of origins" (Behrer and van den Bergh 2016: 103). While these strategies to

promote a sense of authenticity would typically be used to promote a brand's products or locations in more traditional forms of advertisement, a sense of being authentic can also be achieved by means of communication. Where other brand or company Twitter accounts are often polite and non-confrontational, Wendy's used a very casual, very informal, and very rude discourse to engage with consumers. While these strategies are not about promoting a brand and its image, the roasting language creates a sense that there is an actual, genuine human being answering the tweets and formulating genuine, honest responses. Behrer and van den Bergh state that "the underlying values of freedom, autonomy and individuality" (Behrer and van den Bergh 2016: 108) are still relevant forces in marketing today, especially younger generations are concerned. They are values that younger generations in particular appreciate, so they are often used in marketing for a variety of items and services. So, it could be said that the Wendy's roasting trend is based on those values of being free and being able to express oneself freely, even in a way that could be considered informal or rude.

In addition to authenticity, as well as the various ways to utilize and maintain it, Behrer and Van der Bergh (2016) also discuss different ways in which social media can be used as a tool of marketing. According to a study highlighted by the authors, nearly fifty percent of individuals who are a part of Generation Z – in other words, those born in the mid-to-late 1990's – use social media (Behrer and Van der Bergh 2016: 222), so using social media to engage and market to younger consumers is important. One method the authors highlight is interactivity in relation to the concept of FOMO, also known as "fear of missing out" (Behrer and Van der Bergh 2016: 222). FOMO is a type of social anxiety where a person is anxious about missing out on important or rewarding events that other people are experiencing. Because people want to stay connected to what their peers are doing, some advertisers have developed strategies that involve or exploit FOMO to their advantage. These methods are often used by television programs; certain types of shows that are broadcast live have begun to use a "live tweeting" system during their broadcasts, where tweets using a specific official hashtag are shown on-screen during live broadcasts.

Apart from television programs trying to promote engagement, FOMO can also be utilized with marketing in general. A study by Hodkinson (2016) looks into the appeals of FOMO for marketing purposes. In addition, an online article by Cassinelli (2020) talks about concrete ways in which FOMO can be used to benefit marketing strategies. Ways mentioned by Cassinelli (2020)

and Hodkinson (2016) include creating urgency, running campaigns for user-generated content, cultivating exclusivity, and even flipping the idea of FOMO "on its head" (Hodkinson 2016), which refers to encouraging consumers to interact with the brand managers personally without the pressure of buying products. Furthermore, an article by Hogan (2019) details various ways in which FOMO can be used for the purposes of online marketing specifically. The most obvious methods involve setting limited-time sales, using quotes from well-known topical celebrities, and utilizing user-generated content, but Hogan also mentions using "clever messaging" (Hogan 2019). Hogan's examples of clever messaging include phrases that are purely related to marketing and promotion, such as "don't miss this" or "while supplies last", but the idea can be taken even further from just advertising deals, sales and products. The Wendy's roasting trend can actually be considered an example of using clever language, but instead of using it for pure marketing, it's used for creating interest and engagement. At the time of the trend, roasting was a fairly well-known style of discourse on Twitter, so it would make sense for a company on Twitter to capitalize on the then-current trends in communication.

4 DATA AND METHODS

This chapter covers the types of data and research methods I use in the present thesis. In the first section, I go through the data I use in the present thesis. I specify my requirements and limitations for the data I choose, as well as my method of data collection. In the following section, I detail the research methods I use in my analysis of the data. I explain how I group the data, which methods of analysis I use, and the ways I use them in relation to the data. For the purposes of the present thesis and the sake of clarity, the Twitter conversations and interactions used as data for the present paper will be referred to as "exchanges" from this point onward, and the participants in these exchanges will be referred to as "actors".

4.1 Data

The data collection I use and analyze for the present thesis is comprised of thirteen Twitter exchanges comprised of multiple tweets that involve the Wendy's Twitter account and their roasting trend from 2017 (see Appendix for complete list of screenshots). These tweets were found and collected by using various online news publications about the Wendy's roasting trend. These

news articles include the previously mentioned publications by Peteraityt (2018), Travis (n.d.) and Gouldbourn (2017). These articles are often functionally archives that collect the most interesting and noteworthy roasting exchanges, and often contain links back to the original tweets on the Wendy's account. From these articles, I found original Twitter sources for tweets used in the present thesis. A majority of the full exchanges were still available fully on Twitter, including the starting messages and Wendy's responses, but three of the exchanges have had their starting tweets become unavailable. Apart from the exchange that started the trend, two of the exchanges have had their starting tweets become unavailable due to the individual users involved deleting their Twitter accounts. One exchange's starting tweet is unavailable for viewing due to the user restricting the visibility of their tweets to only their approved followers. While these full exchanges cannot viewed directly on Twitter anymore, Wendy's responses are still publicly available and viewable, and the articles that collected the exchanges had screenshots of them, so there is sufficient proof of the exchanges' existence. Unless stated otherwise, all screenshots used in the present thesis were taken by me.

Due to the fact that the roasting trend took place over three years ago, manually searching the Wendy's Twitter timeline could have led to a considerable amount of work, so I decided to use articles that list the most noteworthy exchanges in a convenient manner. These articles were also rather popular, appearing at the top of search results and quite a number of views; the previously mentioned Peteraityt's (2018) article, for example, had over 880 thousand views at the time of summer 2020. Additionally, many of them were also referenced in other articles, such as Know Your Meme's (n.d.) article about the history of the trend, so they are, to an extent and in my opinion, notable enough to be used for collecting data. Furthermore, while there are dozens of other Twitter exchanges from 2017 that are a part of the roasting trend, several of the exchanges and tweets chosen for data for the present thesis were often mentioned in more than one article or publication about the Wendy's roasting trend, so they can be considered as showcases of the most noteworthy tweets and exchanges. Furthermore, like mentioned previously, a number of the full exchanges, including exchanges that were showcased in multiple articles and sites, are no longer available on Twitter due to users deleting or restricting their accounts. While Wendy's messages are still left available of these exchanges, the starting messages can no longer be viewed on the site. However, these exchanges have been archived in their entirety on these

online news articles, so these publications were necessary for keeping a record of the full exchanges. All of the tweets used as data for the present thesis are confirmed to have been a part of the major "Wendy's roasts" phenomenon, and not just "normal" exchanges that are completely unrelated to the phenomenon. Furthermore, while the phenomenon did continue throughout 2017, and even into 2018 – albeit with gradually decreasing frequency – and even saw minor revivals with the "National Roast Day" Twitter events arranged by the Wendy's Twitter in January 2018 and 2019, I wish to focus on the phenomenon when it was at the peak of its popularity. Hence, all of the tweets used as data in the present thesis are from 2017, the time of the original trend's peak.

4.2 Research methods

The research methods used in the present thesis primarily focus on approaches related to pragmatics, mainly conversation analysis. As the present thesis focuses on analyzing asynchronous online interaction, the study primarily involves qualitative research. As Korta and Perry (2006) explain, pragmatics research focuses on "dealing with the effects of context" in relation to the use of language. In summary, the primary goal in pragmatics research is examining how context affects meaning in any given linguistic exchange. The first part of the analysis is dedicated to examining the roasting interactions in which the Wendy's account participated during the peak time period of the roasting trend, and then dividing the examined interactions into distinct groupings. The groupings are based on how the interaction started, who the participants are – for example, the Wendy's account and an individual consumer, or the Wendy's account and another brand's Twitter account – and what the main subject of the exchange is. After that, the discourse features in each group, their differences, and their similarities are analyzed in more depth.

In order to more deeply examine the exchanges and tweets, as well as the ways language is used in them, I analyze the exchanges using conversation analysis, abbreviated as CA, adapted for the purposes of online interaction analysis. Conversation analysis is introduced in detail by D'hondt, Östman, and Verschueren (2009), and is referred to as "study of talk-in-interaction" (D'hondt et al. 2009: 40). In summary, conversation analysis focuses on studying how conversations and its different variants work. On a general level, according to D'hondt et al. (2009), along with other works that talk about CA – such as the paper Peräkylä (2007) – conversation analysis is de-

scribed as "a method for investigating the structure and process of social interaction between humans" (Peräkylä 2007: 1). Specifically, conversation analysis is carried out by studying transcriptions of conversations that contain as much detail of the conversation as possible. These details, depending on the type of exchange, can include things like word stress, pauses, punctuation, the setting of the conversation, and more. As research methods related to pragmatics, such as conversation analysis, are qualitative, the analysis is done by finding recurring patterns in the conversation and its structure. Based on the patterns that are found in the conversation, researchers are able to form models and regularities out of them to answer their research questions or support their hypothesis. While conversation analysis is most often used to analyze and examine verbal, synchronous conversations, it can also be adapted for analyzing non-verbal, asynchronous exchanges, as presented by Meredith (2019). Meredith (2019) presents various research that utilize the methods of conversation analysis to analyze online interaction specifically. Meredith also presents the "core organizational features" (2019: 243) of interaction, and expresses how these features are used and can be observed in online interactions.

Firstly, turn taking, a well-known feature of verbal and synchronous interactions, is also deeply ingrained into text-based, asynchronous online interactions which are typical of Twitter and other similar social media platforms. In the context of conversation, turn taking refers to the phenomenon of conversation participants speaking one at a time in alternating turns. D'hondt, Verschueren and Östman (2009: 41) further define turn taking as "the methods by which persons concertedly manage the routine exchange of turns while minimizing gap and overlap between them". According to Meredith (2019: 243), while turn taking is present in all forms of conversation, studies that analyze online interaction have determined that there are general differences between turn taking in online interaction, in comparison to turn taking in spoken interaction. For example, those who participate in text-based online conversations cannot observe turns as they occur, unlike in spoken conversations. In such conversations, the turn is gradually built and the other participant will have to wait for the first participant to finish talking. However, in text-based interactions, a message has to first be completed in its entirety and then sent to the other participant all at once. In addition to this, the way that the participants are able to transition between one another to take turns "talking" is different from spoken interaction. In spoken interactions, the participants are able to coordinate the transition between speakers. However, in text-

based interactions, this transition cannot be coordinated in the same way, because once a message is posted, any person participating in the interaction can respond to the message with their own. (Meredith 2019: 243) The writer of the original message can also effectively self-select themselves to take the next turn by posting more than one message in succession. In summary, turn taking in online conversations have a number of attributes that makes it different from turn taking in spoken conversations. However, Meredith's (2019) examples are mostly from instant messaging applications, which are much more synchronous forms of communication than Twitter exchanges, so some factors may not apply to Twitter interactions in the same way that they apply to instant messaging and other synchronous forms of online interaction.

Following turn taking, sequence organization is also a part of online interaction that has been heavily studied in relation to coherence and "disrupted turn adjacency" (Meredith 2019: 245). Sequence organization refers to how the turns in a given conversation are organized. According to Meredith, disrupted turn adjacency refers to when "first pair-part and second pair-parts of a sequence are not adjacent but instead are interrupted by other threads of conversation" (Meredith 2019: 245). In other words, it is a phenomenon where one participant's turn is interrupted by another participant's message. Disrupted turn adjacency can occur in a number of ways and for a number of reasons in text-based online interactions according to Meredith (2019). One way in which disrupted turn adjacency occurs is when one participant's messages, discussing one subject, are interrupted by another participant's message – or messages – that are sent in the middle of the first participant's chain of messages. This is possibly the most common form of the phenomenon. However, while disrupted turn adjacency is a rather common phenomenon in online interactions on a general level, it is not very common on a platform like Twitter. While Meredith's (2019) study focuses primarily on synchronous text-based chats, such as the previously mentioned instant messaging applications, Twitter is much more asynchronous by nature. Interactions that take place on instant messaging applications have participants exchanging messages in rapid succession, but tweets that reply to one another can be several minutes, if not hours apart. Thus, disrupted turn adjacency is a much more unlikely phenomenon on Twitter.

Following sequence organization, a feature called repair also appears in online interactions, but the way it is used is different from typical verbal conversations (Meredith 2019: 248). In conversation analysis contexts, repair refers to the process of one of the participants in an interaction

correcting an error that they committed earlier in the conversation. In verbal conversation, repair usually occurs by the speaker repeating what they said, but correcting their earlier mistake. Repair can include anything from relaying additional information that the participant missed before, correcting a mispronounced or misspelled word, or replacing falsely conveyed information with the right information. Repairs can also be initiated both by the person who made the error, and by one of the other participants of the interaction. However, in online conversations, the function and position of the element of repair is different from spoken conversations (Meredith 2019: 248). In spoken conversations, repairs are done in transition spaces, but in online communications, repair is done in the next opportunity space, as there is no real transition space in text-based interactions. According to Fox, Benjamin, and Mazeland (2012), in the context of a conversation, transition spaces are understood as spaces between turns where the holder of the current turn may either continue their turn, or the holder of the next turn may initiate their turn. Conversely, opportunity spaces are presented as spaces where there is an opportunity for a repair of some form to be made. As was stated by Meredith, there are no real transition spaces in text-based online communications, as transition spaces are potential transition points between speakers and depend on the silence between two speakers in a verbal conversation. Thus, the only true opportunity space that participants of a text-based online conversation have is the next message they send. People have also developed tactics related to repair in online text conversations, such as the so-called "repair morpheme" (Meredith 2019: 249), also known as a "*-repair", where an asterisk is used to indicate the corrected version of a previously misspelled word. Meredith also highlights something called "message construction repair" (2019: 249), where one participant edits their message before sending, in cases where the other participant – or participants – first sends a message whose content would require changing the message. An example of this repair method that is shown in Meredith's (2019: 249) paper highlights a person telling a story to their friend, and the friend editing their messages before sending them as the person tells more and more of the story in each of their messages. A simpler form of message construction repair would be to check one's message and correct any spelling errors before sending it. These forms of repair are completely invisible to the recipient, and only the creator of the message knows they occurred. Thus, message construction repair is most likely not relevant to the analysis of the present study, as there is no way to know whether or not it took place. That being said, the "*-repair" can appear in Twitter communications just like it can appear in synchronous text commu-

nications. While Twitter is generally a much more asynchronous platform in terms of communication speed, users cannot edit the tweets they post, so the only widely used way to "fix" errors, apart from reposting the tweet with the error fixed, is the "*-repair". Users often use this repair method by posting a tweet with the "*-repairs" as a reply to the tweet that contains the error.

