Competing Smartphone brands: Understanding brand rivalry between two brand communities.

by

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This thesis is an investigation of brand rivalry between two competing brands. The number of Smartphone users in Canada is rising and is not expected to slow anytime soon. Two major Smartphone brands have emerged as competing brands in this product category: Samsung and Apple. When two strong companies emerge brand rivalry can manifest. Brand rivalry seems to be under studied in the consumer behaviour literature, yet is common amongst consumers. Current literature pertaining to brand rivalry focuses primarily on the ‘dark’ side of this concept, mainly oppositional brand loyalty and brand rivalry. Utilizing focus groups, this study gains a more holistic view of the interaction between opposite brand community members. The findings extend the existing literature by offering evidence of the ‘lighter’ side to brand rivalry.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Competition within a given product line is inevitable within the consumer goods sector. For instance, within the Smartphone market, consumers are driven to two distinct brands: Apple and Samsung. While there are other competitors within the telecommunication market, it appears these brands are struggling to maintain a competitive advantage compared to Apple and Samsung. Globally, Apple and Samsung’s smart phones have 24% and 33% of the market respectively. The Canadian Smartphone market almost mirrors these global statistics. Canadians have been described as one of the most predominate users of the Smartphone in the world (QMI Agency, 2011). Nearly half of Canadian Smartphone users are between the ages of 18 and 34. With the majority of these consumers using either an Apple or a Samsung, there is bound to be some competition between the consumers.

When two brands are competing it is possible consumers may pick ‘sides’. For instance in the cola wars, many consumers have picked either Pepsi or Coca Cola. Research on Pepsi and Coca Cola indicated consumers express their passion for their brand and dislike for the competition (Muniz & Hamer, 2001). Consumers help drive rivalry between the two brands.

Usually, it is the consumers who are very loyal, committed, or devoted to their brand who communicate their opinions about their brand and the opposition. Knowingly or not, these consumers can belong to brand communities. Brand communities are groups of devout brand users who have a passion for the brand and other users of the brand. While not intentionally becoming a member of the brand community, consumers can be considered a member if they express their loyalty to the brand and other users. One way
brand community members express their loyalty is through communicating their passion for their brand of choice; they may also express their dislike for the competing brand (Muniz & Hamer, 2001). The same thoughts can be applied to Apple and Samsung. With two brands dominating the market as strongly as Apple and Samsung, there are consumers who belong to each of these brand communities. Furthermore, these members are expressing and communicating their thoughts regarding their brand and the competition.

Oppositional brand loyalty as discussed by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) is a way brand community members express their loyalty to their brand community. Brand communities can do this by not using the brand or communicating their opposition (Muniz & Hamer, 2001). This can be done through pictures, text, etc. Similar to oppositional brand loyalty is brand rivalry. Brand rivalry is the interplay between the two competing brand communities.

When reflecting on Apple and Samsung, the rivalry between these two companies is obvious. For instance, news article headlines articulate the escalating rivalry between Samsung and Apple (International Business Times, 2011; Forbs, 2012). Two colloquial questions emerged from reflecting on brand rivalry. When consumers are discussing Apple and Samsung, how are opposing brand communities communicating to one another and what are they communicating to one another?

Current literature on brand rivalry has addressed brand rivalry from the dark side (Muniz & Hamer, 2001; Ewing, Wagstaff & Powell, 2013). This literature focuses on the opposing communication between brand communities. Research relative to brand rivalry investigated the opposing dialogue. Hickman and Ward (2007) labeled this dialogue as
trash talking. This is the derogating or expressing of dislike for the competing brand. Muniz and Hamer (2001) found when studying Pepsi and Coca Cola usenet groups rivalry manifested as playful rivals. Ewing et al. (2013) examined two competing car companies via social media websites and forms. Their findings expanded previous research as the authors described the nature of the opposing dialogue between these opposing brand communities as humour, epithets, ridicule, and extreme hostility.

The aim of this research study is to examine brand rivalry phenomenon in real world context. Thus, this research study observes brand rivalry phenomenon between Apple and Samsung users through the use of focus groups. Overall, this research study extends the existing brand rivalry concept through examining the phenomenon beyond the oppositional vantage point.

The objective of this research is to extend the existing concept of brand rivalry by offering additional understanding through examining dialogue employed by competing brand communities. The research context is the brand rivalry context of Smartphone users.

In order to examine the research objective highlighted above, this research addresses the following questions:

1. How do the brand communities communicate to other brand communities?
2. What are they communicating?
3. Do conversations manifest as humour, epithets, ridicule, and hostility (Ewing, Wagstaff & Powell, 2013)?
4. Do brand members communicate their oppositional brand loyalty as “I” or “we”? 
This research exercises grounded theory approach. This approach “assumes the researcher will identify a primary theoretical code or a central/core category that has been emergently developed through data analysis” (Saldana, 2011, p. 27). Grounded theory uses open coding in order to generate theory (Richards & Morse, 2013). Thus, drawing on the data collected through netnography and focus groups, conceptual understanding regarding the rivalry behaviour between brand communities will be extended.

The first stage of this research is exploratory in nature. In order to accomplish this, netnography was employed. Netnography is an adaptation of the ethnographic approach; this methodology is a computer mediated observation-based procedure that makes conclusions based on the data collected (Kozinets, 2010). Following Kozinets’ (2010) guidelines for choosing an online forum a usenet newsgroup, betanews.com, was chosen to observe. Data from a six-month period was collected and analyzed in order to guide the main portion of this study, the focus groups.

The second stage of data collection, and the focus of this research utilized focus groups. Focus groups are a vessel for listening and learning from participants (Morgan, 1998a). First, this method is a viable option to use when little is known about the field (Edmunds, 1999). Also, “focus groups create lines of communication” (Morgan, 1998a, p. 9). Focus groups were the ideal form of data collection as the goal of this paper was to understand the communication between opposing brand community members.

In all, four one-hour focus groups were utilized. An undergraduate research pool at a Canadian university was used to recruit the participants. Participants considered themselves passionate and committed to their Apple iPhone 4S/5 or Samsung Galaxy S2/S3, and would not easily switch to the competitor’s device. The data were analyzed in
order to gain an understanding of the ongoing conversations between brand users. The goal of this research was to learn about the interplay between opposing brand community members.

Brand rivalry was studied in the context of the Smartphone because this context has not been investigated before and it has become a predominate product in peoples’ lives; making it an interesting commodity to study. The use of these devises has grown to nearly 50% in Canada amongst young adults (Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, 2011). These products are not only used for telecommunication; Internet surfing, email, social media connection, banking, games, and music are also some of the functions utilized by users. Microsoft, Android, Blackberry OS, and iOS are some of the operating systems in the Smartphone industry: the top three in Canada are Android, iOS, and Blackberry in that respective order (Sopinski & Marlow, 2013). Brands like Samsung utilizes the Android operating system, Apple uses iOS, and Blackberry uses the Blackberry OS system. In the latter part of 2012 Galaxy and iPhone became the biggest competitors in the market (Forbes, 2012). The competition between these companies has fostered rival behaviour between the companies and its consumers. Thus, this research investigates how Smartphone brand communities communicate to one another.

1.2 Organization of Thesis

The paper begins with a discussion of previous literature on brand communities and brand rivalry. First, brand image, and self-brand connection/identification are presented to gain insight on the connection one has with a brand. Literature pertaining to brand communities, oppositional brand loyalty and existing research studies on brand
rivalry will be explored. The literature review indicates a gap relating to brand rivalry and understanding the interaction of the two competing brand communities. Literature has focused on the oppositional nature of the dialogue. This research extends the brand rivalry concept as it looks at the interactions between brand communities holistically. Also, this research examines brand rivalry in real time; previous literature used netnography to investigate the concept. Therefore, this research aims to narrow the gap, by examining the dialogue between two brand communities holistically rather than focus on the dark undertones as investigated in previous literature.

Next, the methodology section is presented. This section offers a detail description of the two stages, netnography and focus groups, which were utilized in this study. First, the netnography stage will be presented. Preliminary findings, which guided the second stage of research, will be discussed. Second, details in relation to the focus groups employed for this study will be presented. Next, the findings section is presented.