Following repair, Meredith discusses opening sequences, which, according to Meredith (2019: 251), are a facet of online text conversations that have been studied for a long time. Opening sequences refer to the sequences that initiate a conversation, and the ways in which a conversation can be initiated. Meredith highlights three different types of opening messages: standard greetings, personalized greetings, and topic initiations (Meredith 2019: 251). Standard greetings are simple greeting words like "hello" or "good morning!". Personalized greetings contain some personalized element specific to the recipient, like a nickname. An example, as presented by Meredith (2019: 251), could be something like "babe!". Topic initiations are, as their name implies, designed to start a conversation, and are usually short messages that briefly describe some recent or relevant event. An example would be something like "I bought a new bike today!". To summarize, the ways opening sequences are organized, according to Meredith, demonstrate how the action possibilities of the communication medium are important for the interactions themselves (2019: 251). For example, Meredith (2019: 251) states that factors like a lack of an identification and recognition sequence, as well as using topic initiation to start a conversation, orient towards the particular features of any given platform. Meredith also states that opening sequences can vary based on the platform or the nature of the interaction. For one, certain sequences that are normal in spoken interactions only occur in online interactions if they are necessary, either based on the available affordances or the context of the situation (Meredith 2019: 252). On Twitter, standard greetings and personalized greetings are not used often in regular tweeting. If users want to start public tweet interactions, they usually do so by asking a question that people can answer, or by tweeting about a subject about which they want to have a discussion. If someone wants to have an interaction with a specific user, they can "@ mention" the specific user's username in the tweet to get their attention and increase their chances of getting a response.

Finally following opening sequences, the feature of embodied conduct is discussed last. Embodied conduct is related to the concept of embodiment, which is defined by Nevile (2015) as the

non-verbal, bodily aspects of communication like hand gestures, gaze direction, facial expressions, and other physical movements (122). Thus, embodied conduct is, as expressed by Nevile, "the involvement of the body" (2015: 121) in a conversation or any in-person interaction. While it is clear that interactions that occur purely in text cannot involve any traditional embodied conduct, Meredith (2019: 252) states that some other studies have determined unique ways in which people on the Internet represent or replicate embodied conduct in their conversations. Examples mentioned include emoticons and emojis that work as stand-ins for facial expressions, as well as unique punctuation elements such as a double question mark at the end of a question to indicate the emotion of being surprised or incredulous. (Meredith 2019: 252) Emoji, emoticons, and various punctuation elements are frequently used on Twitter in casual interactions, so they can certainly be of relevance in the present thesis. Meredith also mentions virtual bodies and avatars, which are used as another way of compensating for the lack of proper visual and physical contact (Meredith 2019: 252). However, as Meredith (2019: 252) elaborates further, these are most often used in games, and they certainly do not appear on Twitter like they appear in virtual games. That being said, general avatars and profile pictures do help in giving the actor an identity of sorts in text-based online communications. Meredith (2019: 252) also discusses a challenge with conversation analysis research into online interactions: the increasing multimodality of said online interactions. People do not use just text, but also pictures and animated images to convey their body language and expressions (Meredith 2019: 252). After the explanations of the core features, Meredith (2019) goes on to explain more about CA and online interactions in general. For one, she explains that CA-related findings concerning spoken interaction, such as how spoken interaction is organized, could potentially be applied to the analysis of online interactions (2019: 253). This means that the general principles of conversation analysis can feasibly be used to analyze text-based online interactions. However, Meredith (2019: 253) also notes that most of the research into online interactions in relation to CA has been focusing on interactions that are based in chat room and "public forums", and less attention has been given to modern social media platforms like Twitter. Despite this lack of focused research, the general methods of conversation analysis can still be adapted to these forms of online communication.

My intention is to use conversation analysis, adapted for the analysis of online conversation as presented by Meredith (2019), to analyze the language of the exchanges, by finding patterns in the data that I collected. For the purpose of specifically analyzing text-based exchanges on the

Internet, my intention is to analyze the tweets and find recurring patterns and models by going through the core organizational features of interaction – turn taking, sequence organization, repair, opening sequences, and embodied conduct – that were listed by Meredith in her study. My goal is to find patterns by going through each feature and examining how the different features can be observed in the different tweets and exchanges. While text-based interactions do not convey factors like word stress, tone of voice, and other factors inherent to vocal conversations, people communicating online have found other ways to express their emotions and the nuances of conversation. Apart from the examples Meredith (2019) provided of embodied conduct that were presented previously, capitalization is another way among many in which people online can provide more nuance to conversations that occur in pure text.

Trester and Tannen (2013), who were also discussed in the previous chapter, also provide valuable viewpoints of examination and analysis in exploring the metamessages and conversational styles of the exchanges. As mentioned previously in the present thesis, metamessages are additional or underlying meanings of messages that are separate from the literal meanings of the words used. These messages can be a key part of different communication styles like sarcasm and "backhanded compliments", or insults disguised as compliments. This style of exploring and examining the tone of the messages comes from the direct viewpoint of new media discourse analysis, so it is a valuable method of analysis from its own standpoint. Thus, I also use the work's information and examples in my examination and analysis of the tweets.

By using the online-adapted form of conversation analysis, as well as metamessage analysis, I examine how the Wendy's Twitter account uses the language of roasting in their tweets, and how their exchanges are formed. I first examine the tone that can be found in their messages, the similarities and differences between the different types of exchanges that they have with different types of actors, and the ways that interactions of the same type differ from each other. After this initial surface examination, I examine the exchanges and the language used in them through online conversation analysis, by going through each core organizational feature one at a time and seeing how these features apply to the roasting exchanges. Following that, I examine how and for what purposes metamessages are used throughout the various tweets and exchanges. My goal is to analyze roasting – as it relates to the "Wendy's roast" trend – as a new and unique form of

discourse and online interaction which plays a strategic role in a company's marketing communications.

My research questions for the present thesis are: 1) What characterizes roasting discourse in regards to the Wendy's roasting trend? 2) What different types of interactions can be identified from their tweets and responses? 3) How can a company or a brand use this type of "roasting" discourse for marketing and self-promotion purposes, and how did Wendy's use that discourse for those purposes?

5 ANALYSIS

This chapter focuses on the analysis. The first part is an overview of the general features of the Wendy's roasting trend, and the interactions are split into different groupings based on the actors present. I present examples of each type of exchange in this section, as well as discuss some of the differences and similarities between the types and examples. The following section goes into examining the trend through the methods of conversation analysis, and the section after that studies the use of metamessages in the exchanges. Finally, the last section of this chapter summarizes the findings of the analysis.

5.1 Grouping the tweets and initial observations

This section serves as a start to the analysis process. Before the tweets and their use of language can be explored and analyzed on a deeper level, it is important to do initial observations and see what features, characteristics, similarities and differences can be immediately observed from the collected tweets. In order to better – and more clearly – analyze how the trend work on a linguistic level, I decided to differentiate between different types of interactions that can be observed involving the Wendy's account. In short, I examined the different exchanges and divided them into two main groups based on the types of actors that are present in the exchange. These actors can be either the Wendy's account, individual Twitter users, or other corporate accounts on Twitter. For the purposes of the present thesis, these groups are called the "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchanges, and the "brand-to-Wendy's" exchanges. Out of the thirteen Twitter exchanges used as data and examples for the present thesis, eleven of the exchanges are in the "consumer-to-

Wendy's" group, and two exchanges are in the "brand-to-Wendy's" group, making the "consumer-to-Wendy's" group the more numerous group overall. The "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchange group also has a notable subgroup to it, whose messages and roasts revolve around comparing Wendy's to their competitors. I provide examples of every kind of exchange type.

The "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchange group involves individual users and the Wendy's account as the central actors. The individual users typically start the exchange by tweeting something – usually directly at the Wendy's account – and Wendy's then replying to the users with their roast. The initial tweets by the users are always directed directly at the Wendy's account, and often involve comments meant to incite annoyance or anger. In summary, these interactions are a form of teasing that involves individual users deliberately trying to get themselves roasted by the Wendy's account. These types of interactions are the most common, as a majority of the more well-known examples of the trend involve these types of exchanges. One example would be a user tweeting:

(1) User: "Waiting for the @Wendys roast to happen to me"
     @Wendys: "Turn your hat around, you aren't Bart Simpson, and it isn't 1997. 😎"

The mention of the hat is in reference to the user's profile picture at the time of posting the tweet. Another example of this type of exchange would be:

(2) User: "Roast me"
     @Wendys: "Get one of your 51 followers to roast you."

However, even though these two examples are both exchanges belonging to the "consumer-to-Wendy's" group and there are a number of key similarities, such as the users' expectation to being roasted and both of the roasts referencing attributes of their Twitter profiles, there are still noticeable differences between the two exchanges. For instance, the former example does feature an @ mention of the Wendy's Twitter account, but the user is not explicitly asking to be roasted. The user is only saying that they are waiting for the roast to happen to them. On the other hand, the user in the latter example is explicitly asking to be roasted by Wendy's. Furthermore, the roasts themselves reference different attributes of the users' Twitter profiles. In the first example, Wendy's references the user's profile picture, while in the second, they reference the user's

seemingly low count of followers.

The "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchange group also has a noteworthy subgroup: exchanges in which consumers bring up or compare Wendy's to another fast food restaurant chain. By far, this type of "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchange is the most common in all of the examples that I found. The restaurant chain that is most often brought up in these exchanges is McDonald's, but some exchanges also discuss other chains like Burger King, and in one example I found, the sandwich restaurant chain Subway. The exchanges usually begin with the user making a comment about Wendy's and comparing them to McDonald's, or they direct a question related to a competing restaurant chain at the Wendy's account. Wendy's would then reply with a response related to the user or the restaurant chain being discussed. An example of this kind of exchange would be the following exchange:

(3)   *User: "McDonald's is better."*
       @Wendys: "At freezing beef.".

Another similar example would be the following exchange:

(4)   *User: "My friend wants to go to [McDonald's], what should I tell him?"*
       @Wendys: "Find new friends."

In both examples, both users are, in some way, teasing the Wendy's account with references to their direct competitor. However, there are some differences between these examples as well. For example, in the first example, the user explicitly states that McDonald's is better than Wendy's. In the second example, however, the user mentions a friend who apparently prefers McDonald's to Wendy's. Additionally, while example 3's roast is a more straightforward insult directly targeted towards McDonald's, example 4's roast is a more subtle jab at the user's supposed friend, who is implied to be not worth befriending due to their preference of McDonald's.

The second major type of exchanges, the "brand-to-Wendy's" exchange group, involves Wendy's tweeting and sending roasts to other brand accounts. The brand account that received the most roasts was McDonald's, and all of the examples used in the present thesis also feature the McDonald's Twitter account as the second actor. These interactions usually start with the other brand account posting a standalone tweet that is not related to Wendy's in any significant

way. However, later on, Wendy's posts their own reply to the first tweet that is somehow related to its message. An example of this would be the following exchange where Wendy's reacted to an announcement tweet by the official McDonald's account in the following way:

> (5)   @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."*
> @Wendys: *"So you'll still use frozen beef in MOST of your burgers in ALL of your restaurants? Asking for a friend."*

The fully capitalized word "ALL" should be noted, as it seems that Wendy's wants to emphasize it. This could be due to the Wendy's account wanting to mimic patterns of spoken language, thus writing the word in capital letters as if they were speaking the sentence out loud and emphasizing the word "all". Another example of a "brand-to-Wendy's" exchange was observed when a McDonald's Black Friday promotional message was clearly sent before it could be properly finished:

> (6)   @McDonalds: *"Black Friday **** Need copy and link****"*
> @Wendys: *"When the tweets are as broken as the ice cream machine."*

The roast here is clearly making fun of the tweet that was sent in an incomplete state. As previously stated, most of these exchanges seem to have occurred between Wendy's and McDonald's. This may be due to the fact that Wendy's and McDonald's are business rivals in real life, or it could be because users who participated in the trend themselves liked to compare the two restaurant chains frequently. While other brand accounts would participate in the roasting later on, they mostly did so during the National Roast Day events in 2018 and 2019, after the original trend's peak time period, so these exchanges cannot be included in this analysis. It is worth pointing out, however, that unlike in the exchange types where the second actor is a human user, the exchanges where another corporate account do not direct the starting tweet at Wendy's. Usually, like in the examples mentioned above, the exchanges of this type start with a tweet unrelated to Wendy's that is not directed at them in any way. Wendy's will then reply to the tweet with a tweet of their own, making an observation or comment about the initial tweet that serves as a roast to the other company or brand. These comments are usually about things and occurrences that are well-known clichés of the other company, like how the roast of Example 6 references a

common occurrence at McDonald's, namely the ice cream machines being frequently out of order.

The most common point between all the different types of tweets and interactions is the sequence, or in what order the different parts of the exchange are arranged. No matter what actor types are involved or what was discussed in the exchange, the roast by Wendy's is always at the end of the exchange. In addition, it is very rare for Wendy's to start off the interaction themselves. Either a user first tweets first with the specific intent of getting the corporate account's attention, or someone else creates a tweet, to which Wendy's later replies. Wendy's never starts the exchange themselves by tweeting at another user first. There is clear possibility for speculation as to why Wendy's never starts the roasting exchanges and only begins participating once a user has sent their initial message. For one, it could be that Wendy's only roasts those who first tweet at them to establish a sense of mutual consent. Like was previously established by Dynel (2020), roasts are traditionally understood as harmless fun by both participating parties, which means that all participating parties have to have a mutual understanding of the intent of the exchange. By sending roasts to all random Twitter users without the user first initiating the exchange, Wendy's could risk genuinely offending someone, which is why letting the user message them first is much less risky.

Another common factor of the roasts is that they are never exceedingly personal for the person roasted, at least in cases where the other actor is an individual Twitter user. For example, in the aforementioned Example 2, Wendy's replied with the roast "Get one of your 51 followers to roast you.". This is an obvious reference to the user's low number of followers, at least at the time of posting. This is a fact about the user that can be easily learned by looking over his profile, and does not say anything about the more personal parts of the user's personality or life. A similar example can be found in Example 1. As previously mentioned, the roast in this exchange refers to the user's profile picture, which featured a photo of the user wearing a cap backwards. This too is something that can be observed easily by looking at the user's profile, and does not delve into the user's personality or other more personal attributes. Furthermore, because other companies and restaurant chains are not individuals or people, they cannot be "personally" insulted. This is likely the reason why Wendy's can more freely point out real problems with the other restaurant chains, such as the fact that McDonald's' ice cream machines always seem to be

broken, or how McDonald's' Twitter announcement about their Quarter Pounder burgers having fresh beef patties in most locations by mid-2018 seems to imply that most of their burgers – considering that the Quarter Pounder is only one of the beef-containing products that the restaurant chain serves – will still serve frozen beef. Wendy's also often insults the food of their competitors in their roasts concerning them. For example, there is the following exchange:

> (7)   User: *"Hey @Wendys what's better than the new McDonald's grand mac?"*
> *@Wendys: "Every single item on our menu."*

In short, while roasts directed at individuals are often less personal and more about things that the Wendy's social media managers can easily find out from looking at their social media profile, the roasts that concern other restaurant chains and fast food companies often bring up real grievances that are well-known things among the general public, or insult the food they offer, directly or indirectly.

As for differences between the exchanges, while the roast always ends the exchange, the insult is directed differently depending on the type of exchange and the actor involved. When a competing restaurant chain is involved as another actor in the exchange, whether it be McDonald's or Burger King, the other brand is always directly roasted. This means that the roast and its insult is always directed at the other brand. However, additional differences can be observed in exchanges where the other actor is an individual user and the topic is another fast food restaurant chain. If the user only brings up the competing chain, be it McDonald's or Burger King, the roast is directed at the restaurant chain itself. An example of this would be this exchange:

> (8)   User: *"BK [Burger King] for the win"*
> *@Wendys: "what'd they win? A participation trophy?"*

Another example would be the previously mentioned Example 3, which contained a direct comparison of Wendy's to McDonald's. However, if the user discusses other people who apparently have a preference to the competitor's food, the roast is directed at the individual or individuals that are mentioned by the user. An example of this would be:

> (9)   User: *"I want Wendy's But My Girlfriend wants McDonald's what do I do"*
> *@Wendys: "There are plenty of fish in the sea"*

The roast is clearly in reference to the girlfriend that the user brought up in their initial message, and Wendy's are implying that the user should break up with her due to her preference of McDonald's.

5.2 Examination through conversation analysis

In this section of the analysis chapter, the language and structure of the exchanges are analyzed through conversation analysis adapted for online interaction analysis. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I look at my data through the core organizational features of interaction – turn taking, sequence organization, repair, opening sequence, and embodied conduct – that were presented by Meredith (2019). I go through each core organizational feature one at a time and analyze how these features appear in my collected data.

First, I examine how turn taking is performed within the trend. The way turn taking is formed in these Twitter exchanges is rather easy to observe, as the tweets come in a clear order one after another with each actor taking their turn after the previous actor has sent their tweet. Each turn usually lasts for only one tweet, after which the other actor is free to take their own turn. It is worth noting that in all of the examples that I found, after sending their message of their turn, neither of the actors participating in the exchange send another message before the other actor has sent theirs. For example, when an individual user sends a tweet directed to the Wendy's account, they will not send another message afterwards in an attempt to extend their own turn, but instead wait until the Wendy's account has sent a response to their message. This can already be seen in the exchange that worked to start the trend: the entire exchange is several messages long, but the user participating in the exchange does not attempt to self-select themselves to take over the following turn. In a similar manner, Wendy's only typically posts one message at a time and does not extend their roasts to continue in a second message. In fact, considering that all of the roasting exchanges start with the other actor making one tweet and Wendy's then replying to the tweet with their roast, both actors only take one turn in the entirety of the interaction, sending only one message for their turn.

Next, I examine the sequence organization. As mentioned previously, the exchange always starts with the non-Wendy's actor making a tweet. If the non-Wendy's actor is an individual user, the

actor is usually @ mentioning Wendy's in their tweet to get their attention. If the other actor is another corporate or brand account similar to Wendy's, like McDonald's, the tweet is not related to Wendy's at all. This is indicated by there being no @ mentioning of the Wendy's account in any of the examples, and by how the topics of the brand accounts' tweets are completely unrelated to Wendy's. Regardless of how the exchange begins, it is then continued – and ended – by the Wendy's roast message. This is a consistent organization of the sequence of the exchange that is rarely broken. However, there are a few instances where the established sequence was broken. Examples include the very first exchange, as well as Example 2, where the roast from Wendy's was followed by a response from the other actor saying "I'm going to Burger King now". This kind of exchange where the roast was followed by a reply from the first actor was rare, not only for the fact that it gained some attention on Twitter, but also in the fact that it was even featured in article outside of social media, in a manner that highlighted the response to the roast (Gouldbourn 2017). Furthermore, the very first exchange's breaking of the sequence can be explained by the fact that the organization of the sequence had not yet developed, and only formed properly when the trend was popularized. The latter example is also a very rare exception where a user posts an additional tweet after the roast and said message posted after the roast gains attention. Generally, the individual users who get roasted by Wendy's do not continue the exchanges after getting roasted. In most of the data I collected, users remained quiet and did not send any additional messages after the roast was sent.

Following sequence organization, I analyze the aspect of the opening sequence. In the trend at large, the opening sequence is never on the part of Wendy's, apart from the exchange that served as the start of the trend. In that exchange, an individual user started replying to a Wendy's tweet out of their own will and seemingly without provocation from anyone. During this exchange, the Wendy's roasting trend had not "officially" started yet, so no consistent pattern had been established, meaning this exchange is an outlier in regards the trend proper. In any case, the opening sequences are different based on the types of actors present in the exchange. Exchanges that involve individual users as the other actor are often started by one of two ways: by specifically asking to be roasted, like in Example 2, or by asking questions related to other fast food chains. Example 1 had the user only wondering when they were going to be roasted, but they also @ mentioned the Wendy's account in the tweet – which would notify the Wendy's account of the tweet – and also heavily implied they wished to be roasted.

It is also important for the sake of the analysis to examine what type is the opening sequence used in these exchanges. The opening sequences present in the trend appear to be entirely comprised of topic initiations with no exceptions, as far as can be told from my data. Considering there are no greeting words or anything similar to them, and the point is to simply start an exchange, get Wendy's attention, and give them something with which to engage them, these opening sequences are most often questions like "what should I get from McDonald's????" or "I want Wendy's But My Girlfriend wants McDonald's what do I do". Other users' opening sequences are requests to be roasted, either direct ones like "Roast me" or more indirect ones like "Waiting for the @Wendys roast to happen to me". Others are more straightforward statements like "BK [Burger King] for the win" or "McDonald's is better.". In the exchanges where the other actor is another corporate Twitter account like McDonald's, the "opening sequences" were not made with the intention of starting an exchange with Wendy's. In the McDonald's examples, the tweets were standalone promotional tweets with no mention or connection to Wendy's, such as the tweet advertising the then-upcoming fresh beef patties of the Quarter Pounder burgers, or the case of the Black Friday tweet that was posted in a clearly unfinished state. In summary, in the case of brand accounts, Wendy's would send them a roast even without being provoked to do so. However, in exchanges where the other actor is an individual user, Wendy's will only reply to their message with a roast if they send a tweet to them. These differences are the result of, in my opinion, the differences between the actor types involved in the trend. Because other companies are essentially faceless entities, Wendy's can comment on their tweets more freely and without being directly prompted. If Wendy's replied with roasts to tweets by individual people that did nothing to indicate that they were tweeting to Wendy's, they would be considered rude and attacking people online for no good reason. However, when people ask and want to be roasted, it becomes more acceptable for Wendy's to roast them.

Following from the opening sequence, I examine how repair is performed within the trend. However, repair is not present in the trend, at least not in the dozens of exchanges I was able to find and observe. For instance, Wendy's does not make typos in any of the tweets that I was able to find, and users do not attempt to use repair to correct any grammatical errors. However, in general terms, Twitter does not allow users to edit their tweets, so if they make a mistake, they will have to fix it with another tweet or delete the tweet with the mistake and post a new, corrected

tweet in its place. Individual users do not try to do repair either – even when their tweets contain incorrect spelling or punctuation errors – and other corporate accounts similar to Wendy's that participated in the trend also have fairly well-written tweets with no typos. Like I stated earlier, individual users that participated in the trend often do not use proper punctuation. For example, a number of people do not use apostrophes in words like "McDonald's" that need them. However, these users do not seem to correct their mistakes at any point, not by using "*-repair" in a later tweet or otherwise. In this instance, it is important to ask why this is the case. There is one likely reason for why the individual users did not fix the typos and other errors that they made in their tweets: they saw no need to do such repairs. Because individual Twitter users are rather lax about making typos or making punctuation errors, it is likely they view it as a more casual social media platform for more casual interactions, instead of a more official type of platform made for more serious interactions. Indeed, according to an article by Cooper (2019), sharing content, watching videos, and viewing photos – all rather casual ways to use a platform and spend one's time – are one of the top reasons people use Twitter. Thus, individual users do not often mind typos or punctuation errors in their messages, as the platform is mostly used for more casual interactions – at least when they occur between two individual people – and thus, there is no pressure to do things like follow English grammar and punctuation rules perfectly. On that note, some of Wendy's roasts do not follow proper grammar rules, either. Sometimes sentences aren't started with a capital letter, like in example 8 where Wendy's response did not start with a properly capitalized letter. On other occasions, they do not add a period at the end of a sentence, like in the previously presented Example 9:

(9)   User: "I want Wendy's But My Girlfriend wants McDonald's what do I do"
        @Wendys: "There are plenty of fish in the sea"

As can be observed, no period was present at the end of the sentence that is Wendy's response to the user. Considering these "mistakes" were never fixed – or that no attempt to fix them was made – these occasional grammar errors were most likely intentional on Wendy's part, but this raises the question of why these grammar "errors" were made in the first place. These mistakes were probably added in to emulate a more casual writing style that is more often seen from individual users and less often from corporate accounts.

Following repair, I examine how embodied conduct is represented in the trends and its tweets.

While using one's physical body gestures to convey more emotion is frankly impossible in Twitter exchanges, most Wendy's and individual users have found ways to convey more emotion in their messages; Wendy's occasionally uses words whose letters are fully capitalized in their roasts, like in the previously mentioned example 5 where the word "ALL" is fully capitalized. This kind of typing quirk is most likely symbolic of the word being stressed if the sentence was being spoken out loud. In addition to these typing quirks, individual users sending messages to Wendy's occasionally use emoji in their tweets; for example, there is the following exchange which is also shown in Figure 3:

(10)   User: "what should I get from McDonald's????🤔"
        @Wendys: "Directions to the nearest Wendy's"

The user's initial message is accompanied by an emoji depicting a face with a hand on the jaw and a puzzled expression, as also shown in Figure 3. This emoji is better known as the "thinking" emoji, as is used to convey a certain kind of "thinking" gesture or body language on the actor's part. Another user, when responding to the roast they received from Wendy's, started the tweet by including three of the same emoji, featuring an expression with wide eyes and blushing cheeks, as also shown in Figure 4. Said emoji is used to express embarrassment or bashfulness. In other words, individual users use emoji in their tweets to convey emotions, facial expressions and occasionally, even body language through text-based communication, as stated by Meredith (2019: 252).