The findings section presented the results from the focus groups. This section explains the two major themes, and the six sub themes found. The two main these are: monologues and dialogues. The subthemes under monologues are: expressing loyalty for one’s own brand, opposition towards the other brand, acknowledging the benefits of the other brand, and stories about brand experiences brand. The subthemes under dialogues are: the interplay of both brand communities: expressing their opposition for the other brand and the interplay of both brand communities: exchanging information.

The final chapter of this paper offers the discussion, conclusion, conceptual and managerial implications, limitations of this study, and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This research was interested in the nature of the rivalry between two brand communities. Therefore, literature pertaining to: consumers’ connection to a brand, brand communities, oppositional brand loyalty and brand rivalry was explored. Exploring this literature gave the researcher an understanding of why consumers engage in brand rivalry and the current understanding of the concept.

Consumers often become intertwined with a brand; through the consumption of a brand, people are able to define their social selves creating a self-brand identity. Those who identify so greatly with a brand tend to be more committed to that particular brand. Consumers may belong to brand communities. These communities connect committed consumers to others who share a close connection to the product and the brand. Brand communities work to differentiate them self from other brand communities. To do so, brand communities attempt to communicate their brand as superior and from negative views about the competition. Communities also communicate adversarial views in order to differentiate themselves. When competitive brands communicate this way, brand rivalry may manifest. Previous research on brand rivalry has investigated this concept from a “dark-side” perspective. However, this research extends the understanding of brand rivalry by investigating the dialogue between competing brand communities.

In the following section, literature addressing an individual consumer and their connection to a brand will be explored. Exploration of literature pertaining to groups of consumers will follow focusing on how groups of consumers or brand communities are drawn together via the brand and the resulting implications. Finally, literature addressing the notion of oppositional brand loyalty and brand rivalry will be investigated.
2.1 Literature on Brand Image

Research has indicated that consumers may use products or brands for reasons separate to their physical attributes or functions (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Brands can have symbolic associations that draw consumers to use the brand. These non-functional aspects of a brand are identified as brand image. There are a number of definitions for brand image; nonetheless, brand image is the associations perceived by the consumer including the personality projected by the brand (Batra & Homer, 2004). Brand image is also described as being the symbolic use of the brand (Levy, 1958; Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Regardless of the definition these brand associations can help motivate consumers to use particular products or brands because of the social and psychological nature of the brand and the feelings and attitudes that arise from using the brand (Levy, 1958; Sirgy, 1982). Thus, not only are products used for their functionality, the “image” of the brand is also a contributing factor when choosing a brand (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990).

Brand image is typically perceived as a socially visible aspect (Batra & Homer, 2004) allowing brands to communicate an image that is reflected in the user (Sirgy, 1982). Since others can perceive a brand’s image, consumers who use a brand for symbolic reasons will use the brand in order to be associated with the image of the brand. Thus, people may consume a product or brand based on its brand image. Specifically, people may use products or brands with images congruent to their ideal self (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Ross, 1971). An early study done by Grubb and Hupp (1968) indicated that consumers identified the self-concept associated to brands to reflect the self-concepts of the brand users. Escalas and Bettman (2003) found consumers communicate their self-identity through specific brand choices; these choices are based on the congruency
between brand-user and self-image associations. In more recent research, consumers identify with brands via their Facebook page to communicate the ideal self (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). For instance, consumers are able to “like” brands and products on Facebook. This Facebook option gives users to literally click a button entitled “like” to express their preference for a brand’s Facebook page. Other members are able to see which brands and products a user “like”. Hollenbeck and Kaikati’s (2012) study suggested people may “like” brands and products that are in line with their ideal self; the image they hope to achieve. Consumers can use brand image as a way to communicate a personal image. Overall, “people do not buy products just for what they do, but also for what the product means; thus, brands can be symbols whose meaning is used to create and define a consumer's self-concept” (Escalas & Bettman, 2005, p. 378).

2.2 Literature on Self Brand Connection/ Identification

Literature has made it relatively clear that consumers may use a product or brand for the image the brand projects. A brand can help a consumer develop their self-concept by defining who they are and who they want to be (Fournier, 1998; Escalas, 2004; Chaplin & John, 2005).

Specifically, “self-concept is of value to the individual, and behaviour will be directed toward the protection and enhancement of self-concept; the purchase, display, and use of goods communicates symbolic meaning to the individual and to others; [and] the consuming behaviour of an individual will be directed toward enhancing self-concept through the consumption of goods as symbols” (Sirgy, 1982, p. 289).

A relationship manifests between the self and brand, when the brand is utilized in order to create one’s self image. For this research, the notion of self is used when describing self-image.
There are a number of terms to describe the association between consumer and product or brand; self-brand connection, brand identification, and consumer-company identification are terms suggested to articulate the link between consumer and brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Escalas, 2004; He, Li & Harris, 2012). Self-brand connection (SBC) is the extent to which consumers include a “brand in their mental representation of self…” (Escalas, 2004, p. 170). A similar definition is the one He, et al. (2012) used to describe brand identification. It is interesting to note that He et al. (2012) used Bhattacharya and Sen’s (2003) definition of consumer-company identification to describe brand identification. Nonetheless, the authors state: consumer-company identification (or brand identification) is “…an active, selective, and volitional act motivated by the satisfaction of one or more self-definitional (i.e., “Who am I?”) needs…” (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003, p. 77). This statement suggests, consumers actively seek brands that help create self-identity. Thus, despite variation in the term, it is clear the relationship (connection/identification) one has with a brand is ignited by the consumers’ need to use the brand in order to define who he or she is. For the purpose of this research, connection and identification will be terms used interchangeably.

It is evident that research indicates when brands are used to communicate a particular self-image a self-brand connection is created (Chaplin & John, 2005; Escalas & Bettman, 2005):

“Possessions can be used to satisfy psychological needs, such as actively creating one's self-concept, reinforcing and expressing self-identity, and allowing one to differentiate oneself and assert one's individuality”

The use of a brand in developing the self facilitates a sense of oneness between the
consumer and the brand (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich & Lacobucci, 2010). The extent to which a brand is used to form the self mediates the strength of the SBC. A stronger more meaningful connection can be had if there is a close tie between the brand’s image and the consumers’ personal experience with the brand (Escalas, 2004; Moore & Homer, 2008). Thus, if the consumer has a positive experience with the product and there is a link between brand image and the consumer there will be a rich SBC.

The connection shared between the self and the brand can have positive implications for the brand. Identification with a brand may ultimately lead to brand loyalty behaviour (Park et al., 2010; He, et al., 2012). “If a consumer identifies with a company, he or she is likely to have positive thoughts and feelings about the company” (Einwiller, Fedorikhin, Johnson & Kamins, 2006, p. 187). Park et al. (2010) demonstrated that SBC is an indicator of brand attachment which is a predictor of brand loyalty. Their results suggested that brand attachment is mediated by SBC, and the attachment between the consumer and brand may lead to brand loyalty behaviour (Park et al., 2010). He et al. (2012) investigated the effect of brand identity on brand loyalty. In their study they also tested the mediating effects of brand identification on brand loyalty. The results indicated that brand identification does indirectly effect brand loyalty (via perceived value; He et al. 2012). The literature on brand image, and self brand connection/identification lends insight on why consumer may have a bond with some brands. Reiterating Park et al. (2010), it is possible for a brand and consumers to be viewed as united. Consumers who have this type of relationship may belong to a larger group of consumers who share the same connection with a brand. Those who belong in a brand community are committed to the brand and others who are apart of the community.
Thus, even though this research is concerned with opposite brand communities, this literature provides some background on why one might concern them self with a brand. It also highlights some of the implications of having a close connection to a brand. The next section offers literature on brand communities.

2.3 Literature on Brand Communities

As outlined previously, brands can assist in the development of the self; possessions, like the use of a brand, can assist in the development of social ties like the ones found in brand communities (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). A brand community is a grouping of brand admirers who have developed a social relationship centred on a brand (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). This type of community is not restricted by geographical limitations (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; Kozinets R., 1999), but is liberated from such boundaries (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Since the development of online resources, the establishment of these communities have progressed (Kozinets, 1999; Casalo, Flavian & Guinaliu, 2007). However, brand communities are not confined to a virtual median. Kozinets (2010) describes three types of brand communities: real world, virtual, and a mixture of both. Real world brand communities are entirely face to face. Schembri (2009) presented her observations which were derived from three years of experience within an Australian Harley-Davidson brand community. Members who belonged to this face to face group would join together for social events which were concerned with the Harley-Davidson brand. A type of event would be rides. A large number of Harley-Davidson users united together to demonstrate their camaraderie, while driving their Harley-Davidson bikes on the highways of Australia. This differs from a virtual community,
which does not require members to meet the other members in person, nor do members have to be in a relatively close geographical location. There is extensive work investigating online brand communities (Kozinets, 1999; Kozinets, 2002; Muniz & Schau, 2005; Casalo, Flavian & Guinaliu, 2007; Sicilia & Palazon, 2008). However, a good example of a brand community with a similar product to the previous example, is Felix’s (2012) research on a Yamaha R1 online community. This is also a motorcycle brand community; however, unlike the Harley-Davidson community studied by Schembri (2009), this community unites via the Internet. These community members came from various geographical regions, in order to discuss and share experiences regarding this motorcycle brand. Kozinets (2010) also discusses an amalgamated version of the previous two types of brand communities; the third type of brand community is one that is present online and in person. Regardless of the brand community type, it is especially important to note that these are unlike other communities, as these communities are “explicitly commercial” (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 415). As Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) so bluntly stated: “this is about brands. This is the tie that binds” (p.426).

Within brand communities three core components exist: “consciousness of kind, evidence of rituals and traditions, and a sense of obligation to the community and its members” (O'Guinn & Muniz, 2005, p. 256). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) found that the most important element of brand communities is the notion of consciousness of kind (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Sicilia & Palazon, 2008). This component relates to the connection group members share with one another. While, members may never meet one another, members describe that they “sort of know each other” (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 418). The connection between the member and the brand is reflected in Muniz and
O’Guinn’s (2001) triade; consumers have a connection with each other, while both having their own connection with the brand. Consciousness of kind also pertains to the thought of legitimacy. Legitimacy is the differentiation of true believers from non true believers (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Oppositional brand loyalty also pertains to consciousness of kind. Members mold their experience and meaning of the community and brand respectively through opposing competing brands. They do this by expressing adversarial views about the competing brand, communicate their brand as superior, and challenge the competing brand community’s choice. This idea will be explored more in depth in a subsequent section as it facilitates the understanding of the behaviour employed by brand communities. Thus, consciousness of kind pertains to the bond between members: a connection must exist, they must be devoted to the brand, and use their resistance to other brands to construct their meaning and experience with their brand and members of their community.

The second and third components of brand communities are rituals and traditions, and moral responsibitly (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). The notion of rituals and traditions within a community is quite explicit. Within brand communities various social processes like celebrating the history of the brand and sharing brand stories help communicate the message of the brand to community members and outsiders (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Moral responsibility is concerned with members being committed to the brand and other members (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002). A way to display commitment is assisting in the use of the brand, and integrating and retaining members of the group (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).
The commitment with a brand can have profound effects on the brand itself and the competition. In a study done by Hur, Ahn, and Kim (2011), their results indicated that brand community commitment is a contributing factor to brand loyalty. While, brand communities effect brand loyalty, a strong brand connection via brand community can also effect brand satisfaction and advocacy (Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). Overall, brand communities are an instrument that assist in strengthening the consumer-brand relationship (Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). It is evident brands play a role in developing the self, along with the formation of group identities (Swaminathan, Page & Gurhan-Canli, 2007); as a result, members have a greater connection to the brand. Often this connection to the brand and brand community can lead to behaviour that demonstrates the devotion to the brand.

Overall, the brand community members possess a devotion for and identify with a brand or service and the other users (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002). Brand community members are: commited, true believers (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001), and advocates of their brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Brand communities differentiate themselves from outsiders. They unite against other competing brand communities, in order to make their own brand community stronger (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Collective pride and group egotism (Ewing et al., 2013) help communicate their brand as superior (Muniz & Hamer, 2001; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). When there is a competing brand community, members may challenge the opposite brand community and may communicate negatively about the competition. The next section devels deper into opposition brand loyalty, which, lend more insight regarding some of the opposing behaviours of brand communities.
2.4 Literature on Oppositional Brand Loyalty/Brand Rivalry

Oppositional brand loyalty is of particular interest for this study as it is concerned with one’s objection for a competing brand. Consumers often define themselves by what brands or products they do not use or buy (Muniz & Hamer, 2001; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). “Oppositional brand loyalty arises when members of a brand community take an adversarial view of competitors” (Ewing et al., 2013, p. 2). As stated in a previous section, members unite to oppose threats, real or not, from the competition (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). This is often done through communicating and defending their brand as superior compared to their competitors (Muniz & Hamer, 2001). In Muniz and O’Guinn’s (2001) study, they observed oppositional brand loyalty in a variety of brand communities. On a web-based Apple brand community, members had superimposed devil attributes onto Bill Gates’ face. When investigating other Mac communities, the authors found ‘Team MacSucks’; this PC community defined themselves by degrading the competition. Muniz and Hamer’s (2001) research found Pepsi fans expressed their disgust for Coca-Cola and vice versa on public websites in order to define their preference and express their loyalty towards their brand of choice.

Thompson and Sinha (2008) mentioned that brand communities are not only a way to express one’s passion for a brand, but also express one’s rival for another brand. Literature illustrates that oppositional brand loyalty is prevalent within brand communities. Oppositional brand loyalty is a tool used by brand community members in order to differentiate their brand community. Oppositional brand loyalty can manifest into brand rivalries especially in highly competitive markets (Ewing et al., 2013). Ewing
and colleagues describe brand rivalries as the interplay between competing brand communities (2013). The dialogue that expresses the rivalry has been defined as “trash talking” (Hickman & Ward, 2007). This concept relates to negative conversations about a competing brand (Hickman & Ward, 2007). Using two sets of brand rivals, Hickman and Ward (2007) found that members of a brand community do engage in trash talk. One of their most interesting findings was: brand community members who have a great bias for their brand’s image reported trash talking the opposition more often (Hickman & Ward, 2007).

Muniz and Hamer (2001) articulated the notion of playful rivals, which was a result found when studying Coca-Cola and Pepsi brand communities. The results of this study articulated that brand communities jokingly discuss the opposite brand. However, while the authors categorize this behaviour as playful rivals, the interaction between the two brand communities was not focused on. Nonetheless, a later study done by Ewing et al. (2013) focused specifically on brand rivalries and brand communities; the results suggested brand rivalry takes varying extremes. Ewing et al.’s (2013) results indicated that brand rivalries manifest as humour, epithets, ridicule, and hostility. These three studies have focused on the darker undertones or the oppositional nature present when competing brand communities communicate.

Overall, brand communities engage in darker behaviour; meaning, brand communities do unite against competing brand communities as a way to show their loyalty to their own brand. Oppositional brand loyalty can become brand rivalry. The literature on brand rivalry highlights the antagonistic dialogue that occurs. This research
aims to evaluate the conversations that take place between brand community members in order to gain a greater understanding of interplay between competing brands.

2.4.1 Existing Research Studies on Brand Rivalry

Understanding brand rivalry and brand competition has been studied through different lenses. Brand rivalry and brand competition has been investigated from the economics, financial, pricing, consumer, as well as, advertising perspectives, to name a few. For instance, Fosfiri and Giarratna (2009) investigated rival soda brands (Coca-Cola and Pepsi) in relation to a firm’s financial market value. Empirically, the authors looked at product innovation and new advertising on the firm’s financial market value. The results indicated that product announcements decrease a firm’s financial market value and there is an increase in rival brand’s filed trademark. However, the current research is concerned with brand rivalry and brand competition in relation to consumer behaviour. This section will review past research studies regarding brand rivalry and brand competition in relation to consumer behaviour.