· 3. tammik. 2017

@Wendys what should I get from McDonald's????🤔

3   ♺ 37   ♡ 38   ⬆

Wendy's ✔
@Wendys

Vastauksena käyttäjälle

Directions to the nearest Wendy's

Käännä twiitti
9.36 ip. · 3. tammik. 2017 · TweetDeck

200 uudelleentwiittausta   **640** tykkäystä
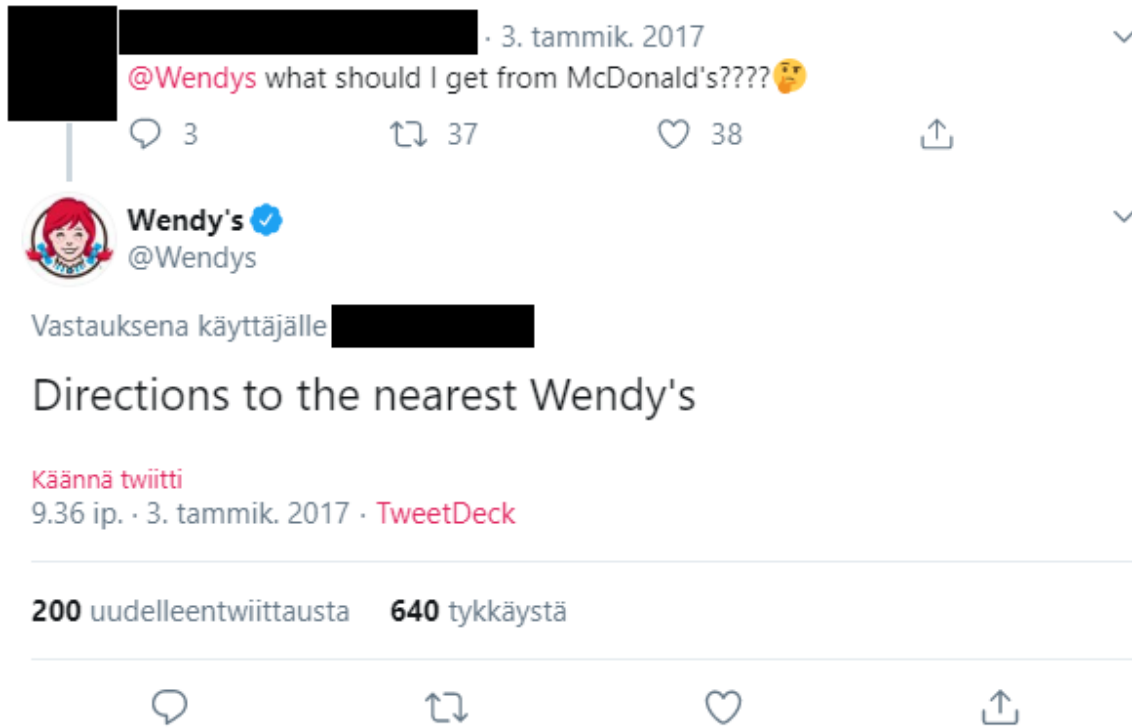
Fig 3. An example of the use of emoji in an opening sequence.

· 3. tammik. 2017

@Wendys Roast me

3   ♺ 1 t.   ♡ 1,1 t.   ⬆

Wendy's ✔ @Wendys · 3. tammik. 2017
Get one of your 51 followers to roast you.

67   ♺ 5,3 t.   ♡ 12,2 t.   ⬆

Vastauksena käyttäjälle @Wendys

😳😳😳 I'm going to @BurgerKing now

6.46 ip. · 3. tammik. 2017 · Twitter for iPhone

538 uudelleentwiittausta   **1,1 t.** tykkäystä

Fig 4. An example of the use of emoji in a response.

Wendy's also use emoji in some their messages, but not nearly as frequently as individual users. The only notable example I was able to find was the exchange of Example 1; as can also be seen in Figure 5, the end of the roasting tweet features one emoji of a smiling face wearing sunglasses. As this emoji is somewhat more abstract in its expression of emotion, it could express things like confidence, smugness, or even mockery, as the user's profile picture at the time also showed them wearing sunglasses in addition to the backwards cap. However, as I stated earlier, this example was the only notable one that I could find where the Wendy's Twitter used an emoji in their roasts. The reason as to why they do not use emoji in the same frequency as individual users could be the desire to preserve some kind of sense of being official and professional. Alternatively, the lack of emoji could be a way to enforce a lack of playfulness or a more serious attitude in terms of the roasts; if Wendy's used emoji more frequently in their roasts, they could come off as more playful and joking. The general lack of them, however, makes them seem less like they are simply joking around and more serious about their comments.

Fig 5. An example of Wendy's using an emoji in one of their tweets.

There were also other observations that I made that do not concern the aforementioned organizational features specifically, but are still important to the analysis and were not mentioned or discovered previously in earlier parts. For instance, when it comes to interacting with other brand and corporate accounts in roasting contexts, Wendy's only engages with other fast food restaurant chains. They do not seem to spontaneously engage in exchanges with companies from other types of business, such as snack brands or general food companies, at least not for roasting purposes. There could be many reasons for this, but the most likely reason for them only roasting other restaurant chain accounts is the ease of communication derived from being in the same type of business. Thus, Wendy's can use the shortcomings of their competitors in the roasts to bring out the other chains' bad parts and highlight their own good features.

An example of bringing out these good features via roasts can actually be found in another exchange, where a user tweeting to Wendy's asked in reference to their square burgers:

> (11)   User: "Why's your beef square?"
>   @Wendys: "Because we don't cut corners"

This is not only a rather amusing pun, but also a roast that references other restaurant chains, like McDonald's or Burger King, in general. Of course, the message is not explicitly a comment about other chains, but with the context of Wendy's being confrontational and a fast food restaurant chain similar to the aforementioned businesses, it is easy to draw conclusions about the context. "To cut corners" is an idiom that refers to doing things "in the easiest, cheapest, or fastest way" (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.).With a message like that, it implies that while Wendy's does not cut corners – meaning that they put time, money and effort into their services – other restaurant chains do cut corners. Of course, while other restaurant chains may have high standards of product quality and work, the general public cannot fully know what happens behind the scenes. However, because the message is presented in such a fun – and very bluntly outspoken – manner, it makes it easier for people to be convinced that Wendy's does more work and puts more effort into their products than other chains. They also sound more convincing when making comments like this about other chains, as they work in the same line of business and thus have immediately more credibility.

5.3 Examination through metamessages

In this section, I analyze the tweets from the perspective of metamessages, as presented by Trester and Tannen (2013). As explained earlier in the present thesis, metamessages, according to Tannen and Trester (2013), are additional or underlying meanings of messages that are separate from the literal meanings of the words that are actually used. Metamessages are also described as "indications of how speakers intend what they say and what they are trying to do by saying [certain] words in [a certain] way in [a certain] context" (Tanned and Trester 2013: 99). In other words, metamessages and their meaning within different types of messages depend on the context in which certain words of phrases are used. For this section, I first go through examples of the use of metamessages that can be observed from the various tweets in the trend, and then I explore how the metamessage viewpoint relates to the conversation analysis portion of the analysis.

Firstly, certain tweets, especially the roasts by Wendy's, contain metamessages that are concealed within the text through the clever use of language. The presence of metamessages is fairly prominent; of the thirteen roasting exchanges used as data for the present thesis, at least seven of them have a roast that can be classified as including a metamessage. To give a concrete example, example 2 where Wendy's tweeted "Get one of your 51 followers to roast you." is an example of a roasting message that contains a metamessage in one way or another. Wendy's is, on the surface, only telling the user to ask for one of his 51 followers to roast him in Wendy's stead, but the comment is actually an observation of and a jab at the user's low follower count. The way the roasting message tells the user to go looking for attention from his relatively small group of followers instead of Wendy's is a subtle implication that the user is not worth Wendy's time due to his very small following, and should instead seek attention from their small follower base. As for another example, there is the previously mentioned exchange where, after an individual user stated that his girlfriend wanted to eat McDonald's over Wendy's, the Wendy's account replied with a tweet saying "There are plenty of fish in the sea". On the surface, this message is fairly innocent, but it references a saying that is used to describe how after a breakup, a person is always able to find a new romantic partner, as their previous partner is not the only metaphorical fish in the sea. Thus, the tweet carries a metamessage that suggests the user should find a new girlfriend to replace his current one, as his current girlfriend prefers one of Wendy's competitors to them. One more additional example comes from the previously mentioned exchange where

Wendy's replied "Because we don't cut corners" when they were asked "Why's your beef square?" by an individual user. As mentioned previously, while the roasting message contains no reference to other fast food restaurant chains, there is a pre-existing context that makes people think that the comment is not just a pun, but also a roast directed at other restaurant chains. For one, Wendy's is not only a restaurant chain that serves similar services and food items to other popular chains, but they had already previously engaged with McDonald's for roasting purposes. The aforementioned exchange occurred on December 18, 2017, but Wendy's had already roasted McDonald's directly on two separate occasions in March and November. Thus, there was enough context for people to assume that Wendy's was commenting on other restaurant chains.

Another example of the use of metamessages – as well as playing with the message's context – within the roasting trend comes from the following exchange:

(12)   User: "what is subway good at?"
        @Wendys: "underground transportation"

The user was most certainly referring to Subway, the American sandwich restaurant chain. However, Wendy's replied to the user with a reference to subways, the underground train transportation systems. This rather unusual roast is, in fact, a pun and a metamessage that takes advantage of the context of the situation. It is very clear that the user who tweeted to Wendy's is referring to the restaurant chain who is one of Wendy's rivals in the fast food business. However, they clearly ignore this obvious context and refer to a subway in its traditional meaning, a form of transportation. This message is not only a clever pun, but also contains a metamessage; it implies that Subway the restaurant chain is less valuable or has less good merits about it than subway the transportation method. Without the context of Wendy's being a restaurant chain themselves, the message could be taken as is at face value, but with the context present, the implications of the message change entirely. In addition to this, however, Wendy's also seemingly ignores or stays oblivious to this obvious context. Of course, it is unlikely that Wendy's are actually ignorant of Subway's existence as a restaurant chain, but by ignoring this obvious fact and making a comment about subways instead, they play or pretend to be ignorant of the restaurant chain to make it seem like they are too insignificant for Wendy's to have even heard about their existence. Thus, it is a good example of a metamessage being context-sensitive, and also an example of Wendy's

playing around with the context to create an interesting message with multiple layers of interpretation.

However, Wendy's is not the only actor who uses metamessages in their tweets. Individual users sending tweets to Wendy's also use metamessages to some extent. One example of this is the previously mentioned example 1. On the surface, the user is simply wondering whether or not they will be roasted by Wendy's at some point. However, considering that they "@ mentioned" Wendy's in the tweet, as well as the wording they used, there is a clear metamessage present: they wanted to be roasted. Wendy's Twitter username would not have been @ mentioned in the tweet if the user did not want them to see their message, and the way they worded the message implies that they expected – or even wanted – the roast to happen to them at some point, to the point that they were even waiting for it to happen. In short, while metamessages are used mostly in the roasts within the trend, it can also be used among the individual users who post tweets at Wendy's.

To expand on the metamessage viewpoint, sarcasm can be considered a type of discourse or a way to use language that relies heavily on the utilization of metamessages. YourDictionary (n.d) defines sarcasm as "an ironic or satirical remark tempered by humor". In general, it is used to state the opposite of what is actually true or factual to make fun of something or someone, often in a manner that is mean-tempered or even insulting. This makes it a good kind of language to use in roasts. One example of sarcasm within the roasting trend lies in the original trend-starting exchange. Wendy's functionally ends the exchange with the comment "You don't have to bring them [McDonald's] into this just because you forgot refrigerators existed for a second there.", after the user they were engaging with sent a tweet saying "y'all should give up. @McDonalds got you guys beat with the dope ass breakfast". Wendy's response is, on one hand, a slight jab at McDonald's, but also an indirect insult towards the user's intelligence, as they seemed to have forgotten that refrigerators are a way to store beef in a fresh state without having to freeze it. As was stated previously in the present paper, this exchange started because the user thought Wendy's was lying about how they only serve non-frozen beef, and decided to challenge them on said statement. The sarcasm of the insult lies in the fact that McDonald's does, in fact, freeze their beef, and also from the fact that the user seemingly forgot about refrigerators at the beginning of the exchange. However, after Wendy's pointed out in another message that there are

methods of storing things cold without freezing them, the user seemed to drop the argument about freezers entirely, instead continuing by bringing McDonald's into the conversation. Because the user seemingly switched the subject due to being embarrassed, Wendy's decided to point out their gap in logic by reminding them of their mistake in the roast message, which was the opposite of what they most likely wanted. By reminding them of their stupidity when the user was trying to avoid it, Wendy's brings ironic and satirical attention to them.

Another roast that contains an example of a use of metamessages in the form of sarcasm can be found in the following exchange:

> (13)   User: "Wendy's needs to get rid of the square burger it seems a little too… artificial"
>   @Wendys: "Unlike the super natural circle shape that hamburgers come in when you pick them off the vine."

This particular comment about Wendy's is relevant to them on a special level, because their square-shaped burgers are what differentiates them from most other burger restaurant chains. The sarcasm in the roast stems from the fact that burgers are, by nature, artificial products prepared by people that cannot be found in nature. In short, Wendy's is mocking the user's faulty logic about burgers. Burgers are, by their very nature, not "natural" products, as they require many man hours and extensive processing of the base ingredients to create the buns, patty, sauces, as well as the other potential relishes and add-ons. In short, calling square burgers "artificial" is illogical, as all burgers are artificial.

In summary, the use of metamessages is central to the trend, especially in the humorous aspects of the roasts. Because the humor contained within sarcasm uses metamessages in a certain way, and because sarcasm is a type of humor meant to mock the recipient of the joke in some manner, it is a perfect type of humor to use with roasts. It can be used to, for example, point out the faults in the other's actor's logic like in the "square burgers seem little too artificial" exchange, mock certain aspects about them, and so on. However, the sarcasm never gets too personal, as was established earlier with the general nature of the roasting trend. By keeping the sarcastic comments relevant and clever with their observations, but not too personal, the roasts remain enjoyable not only for the people observing the trend, but also the users to get roasted. In addition to this, creating roasts with additional, hidden messages is more interesting than just calling people stupid or

mocking then openly. By using metamessages and sarcasm in the ways detailed in this section, the roasts become more interesting for everyone reading them, and are also less directly hurtful than direct insults. In short, the roasting experience becomes more fun and more interesting for all of the parties involved, from the actors participating in the exchange to the observers reading them.

There is also the point of how the metamessage viewpoint relates to the findings of the conversation analysis section. The use of these subtly hidden additional messages mostly lightly relates to the final roasting model; specifically, the use of metamessages mostly applies to the roasts. Using these messages can add a more complex linguistic flare to the messages themselves. While functionally, using metamessages in the form of jokes and sarcasm is not strictly necessary in order to communicate the message they want to convey, it is important to remember that humor is a central part of the roasting trend. There is a point to be made about how Wendy's seemingly wants to make the trend appealing to the so-called audience of Twitter users – as well as the internet at large – and for that purpose, adding some kind of humor or interesting linguistic structures to the messages makes them more fun for those reading them and slightly less harsh for those who receive them. Of course, one could argue that using metamessages in the form of sarcasm may actually lead to the actual message being unclear or muddled. After all, it cannot be guaranteed that everyone reading the text will understand the underlying, "hidden" meaning. For example, considering one of the earlier examples in the use of metamessages, Wendy's comment about Subway in example 10 could be misunderstood by someone who does not have a good understanding of sarcasm. After all, sarcasm is about understanding the context of the comment and playing around with it. Someone may think that Wendy's missed the point of the message that the user who asked about Wendy's opinion on Subway wrote. Alternatively, they may miss the reference to the other restaurant chain entirely if they only saw the entire exchange as a reference to the mode of transportation. That being said, however, all of this can potentially contribute to the trend itself. The Wendy's roasting trend, and roasting in general, was and is fundamentally about making confrontational comments about people and their mistaken or faulty logic or questions. Thus, if someone does not understand the roast directed at them, it can become a further point of roasting for the community to use at large. So, further mocking the individuals who did not understand the sarcasm or other jokes using hidden messages would be, in a way, within the spirit of the trend.

5.4 Analysis summaries

To end the analysis chapter, I conclude the examination of the data by summarizing the findings of the analysis in its entirety. Firstly, there were a number of consistent patterns that could be found in all of the different tweets and exchange types. For instance, the opening sequence is always on the behalf of the non-Wendy's actor participating in the exchange. Apart from the exchange that served as the starting point of the trend, the Wendy's brand account never starts any of the exchanges that lead to a roast. They instead respond to tweets that are created by individual users or other brand accounts with roasts. Leading off from this, the sequence organization is also a consistent pattern. There is a tweet that starts the roasting exchange, which is followed by the Wendy's roast that also always ends the exchange. This sequence is rarely, if ever, broken, and Wendy's themselves stick to it very closely. After posting a roast, they do not participate in the exchange again with any further message. Occasionally, interactions involving individual users are followed up by a comment by the poster of the original message, such as the comment where the user told they were going to Burger King, but these "post-roast" comments are a very rare occurrence and can be considered to be separate messages, and perhaps even not a part of the roasting exchange itself. Turn taking is also very orderly and rigidly organized, in that both actors send one message per turn and do not rush to extend their turn with another tweet.

Secondly, there were a number of elements that remained as consistent occurrences in the different tweets involving different actor types, as well the different exchange types. Starting from tweets involving different actor types, in the "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchange group, the opening sequence is always a topic initiation despite that the main topic of the initiation is. Other fast food restaurant chains, especially those who are well known in the United States, are brought up the most in these opening sequences, mostly comparing Wendy's to these other restaurant chains or asking Wendy's questions about the other chains. The most likely reason for this fact is that they are an easy subject to bring up to Wendy's, considering they are a fast food restaurant chain as well. Thus, opening the exchange with a comment about one of their competitors has been as the best way to grab Wendy's attention and the most consistent way to get a response from them. In exchanges where the other actor is another brand account similar to Wendy's, like McDonald's, the opening sequence could be classified as a topic initiation in most cases. They're often things like promotions of a new special offer or announcements of a renewal of a service or

product, like when McDonald's announced in a tweet that "by mid-2018, all Quarter Pounder burgers at the majority of [their] restaurants will be cooked with fresh beef". However, what makes these messages fundamentally different from the opening sequences of individuals is that these sequences are meant to be just standalone messages, not sequences whose purposes are to start an exchange with Wendy's. In fact, the examples I mentioned earlier are very clearly not related to Wendy's in any way, but Wendy's has still replied to these tweets to add their own comment in the form of a roast towards the other brand.

There are also clear common elements within both of the major exchange groups. Within the "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchange group, the most common way to start an exchange is with a question. Questions like "My friend wants to go to McDonalds, what should I tell him?", and "what should I get from McDonald's????" are extremely common within the trend. The reason for this could be that asking a question is seen as the most efficient way to successfully start an exchange. A question, by its very definition, is meant to be answered, so it is likely that this is the reason that people use them to start the exchange. Another point worthy of note is that, like mentioned earlier, the most common subject for these messages – and thus, the exchanges themselves – is comparisons to and questions about rivaling fast food restaurant chains. McDonald's is by far the most frequently mentioned restaurant chain, but other similar companies like Burger King and even Subway are also mentioned in these exchanges with varying frequency. While simple statements about the superiority of the rivaling chain, for example, "BK for the win", can be found fairly easily, the vast majority of exchanges where the other actor refers to another restaurant has their message framed as a question. Users ask about what to get from McDonald's, what another restaurant chain may be doing well, or advice on what to do when a friend or a significant other wants to eat at a rivaling restaurant chain. As mentioned briefly previously, users referencing Wendy's competitors directly to them can be seen as a form of teasing, but having the references to other restaurant chains be formatted as questions makes them seem fundamentally different than direct statements about how another restaurant chain is superior to Wendy's in some fashion. When these references are written in the form of questions, the actor and their comment comes off as more sincerely curious than outright teasing. Of course, when one thinks about it further, these are all "teasing" messages all meant to illicit a response in the same way as the more direct statements. However, by framing the reference as a question or about another

person that is not the user themselves, they can attempt to shift the target of the roast to be someone else, whether it be the competing restaurant chain or the other person they mention. In the exchanges of the "brand-to-Wendy's" group, the aforementioned fact that the "opening sequence" is unrelated to Wendy's is still the biggest defining factor of these exchanges. The examples used in the present thesis were all promotional or informational messages, informing consumers of things like future plans for their products or upcoming campaigns – despite the fact that the message meant to inform users about an upcoming Black Friday campaign was clearly posted in an unfinished state.

Moving on from similarities, there were also patterns and elements that were different between the exchange types. The first, and fairly obvious, difference between the exchange groups is the different actors present in the different exchange groups. In the "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchange group, the actors present in the exchange are an individual user and the Wendy's account, and the actors present in the "brand-to-Wendy's" group are Wendy's and another corporate account. Leading off from this first obvious difference, the differences in actors in the exchange types lead to more differences. For instance, in "brand-to-Wendy's" exchanges, the so-called "opening sequence" to which Wendy's replies is not a true opening sequence meant to initiate an exchange with the Wendy's account. Rather, they are unrelated messages of which Wendy's takes advantage. In "consumer-to-Wendy's" interactions, there is always a proper opening sequence that is posted by the individual user. The type of the opening sequence is a topic initiation, usually formatted as a question or statement about Wendy's or one of their competitors. Another difference leading from the differences in actors is the level of the insults in Wendy's roasts. When the actor being roasted is an individual, the insult is never too personal. Rather, the roast will touch upon something that a Wendy's social media manager can easily find out by looking at the user's Twitter profile, or something they stated in their opening sequence. However, when the other actor is another brand account, such as McDonald's, the roasts are more often proper insults, usually attacking the food being served at the other restaurant chain, or point out actual issues with the other brand, like how McDonald's can never seem to have working ice cream machines in most of their locations. These differences are by and large due to the differences between the actor types. Roasts directed at individuals are less "truly" personal and more often concern aspects of the person that the Wendy's social media managers can easily find out from looking at the users' social media profiles. The roasts that concern other restaurant chains

and fast food companies, however, can be used to bring up real grievances that are well-known things among the general public, or criticize the food they offer, because corporate entities are non-human existences that can be talked about more harshly.

Finally, as is typically done with conversation analysis, the patterns and consistencies found within the analyzed conversations are turned into models that can be used to describe these patterns in a consistent manner. In short, it is possible to form "a model of roasting", based on the information gathered and analyzed in the present thesis. This model involves a two-step core process: the opening sequence, written and posted by the non-Wendy's actor, and the roast sequence, posted by Wendy's as a response to the opening sequence. This basic model has two separate variations based on the actor types be present in the roasting exchange. For exchanges in the "consumer-to-Wendy's" group, the basic two-step process' opening sequence is aimed at Wendy's directly, usually "@ mentioning" the account's name within the message to make sure the brand managers see the message. As for exchanges in the "brand-to-Wendy's" group, the opening sequence is not directed at or directly involved with the Wendy's account in any way. Wendy's simply uses the message to formulate a humorous response intended to mock the other brand. However, the other brand account also cannot be completely unrelated to Wendy's or their type of business; engaging only with other fast food restaurant chain accounts is the most reasonable, as they are not only working in the same business as Wendy's, but are often direct competitors to Wendy's, so they are able to have an opportunity to point out issues with the other chains and highlight their own good sides.

The use of metamessages is also significant within the roasting trend, especially for its humor. While individual users are capable of using metamessages in their initial tweets, it is Wendy's who takes advantage of these messages in most cases, mostly for the benefit of their roasting messages. Thus, in terms of the "model of roasting", metamessages are often involved with the roast portion of the model. Metamessages are used by Wendy's to add an additional layer of meaning and interpretation to their roasts, and they often take advantage of the context to make sarcastic jokes and other kinds of humorous remarks. The use of metamessages and sarcasm is highly dependent on the context surrounding the messages, and Wendy's most likely recognize this. Even if some people do not understand the full context of these metamessages, it could still be considered to be within the trend's spirit to mock individuals who do not understand the

metamessages in the roasts.

To end the entire analysis chapter of the present thesis, I need to discuss the ways that the findings provide answers to the research questions presented earlier in the present thesis. The questions were: 1) What characterizes roasting discourse in regards to the Wendy's roasting trend? 2) What different types of interactions can be identified from their tweets and responses? 3) How can a company or a brand use this type of "roasting" discourse for marketing and self-promotion purposes, and how did Wendy's use that discourse for those purposes? First, roasting discourse, on its most general level, works by having one user making a comment of any kind about anything, to which another user makes a follow-up comment. This follow-up comment, also called a roast, is usually mean, rude, or confrontational, or more usually all at once. It is used to either directly mock the person who made the comment, or their faulty logic. In the case of the Wendy's roasting trend, the Wendy's Twitter account never initiates the exchanges, instead waiting for users to send a tweet to them first and then replying with a roasting tweet. The target of the roast changes with the subject and topic of the initial message; if the initial message mentions a competing fast food restaurant chain, a person who prefers one, or is from a competing chain's account, the target of the roast is either the competing chain or the person who supposedly prefers the competitor. In other cases, the topic of the roast is usually the poster of the initial tweet themselves.

Secondly, I was able to discover two types of interactions from the various roasting exchanges: the "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchanges, and the "brand-to-Wendy's" exchanges. These exchange groups are defined by the actors participating in them, and the participating actors further influence the ways in which the exchanges take shape. For one, while the roasting messages in the "brand-to-Wendy's" group are either genuine criticisms or open mockery of the other brand, the roasts in the "consumer-to-Wendy's" group concern surface-level attributes of the actor, whenever the topic of the roast is the user themselves. While non-human entities like brands and companies can be mocked without any particular person's feelings getting hurt, genuinely making fun of human users could lead to misinterpretations and bad press, so it is likely best for Wendy's to only roast surface-level attributes of the users. Furthermore, looking up more personal details on the users would take too much time from the social media managers, so using surface-level information can also be a time-saving strategy.