Within consumer behaviour literature, some research relevant to brand competition focuses on committed consumers’ willingness to switch to the competing brand. For instance, Raju, Unnava, and Montgomery (2009) evaluated the effect of brand commitment on the evaluation of non-preferred brands. Employing an experimental design, the authors primed high- and low- committed participants to information about a competing brand. Overall, their findings indicated that highly committed consumer would focus on information that is dissimilar to their brand. In contrast, low-committed consumers will focus on similar information.
Similarly, Dasi and Raju (2007) also investigated consumers’ willingness to consider the competing brand. This research examined brand commitments role on consideration sets. While this was a three-part study, study one and two primarily looked at the benefits a brand provided and whether it was in line with the usage situation. Study one and study two were concerned with the committed brand’s benefits being inline with a given situation and a competing brand’s benefits being inline with a situation respectively. The findings indicate that highly committed consumers will continue to favour their brand over the competitor’s brand despite the incongruence between benefits offered and situation.

While these studies lend insight on consumers’ choice, they do not offer much in terms of understanding how consumers of rival brand interact. The following studies investigate the communication between consumers’ of rival brands. Employing a netnographical approach, Muniz and Hamer (2001), Ewing et al. (2013), and Chen, Malik, Mathew, Palmer, Sponga, and Yang (2012) investigated consumer dialogue in relation to competing brands. Muniz and Hamer (2001) focused on Coca Cola and Pepsi usenet sites. The results of this study indicated that rivalries between two competing brands manifest as playful rivals. Both Ewing et al. (2013) and Chen et al. (2012) found supporting evidence for rivalries manifesting as playful, nonetheless, both studies extending the classification of the dialogue. Ewing et al. (2013) investigated the dialogue of competing car company consumers on websites in Australia. The findings of this study indicate that the dialogue between consumers of competing brands emerges as humour, epithets, ridicule, and hostility. Humour and ridicule were the most common themes, and very similar; interplay between brand communities was joking, and joking was used to
lessen the tension related to the comment. Similarly, the findings of Chen et al. (2012) were consistent with Ewing’s et al. (2013) findings. Chen et al. (2012) studied Coca-Cola and Pepsi consumers’ comments, which were posted under a Coca Cola and Pepsi commercial posted on YouTube. The three themes that manifested from the data; plain dialogue, friendly competition and lethal attack were the types of dialogue found. Based on these findings, a gap in the literature has been identified. These papers all look at the opposing dialogue between the competing brand consumers. Therefore, this study investigates communication beyond the oppositional nature between these two brand communities to gain insight beyond dialogue relating to conflicting undertones.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This section describes the research design, data collection and data analysis to this study. The intent of this study is to examine the rivalry between brand communities and the dialogue of brand community members. This study took a grounded theory approach. Preliminary data were collected using a netnographical approach and qualitative focus groups were conducted in the main study. The focus groups consisted of participants who expressed passion for either an iPhone or Samsung, would not switch to the opposing Smartphone brand, and felt connected to their respected brand. The open dialogue between focus group participants within the context of Smartphone brands will facilitate a greater understanding and extend the concept of brand rivalry. The following sections delve deeper into the methodology employed for this study.

3.1 Research Context

Due to its rapid growth, the Smartphone has dominated other hand held devices (Chun, Lee & Kim, 2012). Currently, people have a need to be connected constantly: the Smartphone fulfills this need (Lane & Manner, 2011). The Smartphone is not solely a medium for telecommunication, but is used in order to connect to the world in various ways. These devices enable consumers to use social media platforms and email instantly. They also allow consumers to surf the web, play games, and listen to music (Lane & Manner, 2011). The Smartphone is used for a number of other functions like banking, watching television and movies, and reading.

Canadians have been described as bring amongst the top users of the Smartphone (QMI Agency, 2011). In 2010, 269.9 million smart phones were purchased
Internationally (Lane & Manner, 2011). 48% of 18 to 34 year olds in Canada use Smartphone (Schreiber, 2012). The percentage of Smartphone users is even higher at 55% in the 18 to 24 year old segment. It is said that this number will continue to rise (Lane & Manner, 2011).

The major operating systems are Android, iOS, and Blackberry (Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, 2011). Between January 2011 and August 2011, shifts in the market took place. Android’s market share in Canada rose by 10 percent to reach 36 percent; iPhone fell to second with 29 percent; and RIM’s Blackberry struggled to hold on in the Canadian market with 27 percent which was a 14 percent drop (Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, 2011).

Samsung and iPhone are two brands competing to be the industry leader (International Business Times, 2011). For instance, globally Samsung and Apple practically have equal dominance over the market with 33% and 24% respectively (Sopinski & Marlow, 2013). Lawsuits, the discontinuing of business relationships, commercials, and consumer blogging just skim the surface of how intense the rivalry between these two brands is (Beta News, 2012; International Business Times, 2011; Samsung Mobile USA, 2012). The combination of the Smartphone being predominate in our society and the intense competition between these two major brands has made studying smart phones in relation to brand rivalry relevant to the time.

The research being conducted takes a grounded theory approach (Richards & Morse, 2013). “This methodology enables the researcher to identify a central theory through the coding and evaluation of collected data” (Saldana, 2011, p. 27). Since there is limited research done, it is vital an approach like grounded theory is utilized, allowing
themes to be drawn from the data and theories developed. In order to draw theories relative to brand rivalry a number of steps were employed. First, an exploratory stage was administered. A netnographical approach allowed the researcher to grasp an understanding regarding the rivalry between the two Smartphone brands and offer prompts to be used in focus group sessions for the second stage of data collection. The second stage of data collection utilized focus groups. Focus groups enabled the researcher to observe the communication lines between the two brand communities. After data collection, following grounded theory approach, the data were analyzed in order to identify themes. The exploratory stage is discussed in greater detail in the subsequent sections.

3.2. Stage One: Exploratory Stage

The first stage of research was purely exploratory. It was employed to give the researcher an understanding of the Smartphone brand communities, as well as, provide insight regarding the communication between these two competing brands. Netnography was utilized in this initial stage as it allowed the research to examine this phenomenon without imposing researcher perspectives on participants.

Netnography allowed the researcher to observe participants via the Internet, enabling the researcher to gain an understanding of a “communal phenomenon” (Kozinets, 2010, p. 60). Thus, netnography was chosen as an initial data collection stage to understand conversations between brand community members on a usenet newsgroup website (Kozinets, 2002). The subsequent sections review the steps employed during stage one of data collection.
The initial stage of this research followed the two steps of ethnographic/netnographic research as outlined by Kozinets (2010): define research question, and identify a community. After step one of defining research questions, the second step of identifying and selecting a community was conducted. In order to choose an online community for the exploratory stage, guidelines for site selection (Kozinets, 2010) were employed. First, Kozinets (2010) suggests using terms related to the research topic in search engines such as Google and Yahoo, or social media websites like Facebook and YouTube. For this particular study, Google was the primary search engine used. Google was the primary search engine because it is suitable in searching for consumers’ forums or usenet newsgroups, the intended medium to study. Usenet newsgroups are discussion groups where members have “text-based discussions on specific topics” (Okleshen & Gossbart, 1998, p.276). Since the intents of this study was to examine the dialogue between competing brand community members, usenet newsgroups were more relevant than other Internet sites. Mobile forums, cell phone forums, cell phone discussion, Smartphone discussion, and Smartphone forums were the key words used. Overall, six websites were chosen for further evaluation: mobilesyrup.com, forum.dailymobil.net, forum.brighthand.com, wirelessforums.org, cellphoneforaums.net, and betanews.com.

Kozinets (2002, 2010) suggests six criteria: relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous, and data-rich to follow when deciding on the particular site to observe. The websites explored were related to Smartphone; nonetheless, one in particular had rich conversations between competing brand community members. For example comments like “the iPhone 5 has the best display ever” and “it’s [Apple iPhone]
new and its still behind what companies like Samsung are putting out”. These comments were part of a larger conversation between Samsung and Apple users. Kozinets (2002, 2010) suggests online communities need to have recent and regular communication as well have two-way communication between the members. Data found on the online communities must also be substantial; they need to have a mass amount of communication (Kozinets, 2010).

Ensuring diversity amongst the participants is also important for the data collection stage. This usenet newsgroup site had hundreds of participants ensuring there was diversity. Most participants expressed their opinion regarding Apple and/or Samsung. Also, when picking a usenet newsgroup site it was important that the researcher grasped a true sense of the group dynamics, the researcher needed to make certain the data was “detailed or descriptively rich…” (Kozinets, 2002, p. 63). The data found on betanews.com was just that; the conversations clearly described competing brand members’ thoughts regarding their own brand as well as the competitors.

Kozinets’ (2002, 2010) guidelines for site selection were used thoroughly when deciding on the appropriate brand community to observe. Betanews.com met the previous guidelines more stringently compared to the other websites evaluated. Overall, betanews.com is most relevant to the research focus of this paper, allowing the researcher to view the dialogue between Apple and Samsung Smartphone users. Betanews.com was both active and interactive, the participants are heterogenic, and the data is quite rich. Thus, Betanews.com was chosen as the online community to observe. For further understanding regarding site selection please see Appendix A for Betanews.com
description and Appendix B Betanews.com screenshot. The following sections offer the data collection and data analysis phase.

3.2.1. Stage One: Data Collection

During the data collection phase, data pertaining to Samsung and Apple was collected for a six-month period. The usenet newsgroup site is separated into articles. The subjects of these articles are reflective of current Smartphone related news. Insofar, the articles vary. For instance some of the articles explored for this research were titled: Will you Buy an iPhone; Which survives the drop test, iPhone 5 or Galaxy S III?; and Galaxy S III surged past iPhone 4S in third quarter. Please see Appendix C a Betanews.com Smartphone article. Discussions take place under each article. All articles and discussions related to Samsung and/or Apple were extracted from the website. Please see Appendix D for an example a Betanews.com discussion.

3.2.2 Stage One: Data Analysis

After observing the data holistically, a number of steps were employed. Following the suggestions from Kozinets (2010), coding, noting, comparing and theorizing were steps employed when evaluating the data extracted from the usenet newsgroup site. The results of data analysis indicated two major themes manifested: functional and emotional. More specifically, conversations between brand community members where either about functional elements such as screen size, durability, operating system etc or they were more emotionally focused; not referencing functions of the brand and product. Examples of a functional and emotional statements are: “Apple leads in ease of use, smoothness,
design, ecosystem etc.” and “I LOVE my new Samsung phone and find it in EVERY way superior to anything Apple” respectively (please see: Appendix E the preliminary findings). After reading approximately 1200 comments, nearly half of the comments made were regarding some functional element of the phone, while the other half were emotionally charged. Overall, this data suggests that people express their oppositional brand loyalty in terms of functional elements or emotionally. Also, brand rivalry, the interplay between members of competing brand communities, takes a functional or emotional stance. Overall, data were grouped as either function or emotional statements, under these headings data were also grouped if the statements were positive about Samsung and negative towards Apple (Samsung +/-Apple-); and positive towards Apple and negative towards Samsung (Apple +/-Samsung-). Please see Appendix E the preliminary findings for examples of phrases and conversations. In conclusion, this data provided the researcher insights regarding the existence of brand rivalry in the Smartphone context, which guided the second phase of research.

Conversations pieces were selected and used as prompts to facilitate focus group sessions in stage two of this research study. The prompts where chosen for a number of properties. First, emotional statements that were highly emotional or hostile were chosen. Functional statements that had an emotional undertone were chose. Meaning, the functional statements chosen used absolute language (for example, “best display ever”), profanity (for example, “crap”, “bullshit”), and derogating language (for example, “Apple fan boys”). Large groupings of statements were read to a pilot focus group to see the reactions and conversations that manifested from each statement. The final statements
were chosen based on the pilot focus group. To see the statements utilized in the actual focus groups please see the focus group script in Appendix F, focus group script.

3.3 Stage Two: Focus Groups

After gaining a more in depth understanding the communication between competing brand communities, the researcher utilized qualitative focus groups in the second stage of data collection. This second stage was employed in order to retrieve a natural, continuous, and interactive conversation between competing brand community members.

Focus groups are an appropriate method to use when a concept or theory is relatively new or under-explored (Edmunds, 1999). It also allowed the participants to express their “attitudes, opinions, or perceptions towards an issue, product, service or programme” through free and open discussion (Kumar, 2011, p. 127). Therefore, since the goal of the researcher was to explore the dialogue, in particular the natural, continuous, and interactive conversations between competing brand community members, this data collection method was the most appropriate method to employ.

Four focus groups were conducted. Four focus groups were chosen based on diversity of discussion (Morgan, 1998b). Therefore, the less diverse the conversations are or the more saturated the conversation is between focus groups, the less number of focus groups to be conducted. Each focus group had between six and eight participants as suggested by Morgan (1998b). Specifically, focus group one had eight participants, focus group two had seven participants, focus group three had eight participants, focus group
four had six participants. All focus group sessions were approximately one hour or one and a half hour in length.

3.4 Recruitment

After gaining approval for using human subjects for research purpose from the Research Ethics Board (REB) of the University of Guelph, judgment sampling (Kumar, 2011) was used for recruiting participants. This method ensures the appropriate participants are recruited in order to achieve the objectives of this study (Kumar, 2011). The following information outlines the recruitment process further.

Undergraduate students taking classes at the business college at a south central Canadian university were informed about the study via the Desire to Learn website (please see: Appendix H for recruitment advertising) and a university research study registration website. Students who were between the ages of 17 and 24, used an Apple or Samsung Smartphone; more specifically an Apple iPhone 4GS or 5, or a Samsung Galaxy IIIG or IIIG and considered themselves devoted to their Smartphone were encouraged to contact the researcher. Students who contacted the researcher were then required to complete a short questionnaire that asked if they were passionate about their respective phone, whether they would switch to the competition and if they were commitment to their phone (see: Appendix G for recruitment questions). The researcher set up focus groups with an equal number of iPhone and Samsung users. Nonetheless, this was not always obtained due to some participants not attending the focus group. Thirty-four students in total were recruited for the focus groups, however only twenty-nine students participated in the study. Overall, this design allowed the participants, users
of competing Smartphone brands, to interact with one another and provide an opportunity for the researcher to observe the brand rivalry phenomenon in real time (Richards & Morse, 2013) resulting in a greater understanding regarding brand rivalry.

3.5 Participants

The sample populations were undergraduate students between the ages of 17 and 24 enrolled in classes related to a Bachelor of Commerce degree. At the time of data collection participants owned an iPhone or Samsung Smartphone. Participants expressed strong brand connections, as they were passionate for their respective brand, they would not switch to a competing Smartphone brand, and identified them self as committed to their brand of choice.

3.6 Data Collection

After the selection process, four focus groups were conducted. The researcher acted as focus group moderator to facilitate the focus groups. These focus groups sessions were between one hour and an hour and a half depending on the participation intensity and depth, that is, what was being communicated between participants during the focus group sessions. These focus groups took place over a one-week period. These sessions started with first having participants met outside the designated room. Once they were seated in the room, the facilitator introduced herself and briefly outlined the research project. A copy of the consent form was distributed at the onset of the study. Participants were encouraged to read over the consent form and to ask questions. The facilitator then reviewed the disclaimer regarding the audio taping process, the confidentially aspect
associated to audio taping the focus group, and the benefits of audio taping the focus
groups for the study. Participants were informed that the focus group was being held in
order to discuss their thoughts regarding Smartphone brands. After the group was briefed,
the facilitator then opened up the discussion for questions.

Rather then asking introduction questions (Kruger, 1998), the researcher took a
different approach in order to start the discussion. Similar to Fournier’s (1998) data
collection phase where participants where asked to open their kitchen cupboard in order
to initiate a conversation, participants in this focus group were asked to put their
Smartphone on the table. Participants where then asked to discuss their thoughts
regarding the smart phones they saw on the table. The researcher thought this would be a
beneficial way to start the focus groups as: “focus groups are usually much more
effective if the participants are exposed to specific materials to which they can react”
(Greenbaum, 1998, p. 64).