Finally, Wendy's was able to use roasting discourse to their advantage and gain more attention on social media. While it would be difficult to properly examine how the trend affected the Wendy's accounts follower count, engagement rates, and other factors, it is undeniable that the trend received great attention online. Within Twitter itself, many of the roasting messages received great attention in the form of up to hundreds of likes and retweets. Some exchanges received even more attention, with the roasting tweet of example 2 receiving over twelve thousand likes and five thousand retweets by late 2019. Outside of Twitter, writers for online news outlets and blogging sites, such as Covucci and Cooper would write multiple articles about the Wendy's roasting trend, occasionally detailing the circumstances behind the trend's origins, but more often showcasing the most notable or most popular roasts in their articles. This kind of increased media attention would undoubtedly lead to Internet users becoming informed about and interested in the trend, further leading to increased participation of Twitter.

6 DISCUSSION

This section discusses the Wendy's roasting trend and the findings of the previous analysis further. Perspectives related to the previous research presented earlier in the present thesis, as well as how the media reacted to and discussed the Wendy's roasting trend, are also discussed here.

As was previously stated in the introduction of the present thesis, Wendy's is a large restaurant chain with locations all over the United States, with a handful of more locations in certain other countries. While their brand may not be as globally recognized as a brand like McDonald's, they are still a well-known brand, especially in North America. However, thanks to the Wendy's roasting trend, the company and its associated brand gained notable attention on a global level. While Wendy's often compared themselves to their competitors and talked about themselves as the most desirable choice in fast food, the trend was seemingly never about promoting or attempting to sell a new service or product. While it cannot be definitively determined why the trend continued from the initial exchange, the trend continued likely due to Wendy's wanting to gain more attention towards their Twitter account, as well as to gain more credibility among younger Twitter users. By engaging users in a way that was most likely very different from most

other brands on social media, they were able to gain more followers, attention, and credibility on social media.

While it would be impossible to determine the full impact of the roasting trend to the Wendy's brand image, roasting has certainly become a part of the brand. The more casual nature of the roasting became a part of the brand's consumer communications on social media. Roasting certainly existed as a phenomenon before Wendy's used it on social media, but they made it something with which their social media branding could be associated, even after the trend's peak ended. In the years after the roasting trend had died down on their Twitter account, Wendy's would arrange "National Roast Day" in both 2018 and 2019. This, and the fact that both of these events ended up being reasonably popular – with the National Roast Day tweet of 2019 getting over 19,000 replies, over 7,000 retweets, and almost 60,000 likes (@Wendys 2020) – demonstrate that individual users continue to have interest in the Wendy's roasting trend. In terms of Wendy's brand identity, the entirety of the roasting phenomenon certainly affected the way in which Wendy's handles its social media communications with consumers. While the general visual identity of the brand has not been affected by the roasting trend, as it has no particularly substantial relation to the verbal and written communication of the brand, the proliferation of the roasting trend led to more relaxed use of language in online consumer communications, as well as consumer promotion, for Wendy's in general, especially on Twitter where the trend primarily took place. The language of their tweets is noticeably relaxed; words like "ya" instead of you and "'em" instead of "them" are commonly found in their messages. In fact, their general use of language on Twitter appears to indicate that their tweets are meant to be interpreted as written talk. There is also a notable presence of emoji in their messages. While not every tweet that they make includes an emoji of some kind, they are still littered across a number of their tweets.

The Wendy's brand image also experienced a degree of humanization. As the official Wendy's mascot – and Twitter profile picture – is an illustration of a girl with pigtails, it was most likely much easier to think of the "Wendy's brand" as a single, individual "human" with a social media account. This humanization even led to the creation of fan art of the Wendy's mascot, as detailed by Cooper (2017). As the interactions in which Wendy's participated on Twitter became much more personal and unlike how most brands would usually communicate with consumers on social media, users on Twitter and other social media sites began to view Wendy's as more like a

person or a personality than a sterile brand. In addition to their general use of language, Wendy's was able to appear like an individual due to their mascot and visual brand identity; because of that factor regarding their brand in particular, the new brand story ended up being as successful it was. In short, this new kind of narrative for the brand on social media led to a more "human" outlook on the Wendy's brand as a whole, as consumers saw how humanly the account interacted with people who interacted with it. This aspect reached a point where it led to the creation of fan art of the Wendy's mascot, a young girl with her red hair in pigtails, as a sharp-tongued, "sassy" adult woman who was the one behind the roasting messages. This version of the character, according to the online wiki site Know Your Meme and an article by Cooper (2017), is called "Smug Wendy's" and is also referred to as a "smug anime girl" (Cooper 2017) due to the style of the majority of the fan art out there being reminiscent of anime, or cartoon-like art styles. This specific personification of the Wendy's mascot is a key part of the roasting trend and reflects online users' perception of the brand.

Due to the proliferation and popularity of the roasting trend, Wendy's also managed to foster a large community online, which formed not around consuming Wendy's products, but enjoying the roasts on twitter. Of course, some people stated they would go to Wendy's when the trend first started, with comments like "I am going to Wendy's because of these tweets", "who runs this account yall are legends im finna eat wendys everyday from now on", and "I am making it a point to visit one of your locations next time I get back to the US because of this. Just want you to know that." in the responses to the original roasting exchange from January 2017, as showcased by Covucci (2017). However, most of the comment were about the roast or compliments to Wendy's about the roasts, like "I thought Ronda Rousey was going to be the only person I saw get beat this hard this week. I was wrong. Well done Wendy's.", or shorter, simpler comments such as "LMAO nice one"., as also showcased by Covucci (2017). Individuals on Twitter, as well as other social media platforms, would share the roasts amongst each other and discuss them, as well as Wendy's itself. The reason this online community formed primarily around the roasts could be due to the fact that Wendy's do not have locations as globally as other similar restaurant chains, such as McDonald's. So, while some people who saw the roasts on Twitter would not be able to support Wendy's by going to eat at one of their restaurants, they could show their love for the brand on Twitter and other social media sites where the trend was discussed.

Furthermore, the Wendy's roasting trend can see viewed as a marketing tactic that was possible thanks to the nature of Web 2.0. Content creation and online communication are easier than ever before, and boundaries between consumer and brand have become less strict with the advent of modern social media platforms. As was previously discussed by Beaulieu et al. (2015), increased interactivity and impact on real-life businesses are key parts of the Web 2.0 environment as a whole. Thus, the birth of a marketing phenomenon like the Wendy's roasting trend, where the central focus was in consumers interacting directly with the brand on social media, was all but inevitable. Engagement is also very central to the trend. In the context of Twitter, engagement refers to when users interact with another account's tweets, be it by replying to the account's tweets, retweeting the tweets onward to one's own account, or simply liking them. Even mentioning an account in a tweet and clicking the links on a certain account's tweets count as engagement within the mechanics of Twitter (TweetBinder n.d.). Higher rates of engagement lead to an account, the account's tweets, and any hashtags they use, to be promoted more on the site. Nonetheless, the concept of engagement was involved at the very core of the roasting trend, with consumers tweeting directly at the Wendy's account using the "@ mentioning" feature in the hopes of being noticed, and then hopefully getting a reply from the account in the form of a roast. Seeing the ways in which people were roasted by Wendy's also could have brought more engagement to the account, as people saw how clever and snappy the account's managers were with their responses. This led to the users wanting to be roasted themselves, or simply wanting to share the ways Wendy's roasted other users, leading to increased engagement. While Wendy's Twitter analytics are not publicly available, it is fair to assume that the high amount of users interacting with Wendy's led to more engagement towards their account, and thus more attention towards the roasting trend. Not only that, most of the roasting tweets themselves have high like and retweet counts, some tweets receiving "only" hundreds of then, and some tweets even thousands of then. For example, a certain Wendy's roasting tweet, presented earlier in the present thesis as a part of Example 5, has received over 65,000 retweets and over 170,000 likes. These numbers are a fairly clear sign of increased engagement.

6.1 Examining the findings through previous research

In this section, I examine the findings and how they relate to the research and studies presented in the previous research section of the theoretical framework chapter.

First, the patterns seen in the roasting trend and the similarities of both exchange groups are clear and even organized to a degree. Each actor's turn is only one tweet long, Wendy's never starts the sequence, and mocking competing fast food restaurant chains is a fairly common topic in both exchange groups. Apart from these points, and the others discussed in the analysis summaries, more similarities between the two exchange types can be found if Wendy's use of language is examined more closely. As mentioned in the conversation analysis portion, Wendy's is quite relaxed with their use of language and grammar within their roasts. They occasionally leave out periods from the ends of sentences or do not start their sentences with a capitalized letter, and they have even used emoji in their roasting messages. These kinds of behaviors are linked to the points about online discourse imitating spoken language as discussed by Beaulieu et al. (2015). Wendy's use of language also relates to other points made by them, and the points concerning embodied conduct in Meredith's (2019) paper. The emoji and the occasional writing of words in all capital letters are all done to imitate the effects of a face-to-face conversation. In general, Wendy's tone of language in their roasts is fundamentally the same in both exchange groups: while punctuation "mistakes" are more common in the roasts directed towards consumers, the general tone of language – as well as the contents of their messages – is relaxed and very unofficial. This similarity is simple and can even be overlooked, but a degree of consistency in the general tone is important. If the differences in tone were too great between the two exchange groups, people could have thought that Wendy's was not willing to properly roast everyone in equal measure, which could have led to criticism.

In regards to the differences between the different exchange groups, there are a number of them, as discussed in the analysis summaries. Most importantly, however, there were clear tone differences in the different exchange types' roasts. With "consumer-to-Wendy's" roasts, the roasts that are targeted at the users themselves often utilize superficial information, such as follower counts and profile pictures. With "brand-to-Wendy's" roasts, the roasts are often harsher and are occasionally based on actual criticisms towards the other brands. Additionally, while it is not a difference between the two exchange groups, the roasts in the "consumer-to-Wendy's" group seem to target competing restaurant chains whenever Wendy's get the chance, such as when the user asks about another chain. In the analysis summaries, I concluded that the tone differences are most likely due to the differences between the actor types – with individual consumers, it is easier to

simply make roasts about surface-level attributes that can easily be found on their Twitter pro-
file, and other fast food companies can be criticized more harshly due to their non-human status
– but there could also be other reasons for this tone difference that could be interpreted from
looking at previous works of research. For instance, Zappavigna's (2012) work, which discusses
the use of social media discourse, mentions how Twitter seemingly presents microblogging as a
tool for creating a personal branding (Zappavigna 2012: 31). Of course, both individuals and
companies are encouraged join Twitter and the conversations on it, so companies and brands,
too, can use the platform for their own purposes. The reason for the clear tone differences in the
roasts between the two types could be Wendy's intent to create a certain kind of branding for
themselves, at least on social media or just Twitter. If the tones of the roasts between the two
groups had been just as equally similar, Wendy's could have been considered to be just unneces-
sarily rude.

Another possible reason for the differences in the tones of the roasts can be discovered by look-
ing into the concepts of brand authenticity and immersion, as they were presented by Behrer and
van den Bergh (2016). According to the authors, brand authenticity is the process of "being of an
established authority or being genuine, not corrupted from the original, or truthfulness of ori-
gins" (Behrer and van den Bergh 2016: 103). In short, a brand that is authentic – or appears au-
thentic – is truthful and honest in everything they do. Authenticity can be established in multiple
ways, usually through the ways in which a brand is advertised to consumers, but consumer com-
munications are also an important part of the concept. Thus, the difference in tone may partially
be the result of wanting to establish perceived brand authenticity. By criticizing other brands
more genuinely, Wendy's could have been aiming to create the image of a brand that is brutally
honest and not afraid to express even harsh opinions. However, even if they can state actual criti-
cisms about other brands, they cannot genuinely criticize or insult their consumers. For one, if
Twitter users had received genuine insults and actual harsh roasts from Wendy's, they would not
have received the roasting trend so positively. Secondly, like mentioned previously in the analy-
sis, creating more genuine, personal insults would take up too much time and resources from the
social media managers, which would have led to too much work for the sake of one social media
event.

Another difference that was mentioned earlier in this chapter was Wendy's more relaxed use of

punctuation in "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchanges. As mentioned before, while the overall tone of the language of the roasts between the two exchange types is the same, "consumer-to-Wendy's" roasts are more likely to have punctuation "mistakes", whether it be a lacking period at the end of a sentence or sentences not being started with a capital letter. As mentioned Beaulieu et al. (2015), people who engage in certain forms of online discourse often use a number of tricks to emulate spoken language. These tricks include the use of fully capitalized words to emulate either word stress or yelling, and emoticons and emoji to express emotions and expressions. The reason the aforementioned punctuation mistakes are more common in interactions with consumers could be that Wendy's wants to emulate more human-like communication with their individual human consumers. While it is important to keep the same general tone in language with both exchange types, individual users in particular are more likely to receive the more relaxed style positively, especially considering that individual Twitter users tend to use the platform for more relaxed purposes like watching videos and sharing photos. Since the main uses for the site among individuals are very non-official and focused on free-time fun, there is no pressure for any one individual just using Twitter for fun to use strict, official language in their communications on the platform, either. Thus, it could be that Wendy's is trying to appeal to human users by not being extremely strict about punctuation when communicating with them. Conversely, communicating with other brands potentially would still necessitate a certain level of official or "formal" language, despite the rather informal tone and content of the messages themselves. Of course, the content of the message and their tone is still not formal, but it could be that a certain level of good grammar was deemed necessary when interacting with other brand accounts.