Following this discussion, the research read ten statements. These statements
where extracted from the first stage of data collection. These statements were either
functional or emotional in nature, and either identifies Samsung or Apple in a positive or
negative way. Examples of functional statements used within the focus groups are: “The
iPhone 5 has the best display every” and “I always need to laugh or burst into tears when
I read the Apple fan boys talk about the Galaxy phones being made of cheap plastic…
many different airplanes”. Examples of emotional statements read are: “One thing Apple
has done is make people very ignorant” and “Too bad Samsung had no idea what they
were doing…They did an in-depth comparison of their “ugly” user interface with Apples
and realize they had a lot of copying to do”. For a complete list of statements please see
Appendix F, focus group script. The facilitator asked probing and clarifying questions as
the facilitator felt it was needed (Krueger, 1998). For example, the facilitator asked
“Galaxy users how do you feel about that?” This probing question during focus group
three after an Apple user made a comment about the size of the Samsung Galaxy.
Another probing question asked by the facilitator was: “how about you”. This question
was directed at an Apple user during focus group two in order to gain more insight
regarding their opinion. After the data collection period was complete, debriefing took
place (Krueger, 1998). The researcher reiterated the information discussed at the
beginning of the focus group including confidentiality, and when a copy of the thesis
would be available for participants plus distributed a revised information handout. All
focus group sessions were audio-taped throughout. For complete information regarding
data collection please see Appendix H and G for recruitment advertising and screening
questions respectively, as well as Appendix I for consent form, Appendix F for focus
group script, and Appendix J for debriefing form.

3.7 Data Analysis

Prior to the data analysis, audio-taped were transcribed. Transcriptions of the
focus groups were about fifty-nine pages in length (one and a half spacing). In the
transcripts, participants names are not stated but code numbers were used instead. For
example, participants who are Samsung Galaxy users from focus group one are identified
as F1-S1, F1-S2, F1-S3 and so on. Similarly, participants who are Apple iPhone users
from focus group one were identified as F1-A1, F1-A2, F1-A3 and so on. Please see
Appendix K for the first five pages from focus group one.
Once, transcribing was done, data analysis stage started. The researcher explored the data thoroughly in order to understand the interactive dialogue between brand community members. At this time, it was apparent that data separate to the interactive dialogue between the brand communities was also important to evaluate deeper. Thus, all data were considered during coding. Open coding was used in order to generate theory (Saldana, 2011; Richard & Morse, 2013). Using Richards and Morse (2013) strategies for coding, themes were derived. As suggested by Richard and Morse (2013) the transcripts were explored in order to comprehend the meaning of the text. Secondly, the text was explored line by line, where important passages were highlighted and theoretical memos were made (Richard & Morse, 2013). Since this research was concerned with the interplay between the competing brand communities, the researchers returned to evaluating the conversation sets; the dialogue had between the two brand-communities in order to understand the meaning beyond the text. Afterwards, passages relating to one another were grouped (Richard & Morse, 2013); organized into categories depending on the meaning of the phrases (Saldana, 2011). Initially, statements and conversations were the first two categorizes formed. Data were grouped accordingly depending on whether the participant stated something without other brand community members responding, and statements with responses from the other brand community. Next, the data under these two grouping was grouped under subthemes. These groups were based on the nature of the conversation: indicated brand loyalty, demonstrated brand rivalry, acknowledge the other brand positively, and told stores related to other peoples’ experiences, as well as, were rival, or sharing in nature. An example, a statement that was
grouped under loyalty would be: “F1-S1: I love it!” An example of a more interactive rival conversation between brand communities would be:

F2-S1: “Ummm, I would not say it is less easy, because it is open source. So like a lot of developers always post bug fixes and stuff. Ahh and I know where are forums where Apple users go on to address problems and they are usually consistent problems. It is pretty much the same this with android. It is the same type of community across the bored. People are just…”

F2-A2: “I don’t ever remember the last time I had a problem with the iPhone. Like I have had it for like forever and I have not had a single problem with it so”

Finally, the research evaluated the linkages of the categories for further understanding of the phenomenon (Richard & Morse, 2013). It is from these groupings that more understanding regarding the brand rivalry was derived and theorized (Saldana, 2011). Next section presented the findings.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In total, four focus groups were conducted to better understand the interactions between two Smartphone brand communities. This section presents the findings. In general, the data suggests that brand community members’ communication manifested in two ways: monologues (when people expressed their thoughts without response) and dialogues (when people engaged in discussion with other brand community members).

4.1 Overview

Two major themes emerged from the findings: monologues and dialogues. Upon further exploration, subthemes emerged within ‘monologue context’. The first theme was related to either the functional or emotional nature of monologues. The other sub-themes emerged were negatively or positively oriented, such as, admiration (participants relayed fondness for their own brand), oppositional (brand community members offer their dislike, or resistance for another brand), and acknowledging (participants communicate advantages of the other brand and product) in nature. Within the monologue section, brand community members divulged experiences related to Samsung and Apple.

Sub themes within dialogues or conversations context also manifested. Specifically, the dialogues were found surrounding brand rivalry (the interplay between brand community members expressing their adverseness for the other brand) and the giving and receiving of information (the two brand communities sharing and seeking
knowledge from one another). The following section offers the findings that emerged in detail.

4.2 Findings in the form of monologues

Monologues were captured during the focus groups, these were instances where participants would state their thoughts and no one commented on or expanded on the idea. The first sub-theme related to the discussion of functional or emotional element relating to the brand or the product. Functional elements were defined as features of the brand and product, and emotional elements were related to feelings only (functions of the brand and product were not discussed relative to their use).

Exploring the data further, evidence of four other underlying themes: brand loyalty, opposition towards the other brand, acknowledgment of the other brand, as well as stories of other’s experiences were found. These themes captured underlying latent beliefs. Brand loyalty theme was offered in monologues in which Apple and Samsung users expressed why they were drawn to their respective brand and products. Both Apple and Samsung users also expressed adverse thoughts with regards to the other brand. Brand users commented negatively about the other brand and its product. Those were organized under the theme opposition towards the other brand. On the other hand, both Apple and Samsung users also stated the benefits of the competing brand. While, brand community members expressed their loyalty to their brand of choice, they also positively acknowledged the opposite brand. These monologues were organized under the theme acknowledgement of the other brand. The final theme that emerged from the monologues was the idea of articulating the experiences of friends and family with regards to
Samsung or Apple. Brand community members told stories about the experiences of friends and family members with the Samsung or Apple brand and their respective products.

4.2.1 Monologues: Functional or Emotional Element

The contexts of the statements were either just functional or emotional in nature relating to the brand or product. As mentioned previously, features of the brand and product were commented on and the feelings or emotions one had about a brand were offered.

Some of the functional monologues were:

F4-S3: I got the best deal while signing up for my phone with the Android. And… the screen is bigger. It is easier to use in that respect. I find the iPhone are too much like the iPods.

F1-S2: I have always seen Samsung as a pretty quality brand. And I wanted an android.

F1-S1: This is something different you know what I mean. It’s fast.

F1-A4: I just like how every thing is connected like my Mac book my iPad my Apple TV. Everything is just altogether iCloud.

These monologues from participants were about actual brand and product attributes, or the augmented elements of the brand and product. For instance, the Samsung user, F1-S3 stated that he or she enjoys the bigger screen and ease of use; thus, he or she is describing brand and product attributes. The second participant (F1-S2) discussed an augmented attribute of the brand, quality. Similarly, many monologues surrounding functional elements were found in this study.

Some of the emotional monologues were:
F1-S1: I love it!

F3-S4: … [Galaxy] gives your more satisfaction cause you can explore more.

F2-A1: Well I like my phone...its fun it does everything I need. Don’t really have problems with it, never have problems with it.

F4-A3: I just like Apple. I don’t know.

Unlike the functional statements, these emotional statements focused on feelings participants received via the brand and product. For instance, the participant (F1-S1) articulated the love for the product. The participant (F3-S4) described that he or she receives greater satisfaction from the Galaxy. This statement did not specifically reference the brand or product features. The participant (F4-A3) also explained that he or she is fond of Apple, the brand. Again, this participant did not relate his or her brand loyalty to specific brand elements or products functions.

Further analysis of these monologues revealed latent meaning that is discussed in the next four sections.

4.2.2 Monologues: Expressing Loyalty for one’s own Brand

The data indicated that brand communities expressed their loyalty towards their respective brand. For instance, the Samsung brand community communicated their devotion for Samsung and Samsung Galaxy by expressing what they admired about the brand and product. The Apple brand community did this as well. For instance, a member of the Samsung brand community (F3-S3) articulated that he or she is attracted to the Samsung Galaxy because of its compatibility. The device allows its users to share information with anyone and any device. An Apple community member expressed that
one of the reasons he or she is attracted to Apple and Apple iPhone is because of the
iMessanger function, which allows him or her to keep in touch with his or her family and
friends around the world. More examples are explored below. First, four examples from
Samsung consumers are presented:

F3-S3: You can share anything.

As mentioned previously, this comment had to do with compatibility. In this case,
the user prefers a Samsung Galaxy, as the phone is able to give or receive information
with almost any device, like computers, tablets, and smart phones easily. Another user
stated that:

F3-S4: The S3, like for me I prefer to use manual stuff. I can really try
everything. Like do things step by step. I prefer the S3.

Participant F3-S4 enjoys his or her phone because of the customizability of the
Samsung Galaxy operating system. The Samsung Galaxy uses Android, which is an
open-source operating system. Users are able to tailor their operating system to their
needs, rather than being limited to the options given by the brand.

F2-S2: I initially bought the Samsung cause I actually had a choice
between the Samsung and iPhone with my upgrade but iPhone was more
expensive and so I kind of looked more into it and I actually liked the
Samsung better because I like that you can customize it and have
something like different so I went with the cheaper one and I ended up just
like loving it.

This user described that one of the motivating factors for picking a Samsung
Galaxy over the iPhone was price. Nonetheless, upon purchasing the device, he or she
has grown to like the phone, especially the customizability provided by the operating system.

F1-S2: I Love it! I don’t know. It’s the best thing I have ever had. It is fast and powerful. All the updates I had the first Galaxy and it was so slow. It was just killing me. It took like an hour to do all the updates. Here I click all the updates. I turn to someone and back and its done and I am like WHAT?

This particular Samsung user had had previous Samsung Smartphone devices. However, he or she described their current Galaxy as being the best thing he or she has ever had. The user then went on to describe the fast updating procedure, which happens fairly routinely with most electronic devices in order to make improvements, without purchasing a new product.

Next, four examples from Apple consumers are presented:

F3-A3: I love my phone. Like I started a Mac book pro and I felt like just the connection to my phone and all the same stuff and like everything I liked better…

This Apple user described how he or she came to acquire an iPhone. This brand community member had previously owned other Apple devices, and thought the iPhone was the perfect device, because of his or her enjoyment of music, and the need for a new phone.

F2-A2: I have the same phone and they are really easy to se especially if you have a Mac Book or an iPad you can use them all they kind of combine

This user described the ease associated with using an Apple device. He or she has come to be a loyal Apple fan due to the connectivity of the Apple devices. Apple devices connect via iCloud, a virtual space that houses all one’s music, calendar, documents,
information etc. Therefore, if one is to download an album onto his or her computer, it will show up in iTunes on his or her iPhone, iPad, and iPod.

F1-A1: Like I mean I have had an Apple product. Like it was my first ever legitimate product was my iPod and like it lasted forever. And just like seem like all of their products would be good quality because of that. I have never had a problem with it. You know what I am saying.

Similar to F3-A3, this brand community member articulated his or her loyalty to Apple by stating how he or she acquired an iPhone. Like this users (F3-A3), he or she had a previous Apple product, which won him or her over. Therefore, they continue to purchase Apple products, and view the brand as a quality brand.

F1-A2: I love the iMessage because I am from Turkey and I have been on a lot of exchange program in Europe so I have friends all over the world so I can message them immediately that’s why I love it.

As discussed previously, this brand community member is a loyal Apple consumer because Apple devices have a feature called iMessage. This uses wifi or data, which is available, to send messages similar to an SMS. Overall, the data indicate both Samsung and Apple users express their loyalty for their respective brand by sharing monologues that describe both functional and emotional aspects that drive them to remain loyal. While, brand members expressed their devotion for their own brand by stating what he or she likes about their respective brand, they also talked negatively about the other brand, to demonstrate their loyalty to their respective brand.

4.2.3 Monologues: Opposition towards the Other Brand.

Opposition towards the other brand manifested within the monologues. This type of data were negative in nature. Specifically, brand members would state their dislike about the other brand and its’ product and derogate the brand and its products. Both
Apple and Samsung users expressed adverse statements. The data below highlights some of the opposing comments made by brand members. The statements are grouped according to who made the statement (Apple users or Samsung users) and the emotional comments have been italicized.

Statements expressed by Samsung users are listed below:

F3-S2: *I think iPhone is a stupid device.* I use to have an iPhone and, for example if you wanted to change the ring tone you have to do it on the computer and transfer it onto the cell phone. But the Galaxy, you just click and change the ring tones and it will change it.

This Samsung user emotionally expressed his or her dislike for Apple’s iPhone emotionally. This participant communicated dislike for the phone then explained his or her frustration with a feature of the iPhone.

F4-S4: *The problem with Apple is everything has to be Apple.* Like it only works with their system. So I like Samsung that way cause it can like connect with a lot of websites and stuff, where Apple might have a problem with some software.

This statement refers to how Apple devices can only connect to one Apple devices. To ensure all applications work simultaneously between devices, it is ideal to have an Apple computer, Apple Smartphone, and Apple tablet (iPad).

F3-S4: *I just find [Apple] boring cause it is just always the same.* Like iPhone2. Just touch it.

This Samsung participant made reference to the customizability of the Samsung Galaxy devices. These devices run on an open-source operating system, which give users more flexibility with regard to what their phone can do, what the interface looks like, and how it operates.
F1-S1: *The Apple store got you! Every time I go into that store I just get a bad vibe. Everyone working there is just so stuck up.*

This participant stated his or her dislike for Apple, the store, and its employees. The speech was emotional in nature since he or she did not specifically talk about the functional elements of the brand or product, but the feeling him or her experienced upon entering the Apple store.

F3-S3: *Like when I look at [the Apple] phone, I think the screen is just so small, but this [Galaxy] is normal.*

A visible difference between the two smart phones is the size; Apple iPhone is smaller than the Samsung Galaxy. This brand community member views the iPhone as being abnormal with regards to size.

F2-S3: *[Apple users] are pretty loyal; it also showed how ignorant they are ‘cause they didn’t even know what they were getting* 

This Samsung brand community member discussed Apple users lining up for iPhone 5 before they knew about the new features offered by the phone.

F1-S3: *I think Apple has become a religion.* It’s not like, like people just buy a phone and are happy with the phone. They either buy an iPod and then they buy iPhone they buy Mac and they buy everything from Apple. They don’t see anything.

This participant’s comment suggested Apple users will purchase Apple products as long as Apple produces them. This participant suggested that even though better products may be on the market, Apple users do not care.

F1-S1: *Apple is just trying to sucker more money from the competitor and blow them out of the water. It is a shady businesses tactic I find.* They realized Samsung is getting more popular so we are going to sue them for all this money.
F1-S1 is made reference to a lawsuit Apple filed against Samsung. Apple claimed that Samsung copied patents belonging to Apple. Thus, Apple has taken Samsung to court. Overall, the statements discussed in this section express Samsung brand members’ aversion for Apple. These monologues differentiate the Samsung brand community from the Apple brand community, as they express what Samsung brand community members dislike about Apple. Next, statements expressed by Apple users are listed below:

F2-A1: [Apple] is being smart. If Samsung could do that they would too.

This brand community member was referring to the marketing strategies employed by Apple and Samsung. This Apple brand community member believes that Apple has to do little marketing. The way the company has designed their line of products, automatically entices consumers to purchase them. This participant indicates that if Samsung could attract consumers as easily they would. Similar to the Samsung users expressing their dislike for Apple, below are some examples of Apple brand community members communicating their dislike for Samsung.

F2-A1: I like the iPhone. It’s smaller. I like it

The Apple brand community member is communicating why they do not like the Samsung. The smaller size of the iPhone is what makes it more attractive.