Finally, the "model of roasting" presented at the end of the analysis summaries can also be expanded by looking at previous research. As previously explained, the structural model of roasting is a two-step process consisting of the initial message and its following roast. Dynel's paper (2020) states that only a part of the "roasts" found in Wendy's Twitter responses are true roasts. Because Dynel uses a rather traditional definition of roasting, which defines it as "creative jocular insults […] that rest on benign humorous disparagement, for the sake of collective humour experience" (2020: 4), only 46 percent of Dynel's (2020) data could be considered traditional roasts. While all of the different types of humorous responses are considered as roasts metapragmatical sense, only under half of the responses Dynel (2020) studied fit the traditional definition of roasting. While a great number of the data that Dynel (2020) uses is outside of the time frame

of the original trend, these distinctions between the different types of responses could still be applied to the exchanges from the roasting trend's time period, and thus, into the model of roasting.

As shown in Dynel's (2020) paper, responses that are classified as retorts make up roughly 48 percent of the collected data, while responses classified as jibes take up three percent of the data. Retorts are responses that reply to a message in a sharp, angry, or witty manner, while jibes are messages that taunt others, typically other companies in Wendy's case (Dynel 2020: 6). The remaining three percent of data is classified as "residue" (Dynel 2020: 6), which are defined as messages that do not show any humorous content or witty language. When looking at data of the present thesis from this point of view, it becomes clear that many of the "roasts" are, in fact, retorts rather than roasts as they are traditionally defined. In fact, from the twelve exchanges used as data in the present thesis, at least three of Wendy's responses could be classified more fittingly as retorts rather than as "proper" roasts. Furthermore, the "brand-to-Wendy's" exchanges, namely Examples 5 and 6, and also some "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchanges that mention competing restaurant chains, like Example 7, could be classified better as jibes. These messages could be easily interpreted as taunts directed towards the other brands. Additionally, some roasts, such as the one in Example 3, could be categorized as "residue", because it is a very clear statement with no apparent witty tricks of language. This goes to show that while all of Wendy's responses are considered to be roasts within the "metapragmatical" considerations of roasting, these messages often do not fit into the "traditional" definition of roasting. Nonetheless, these observations could also indicate that the definitions of what a "roast" is are expanding in the eyes of the general public.

In terms of the model of roasting, these observations can help expand the second step of the model, namely the roast. It is clear that roasts come in many different forms and styles, andsome messages that are considered to be roasts do not fit the traditional definition of the interaction style. Nonetheless, the online news sources that presented these tweets and exchanges classify Wendy's closing messages as roasts. It is worth noting, however, that there is still an underlying mutual agreement with the interactions, at least in the "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchange group. As Dynel (2020: 4) puts it, the intent of roasting is clear to all participants, so there is an underlying mutual agreement between the two actors of the exchange to roast and to be roasted. Of

course, it is highly likely that an agreement like that was never in the "brand-to-Wendy's" exchanges, but in the "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchanges, it is certainly present, because no user is roasted unless they send a tweet at Wendy's first. This serves as a form of underlying mutual agreement, and it is important for the model of roasting, especially for the "consumer-to-Wendy's" group.

FOMO theory can also be applied to the model of roasting. While the model primarily describes the structural aspects of the roasting exchanges, it is also comprised of the aspects that encourage Twitter users to participate in it. These aspects are especially important to the "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchange group, as it is the significantly more common exchange type, and is also highly dependent on Twitter users actively wanting to participate. Thus, another important part of the model involves encouraging Twitter users to participate into the trend. This is where FOMO theory becomes involved. Because FOMO is a phenomenon concerning the desire to stay involved with topical events with one's peers, it is also important to the Wendy's roasting trend, which became undeniably popular. According to by Cassinelli (2020), Hogan (2019), and Hodkinson (2016), FOMO can be used for marketing and promotion in multiple different ways. As a specific example, Hogan discusses the uses of "clever messaging" in his article. Examples used in the article include obviously marketing-centric lines such as "don't miss this" or "while supplies last". However, in the case of the roasting trend, this idea has been taken even further. While there is no product on sale in the case of the roasting trend, there is the idea of engaging in a topical phenomenon and potentially gaining social media attention from one's participation. Thus, the way FOMO theory contributes to the model of roasting is through exposing Twitter users to the roasting tweets. By sharing the roasts and roasting exchanges on Twitter, either through the retweet function or by posting screenshots, users are exposing more and more people to the trend, raising its popularity and topical status, and making more and more people interested in participating in it. This makes FOMO a crucial part in the roasting model's aspect that concerns encouraging users to participate in the trend. Even the online news articles made of the trend during the trend's main time period could have contributed to the FOMO effect. When Internet users saw the various exchanges and the way other users interacted with the Wendy's account, many of them possibly began to want to join in on the trend.

Another way for Wendy's to encourage participation can be found in the paper by Gensler et al.

(2013). As was previously explained, the authors discuss brand stories and how consumers shape and participate in them. As they explain, brands can even become a "source of group identification" (Gensler et al. 2013: 244). When consumers feel that they can identify with the brand and its story in some way, they will feel more attached to it, and could even form massive communities around the brand itself. One way a brand can increase their relatability is to change the way they communicate with consumers. By adopting a form of discourse that is popular with social media users, they could attempt to connect with these users better than if they used more neutral forms of discourse to promote their brand. Thus, it is reasonable to say that a part of the consumer-attracting side of the roasting model also involves some of these tactics that increase the approachability and relatability of a brand.

In addition, the "conceptual framework" of the impact of social media on brand management presented by Gensler et al. (2013), as well as the information it provides, can also provide new viewpoints to the model of roasting and its participation-encouraging factors. As explained earlier in the present paper, the conceptual model was created to explain the ways in which brands' own brand stories are expanded upon by the consumers' personal stories and experiences of the brand. These consumer-generated stories can be told through many possible channels, and can either add to the intended meaning of the story or create entirely new meanings. With the advent of modern social media platforms that allow people to post about their experiences and tell their stories with great ease, consumers are now able to share their experiences with brands and companies easily and to a much wider audience than ever before. Furthermore, Zappavigna's (2011) study discusses how modern social media platforms, Twitter included, are built around findability and searchable talk, two concepts that revolve around users being able to easily find discussions of certain topics. Users are also actively encouraged to participate in conversations, like Zappavigna mentions in her other paper (2012). According to the paper, Twitter has encouraged people to join the sites with catchphrases like "follow the conversations" (2012: 30). Thus, because Twitter is an environment that encourages people to participate in topical conversations and which allows users to find the conversations easily, something like the Wendy's roasting trend would be highly likely to succeed. When seeing the roast and roasting exchanges, people share them and have discussions about them, which will lead to more people looking up the trend and participating in it, which will lead to more sharing and conversation. Thus, searchable talk

and findability are important concepts for the sake of the model of roasting and its parts that explain the proliferation of the trend and its rise in popularity.

Lastly, the metamessage use within the trend is also worth further discussion. As stated in the analysis summaries, metamessages are primarily used for the sake of the humorous aspects of the trend, being mainly used within the roasts. Thus, in terms of the model of roasting, metamessages are mainly a part of the second step. In the work by Trester and Tannen (2013), where metamessages are introduced, the authors discuss real-life instances of metamessage use, particularly how something that is typically perceived as an aggressive act can also be interpreted as a playful act, as long as the right metamessage is applied (Tannen and Trester 2013: 101). In the analysis, I examined the use of metamessages from the viewpoint of sarcasm and jokes, but the aforementioned viewpoint is also important. Throughout the entire trend itself, individuals are receiving harsh, rude comments from a brand account on Twitter, but there is some type of metamessage present that allows every participant to interpret the situation as it was intended: as something mutual and fun. As was mentioned by Dynel, (2020), the traditional practice of roasting involves an underlying agreement that any insult told in a roast is a jocular one, and that it is done simply for the sake of the humor experience. However, this underlying assumption itself is a metamessage and very similar to the example provided by Trester and Tannen (2013). As was also mentioned in Dynel's (2020) paper, roasting and other jocular insult practices are common in the Unites States where Wendy's originates, so this fact is at least a part of the reason why users were able to understand the intent of the trend. While it would be impossible to find out the nationalities of all users who participated in the roasting trend, it is likely that at least a great deal of them were American, as Wendy's is primarily an American chain, and its Twitter account advertises to American consumers. Another reason for people understanding the intent behind the trend could be the popularity of roasting during the 2010's. While roasting as an online practice has existed since the 2000's, it saw a rise in popularity on social media, particularly on sites like Twitter, during the 2010's. Of course, while the initial exchange was possibly meant to exist as a standalone interaction with no continuation, the fact that there was a notable positive response meant that Wendy's became willing to continue the practice far beyond the initial exchange. Even after this initial exchange, the popularity of roasting at the time, as well as the cultural precedent that Americans had, allowed users to interpret the intent of the exchanges easily.

7 CONCLUSION

The present thesis has aimed to study the online interactions the Wendy's roasting phenomenon, as well as the discourse structure of roasting in relation to the phenomenon. The goal has been to study how roasting as a form of discourse works on a general level, how Wendy's used the discourse in the Wendy's roasting trend, and how they used roasting language to gain themselves positive attention on social media. I analyzed the trend's discourse structure from the viewpoint of conversation analysis and metamessages. I also discussed the trend from the viewpoint of marketing and social media use, as well as how the trend was discussed in the media and how the findings of the analysis relate to the previous research presented in the background chapter.

The research questions for the present thesis were: 1) What characterizes roasting discourse in regards to the Wendy's roasting trend? 2) What different types of interactions can be identified from their tweets and responses? 3) How can a company or a brand use this type of "roasting" discourse for marketing and self-promotion purposes, and how did Wendy's use that discourse for those purposes? As stated at the end of the analysis summaries, roasting discourse, on its most general level, works by having one user making a comment of any kind about anything, to which another user makes a follow-up comment. This follow-up comment, a roast, replies to the initial comment in a rude and even insulting manner, or in other words, roasting the other user. It is used to either directly mock the person who made the comment, their mistaken logic, or some other aspect of their initial message. With the Wendy's roasting trend, the target of the roast varies depending on the topic of the interaction. If a competing restaurant chain is brought up at any point by the initiator of the exchange, the target of the roast was the mentioned competing chain. Otherwise, the target of the roast was usually the person who initiated the exchange. Furthermore, becoming overly personal with the roasts would cost too much time for the brand managers – as they would have to spend time looking up information about every person that they roast – and it can also be viewed as actually insulting, rude, and even bad handling of consumer communications instead of being seen as playful engagement with the consumer base on Twitter. There are two major types of exchanges, the "consumer-to-Wendy's" group and the "brand-to-Wendy's" group. These groups are characterized by the participating actors, and the "consumers-to-Wendy's" group is more numerous than the "brand-to-Wendy's" group. Finally, Wendy's

used roasting discourse to their advantage in order to gain more attention on social media. While it would be difficult to see how the trend affected the Wendy's accounts follower count and other factors, it is undeniable that the trend received great attention online. Within Twitter itself, many of the roasting messages hundreds of likes and retweets, with the roasting messages of Example 2 receiving over twelve thousand likes and five thousand retweets. Other roasting tweets showcased in the present thesis would also consistently receive up to hundreds of likes and retweets. Outside of Twitter, writers for online news outlets and blogging sites, such as Covucci (2017) and Cooper (2017) would write multiple articles about the Wendy's roasting trend, often showcasing the most notable or most popular roasts in their articles. This increased media attention lead to Internet users becoming informed about and interested in the trend, leading to further participation of Twitter.

The findings of the analysis and the further interpretations of the discussion chapter helped me chart how roasting discourse works and how Wendy's took advantage of it. Thanks to the conversation analysis, I found many patterns and common points, but also differences, in the roasts and roasting exchanges that contribute to the exchanges and their tone. As stated, there are two major groups of roasting exchange within the trend: the "consumer-to-Wendy's" group and the "brand-to-Wendy's" group. Both of these groups are defined by the participating actors and have some overarching similarities, but also have notable differences. While the structure of the exchanges and the general tone of language are the same in both exchange groups, the roasts of the "consumer-to-Wendy's" group are often about superficial qualities of the actor that can be easily discovered by observing their public Twitter profile, or about a competing restaurant chain if one was mentioned in the initial message. Conversely, the roasts in the "brand-to-Wendy's" group are proper critiques or open mockery of the competing brand. Furthermore, while "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchanges start from messages directed fully towards Wendy's written by individuals, "brand-to-Wendy's" exchanges often start from messages written by other brand accounts that are completely unrelated to and unattached from Wendy's. I also analyzed the roasting trend's use of metamessages, and discovered that metamessages are an important part of the humor of the trend – in the roasts, to be precise – in the form of sarcasm and multilayered jokes. They can also be found in individual users' messages to Wendy's, but their role in said messages is much more minor. At the end of the analysis summaries, I was able to present a "model of roasting", a model based on my findings that presents how these interactions are formed and how the model

can differ based on the participating actors.

In the discussion chapter, I examined the connections of the findings to the previous research, which allowed me to reinterpret the findings and expand upon them. The first topic was the tone of Wendy's language and their use of punctuation. The more relaxed use of punctuation – the lack of periods and capital letters – was more common in the "consumer-to-Wendy's" exchange group, but the general tone of the language was the same across both exchange groups. There was also a noticeable attempt to emulate spoken speech in the messages of both exchange groups. This similar tone of language present in both exchange groups could be a conscious effort to maintain consistency, which is potentially a very important factor in trying to establish a sense of authenticity. I also discussed further possible reasons for the linguistic differences between the two exchange groups. Because Wendy's messages in the "brand-to-Wendy's" exchange group uses proper punctuation more often than the messages in the "consumer-to-Wendy's group", there could be a slightly elevated sense of formality when interacting with other brands and companies. The differences cannot be too great, however, as Wendy's could then be criticized for preferential treatment or something in a similar vein. Furthermore, the differences in the tones of the roasts between the two groups could also be due to an aim for authenticity. Genuinely criticizing other fast food companies through their roasts is seen as brutally honest and "sassy", but genuinely pointing out the personal flaws in the individual consumers would most likely not have been taken positively.

Finally, I was also able to expand upon the model of roasting. The model does not just concern the structure of the roasting exchanges, but also the aspects of the phenomenon that attract other Twitter users to participate in it. These aspects are related to concepts like FOMO theory, group identification with brands, and Twitter's "searchable talk" and "findability"-centric models as a social media platform. The roasts themselves can also be divided into multiple different types, which are all metapragmatically classified as roasts, but are still different types of messages. These "roasts" can be traditional roasts as defined by Dynel (2020) in her paper, retorts, jibes, or even "residue" that does not have any kind of clever linguistic tricks or witty messages. Finally, I discussed metamessages as they relate to the roasting phenomenon as a whole. Metamessages are not just a part of the humor of the roasts, but also contribute to the trend as a whole. It is thanks to the presence of metamessages in the culture surrounding the roasting trend – both in real life

and on Twitter at the time – that social media users were able to correctly interpret the trend as humorous fun and not Wendy's attacking their consumers on social media.

In my own opinion, the present study and my efforts with it succeeded fairly well and with consistency. I feel that I succeeded in the conversation analysis portion and the discussion chapter, especially the parts regarding metamessages and Dynel's paper. While conversation analysis is primarily designed to study and analyze verbal, in-person conversations, the method was best suited to be used in the analysis of the roasting trend in my opinion. After all, roasting fundamentally occurs during interactions between two or more people, and is thus a form of conversation. The metamessages portion of the analysis was also, in my opinion, a good addition to the overall examination of the roasting language. It helped me understand some of the details of the humor of the trend and the ways that roasts can potentially be formed.

While I believe that I succeeded in many aspects on the present thesis, I also faced some challenges. In my opinion, finding previous research that were relevant enough for the topic of the study was particularly difficult. While online marketing and social media communications have been studied fairly well, the topic of the present thesis concerns a rather unusual social media phenomenon, and a style of online discourse – roasting – that has not been studied in great detail before. Despite one study having been published about the Wendy's Twitter roasting phenomenon after the writing of the present thesis had begun, its research topic was quite different from the topic of the present thesis, and the author also focused on data from outside of the main trend's time period, which meant that some of the points made in said study would not be usable in the present one, because the context and data were different from the context and data of the present thesis. Due to these difficulties, it was occasionally difficult to properly connect the previous research works to the data and the findings.

As for how this research could be continued on from here, further analysis and investigation could be done into how these roasting models could be adapted to work in casual contexts that do not involve brand accounts, but individual people roasting each other. The model of roasting formed in the present thesis was formed on the basis of a brand interacting with human users and other brand accounts, and thus cannot be properly used to analyze roasting interactions that take place between individual users. Thus, the next step in the research on this topic could be the

analysis of roasting discourse as it occurs purely between individual people on social media. Other similar social media trends that are related to brand or corporate accounts could also be investigated from the viewpoints that were presented in the present thesis. In general, the viewpoints and knowledge that were gathered and discussed in the present thesis could be used to further discuss or analyze modern social media marketing phenomena that involve an attempt from the brand to appear more appealing to users by presenting themselves in a new manner by using new, atypical forms of discourse.

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APPENDIX

1. The first part of the exchange that started the Wendy's roasting trend. Screenshot retrieved from the article by Covucci (2017).

2. The second part of the exchange that started the Wendy's roasting trend. Screenshot retrieved from the article by Covucci (2017).

3. Example 1. Source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/816362961367351296
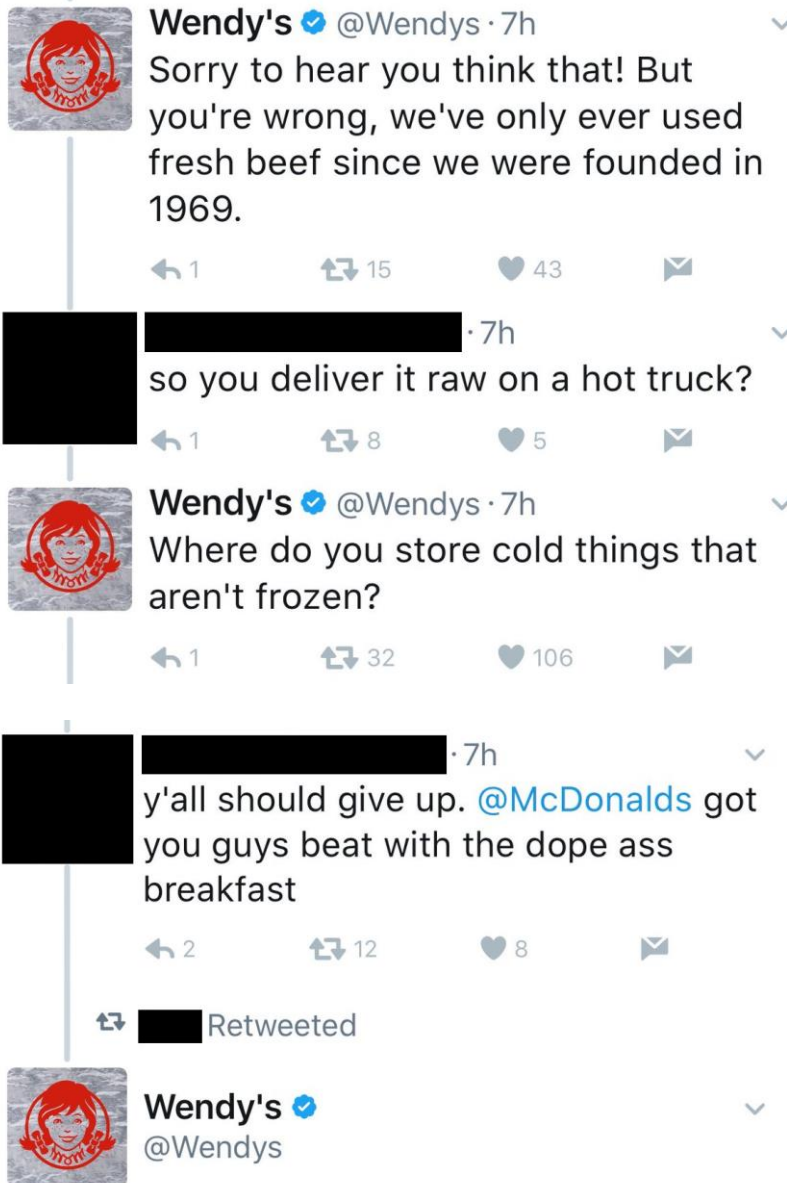
· 3. tammik. 2017

Waiting for the @Wendys roast to happen to me

💬 1   🔁 11   ♡ 25

Wendy's ✓
@Wendys

Vastauksena käyttäjälle

Turn your hat around, you aren't Bart Simpson, and it isn't 1997. 😎

Käännä twiitti
9.17 ip. · 3. tammik. 2017 · TweetDeck

106 uudelleentwiittausta   **472** tykkäystä

💬   🔁   ♡   ⬆️

4. Example 2. Source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/816324550703120384

· 3. tammik. 2017

@Wendys Roast me

💬 3   🔁 1 t.   ♡ 1,1 t.

Wendy's ✓ @Wendys · 3. tammik. 2017
Get one of your 51 followers to roast you.

💬 67   🔁 5,3 t.   ♡ 12,2 t.

Vastauksena käyttäjälle @Wendys

😳😳😳 I'm going to @BurgerKing now

6.46 ip. · 3. tammik. 2017 · Twitter for iPhone

538 uudelleentwiittausta   **1,1 t.** tykkäystä

💬   🔁   ♡   ⬆️

5. Example 3. Source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/942844199778553857

Wendy's ☑ @Wendys · 18. jouluk. 2017

At freezing beef.

> ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ · 18. jouluk. 2017
>
> @Wendys McDonald's is better.
>
> Näytä tämä ketju

💬 1,4 t.   ⟲ 15,3 t.   ♡ 96 t.   ⬆

6. Example 4. Source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/816385338545504256

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ · 3. tammik. 2017

@Wendys My friend wants to go McDonalds, what should I tell him?

💬 1   ⟲ 21   ♡ 17   ⬆

Wendy's ☑
@Wendys

Vastauksena käyttäjälle ▮▮▮▮▮

Find new friends.

10.46 ip. · 3. tammik. 2017 · TweetDeck

48 uudelleentwiittausta   **168** tykkäystä

💬   ⟲   ♡   ⬆

7. Example 5. Source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/847478772311834626

McDonald's ✔ @McDonalds · 30. maalisk. 2017

Today we've announced that by mid-2018, all Quarter Pounder burgers at the majority of our restaurants will be cooked with fresh beef.

0:08   2,6 milj. katselua

♡ 1,1 t.   ⟲ 5,3 t.   ♡ 7,5 t.   ⬆

Wendy's ✔
@Wendys

Vastauksena käyttäjälle @McDonalds

.@McDonalds So you'll still use frozen beef in MOST of your burgers in ALL of your restaurants? Asking for a friend.

Käännä twiitti
7.00 ip. · 30. maalisk. 2017 · Twitter Web Client

65,9 t. uudelleentwiittausta   170 t. tykkäystä

♡   ⟲   ♡   ⬆

8. Example 6. Source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/934104301210828806

Wendy's ✓
@Wendys

When the tweets are as broken as the ice cream machine.

Käännä twiitti

> ⓜ **McDonald's Corporation** ✓ @McDonaldsCorp · 24. marrask. 2017
> Black Friday **** Need copy and link****
> Näytä tämä ketju

6.59 ip. · 24. marrask. 2017 · Twitter Web Client

251,7 t. Uudelleentwiittausta   **715,2 t.** Tykkäykset

9. Example 7. Screenshot of full exchange retrieved from an article by user name Mattstaff on the Cheezburger website (n.d.). Wendy's tweet source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/835171974318022657

Hey @Wendys what's better than the new McDonald's grand mac?

🔁 1   ↩ 1   ♥ 1

Wendy's ✓
@Wendys

Following

▇▇▇▇▇ Every single item on our menu.

RETWEETS LIKES
3   18

10:58 AM - 24 Feb 2017

↩ 1   🔁 3   ♥ 18

10. Example 8. Source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/816652201749843968

· 4. tammik. 2017

@Wendys BK for the win

💬 2   🔁 13   ♡ 16   ⬆️

Wendy's ✓
@Wendys

Vastauksena käyttäjälle ▆▆▆▆▆

what'd they win? A participation trophy?

Käännä twiitti
4.27 ip. · 4. tammik. 2017 · Twitter for iPhone

228 uudelleentwiittausta   **867** tykkäystä

💬   🔁   ♡   ⬆️

11. Example 9. Source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/942845124597477379

· 18. jouluk. 2017

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

💬 4   🔁 26   ♡ 147   ⬆️

Wendy's ✓
@Wendys

Vastauksena käyttäjälle ▆▆▆▆

There are plenty of fish in the sea

Käännä twiitti
9.52 ip. · 18. jouluk. 2017 · Twitter Web Client

124 Uudelleentwiittausta   **2,2 t.** Tykkäykset

12. Example 10. Source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/816367736163024896

· 3. tammik. 2017

@Wendys what should I get from McDonald's????🤔

💬 3   🔁 37   ♡ 38

Wendy's ✔
@Wendys

Vastauksena käyttäjälle

Directions to the nearest Wendy's

Käännä twiitti
9.36 ip. · 3. tammik. 2017 · TweetDeck

200 uudelleentwiittausta   **640** tykkäystä

💬   🔁   ♡   ↑

13. Example 11. Source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/973215329705963520

· 12. maalisk. 2018

Why do you have square burger patties?

💬 3   🔁 8   ♡ 46

Wendy's ✔
@Wendys

Vastauksena käyttäjälle

Because we don't cut corners

Käännä twiitti

5.13 ip. · 12. maalisk. 2018 · Twitter Web Client

14. Example 12. Screenshot of full exchange retrieved from article by Peteraityt (2018). Wendy's tweet source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/942844406629101569

15. Example 13. Screenshot of full exchange retrieved from article by Travis (n.d.). Wendy's tweet source: https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/935988247012036609