F1-A3: Like to have a store like to go to, like Samsung doesn’t have a store really to go to, like to fix them.

This brand community member described the ease associated with solving problems related to one’s Apple iPhone. Apple members are able to go to the Apple
store, which can help solve problems in store. A third party, such as one’s network provider, does not manage the problem.

F3-A4: Samsung is huge. Like, who wants a phone that big? It is a huge thing.

This particular monologue made reference to the size of the phone, which was commonly commented on. The Apple brand community member showed his or her loyalty to Apple, by disparaging the Samsung Galaxy.

F1-A3: They are also a lot bigger to carry.

This Apple devotee makes referred to the size of the Samsung Galaxy. Again, the Apple user expresses dislike for the Samsung’s Galaxy due to its larger size.

F4-A2: I don’t know I feel, like for me this is big enough. Why do I need that?

Again, this monologue is consistent with previous comments, which talked about the size of the Samsung Galaxy. Like the other brand community member, this member showed his or her loyalty by dismissing the need for a larger phone.

The comments under the opposition theme are plentiful. Both Apple and Samsung users clearly articulated their dislike for the other brand. It is important to highlight that this was done without engaging in a conversation. Overall, brand community members communicate negative thoughts about the other brand without engaging in discussion with the other brand community members.
4.2.4 Monologues: Acknowledging the Benefits of the Other Brand

The second subtheme that manifested from the notion of monologues was the idea of acknowledgement. Brand communities positively discussing the other brand was a common type of monologue that appeared in the data. While the participants stated that they are loyal users of either Apple or Samsung, they were not disparaging towards the other brand. Instead, the Apple and Samsung users state positive elements of the other brand and products, and recognized what the other brand and product does well. The contexts of the statements were functional and emotional in nature. Participants highlighted positive functions of the brand and product and articulated their feelings about the other brand and product. For instance, when the probing question from the focus group moderator, “does anyone have something else to add” was posed to the focus group, in response, an Apple user (F1-A1) stated: “I think Samsung are the better phone then the iPhone.” More examples regarding Apple and Samsung acknowledging the opposite brand within monologues are shared below. Again, the emotional comments are italicized.

Examples from Apple users:

F4-A1: Competitor’s phones look bigger, sleeker, better designed.

Similar to the example discussed above, this Apple brand community member acknowledges the design of the Samsung Galaxy. While he or she is a part of the Apple brand community, he or she positively communicated about the look of the Galaxy phone.

F3-A4: *I feel like the iPhone is a good phone*, but like if you want a tablet then I think Samsung Galaxy tablet is so much better than the iPhone tablet, the iPad.
This brand community member articulated that he or she does think the iPhone is a good phone, nonetheless, Samsung’s tablet is a better device compared to the Apple tablet.

F1-A1: *I think Samsung are better phones than the iPhone.*

Again, this Apple brand community member articulated positive feelings about the look of the Samsung Galaxy.

F3-A1: Yeah I think the iPhone is uglier.

Similar to the first comment, F4-A1, this participant sees the Samsung Galaxy as a good looking phone, despite the fact he or she uses an Apple iPhone.

F1-A1: Siri is crap.

F1-A1 bluntly articulated his or her dislike for Siri. Siri is a voice activated virtual personal assistant feature on iPhone that can complete commands like: write emails, answer text messages, and find the weather report. This user expressed that the application does not work well.

F1-A1: But eventually if someone knew like Samsung or whatever makes something new like crazy I don’t think like you know some people who are Apple will probably switch. If something new crazy come out. You will always have to kind of innovate, but like a good amount of will stay even if not much has changed.

Here, the Apple user communicated that if a brand, like Samsung develops an innovate product compared to other devices on the market, people may be more incline to leave Apple for the other brand.

F1-A1: I have never seen a phone like [Galaxy] like that break before, I have seen so many iPhones break.
This Apple brand community member articulated that unlike Apple iPhone, he has never seen a Samsung Galaxy break.

F1-A1: *I like the Samsung more…* I like the screen, I like how it is wider.

Again, the size of the two phones is being discussed. This Apple user described that they are attracted to the wider screened Samsung Galaxy.

F4-A1: I think when I look at the Samsung and Android phones they have better design. They are larger. They have a contour design that is better for phones.

Even though this participant is part of the Apple community, they articulate that the Galaxy is designed well. The comments discussed in this section are examples of acknowledgement. These monologues indicate that while Apple users are loyal to Apple, the users recognize and communicate benefits found in Samsung and Samsung Galaxy. The same was seen with Samsung brand community member with regards to Apple and iPhone.

Examples of Samsung users acknowledging Apple products are presented below:

F1-S2: *I do, I do like the iPhone.*

This Samsung user articulated that they have positive feelings about the iPhone.

F3-S1: That’s one thing *I like about the iPhone:* I could just pick up an iPhone from anywhere and use it right away. Like right away. I could do what I wanted to. Android it takes some time. Like you need to set up your lay out. It takes awhile…

Here, F3-S1, delved into more detail regarding why they like the iPhone. They discussed that the iPhone is very easy to use compared to an Android phone like the Samsung Galaxy.

F2-S1: I actually like the look of the iPhones too. Even though I have a Samsung, I like the look more.
A Samsung user articulated his or her preference for the look of an iPhone over the Galaxy.

F3-S4: I think iPhone is easier to use.

Similar to the participants F3-S1, this Samsung Galaxy user acknowledged how easy the iPhone is to use.

F2-S2: I think Apple’s fans are more dedicated because, they have been doing it longer than Samsung. Samsung recently kind of took off…

This monologue articulated a Samsung brand community member’s belief that Apple users loyalty to the company may be because Apple has a longer history compared to the Samsung Galaxy.

F1-S2: I think the iPhone is better.

In an early example, an Apple brand community member articulated that he or she felt the Samsung Galaxy is a better phone. In this example, a Samsung user articulated that the iPhone is better. This individual is devoted to Samsung, however, he or she acknowledges that the iPhone is perhaps a better device.

F3-S1: …I got to say Apple sells it all as like a big package. If you have a Mac book and an iPhone you are set. It is easy to go. They built brand loyalty, which is smart on their front…

The marketing technique utilized by Apple is communicated in this example. The Samsung user made a statement about the connectivity of the Apple products. Apple works hard to ensure their products have seamless connection to one another. Apple highlights connectivity between its products in their advertisements. This Samsung user acknowledges that Apple does this well, which cause them to have a high volume of consumers. Overall, the data here suggests that Samsung users acknowledge benefits in
Apple and Apple iPhone. In this section brand communities positively recognized aspects of the other brand.

The theme monologue is interesting as it indicates that brand community members communicate their thoughts in a unidirectional manner. The examples under the theme showed participants expressed their opinions without engaging in conversation with the other brand community. When evaluating the context of the monologues, both emotional and functional claims are made. For instance, a comment made above was: “I think Samsungs are better phones”. This participant, while an Apple user, shares thoughts about Samsung that are not supported by reference brand or product features. This is different than a comment made by another Apple users who articulates his or her thought by making references to the design elements of the phone (F4-A1: Competitor’s phones look bigger, sleeker, better designed). Furthermore, the data reveals that monologues are either oppositional or acknowledging in nature. Overall, brand community members engage in both negative and positive natured monologues that focus on either emotional or functional elements.

4.2.5 Monologues: Stories about Brand Experiences

The final theme emerged was narratives regarding brand experiences. This theme is similar to someone telling a story. Brand community members shared experiences they had with the brand and/or product. For instance F2-A4 stated: “I don’t know… I feel like Apple is the best for me. Like personally like it is the best for music. Like I have had other mp3 and they just like sucked. So like and that’s one of the reasons I got it…”. The
Apple user explored an experience they had with Apple. Samsung users also shared narrative relating to brand experience. For example F2-S2 stated:

“I initially bought the Samsung cause I actually had a choice between the Samsung and iPhone with my upgrade but iPhone was more expensive and so I kind of looked more into it and I actually liked the Samsung better because I like that you can customize it and have something like different so I went with the cheaper one and I ended up just like loving it”.

Like the previous example the Samsung user articulated an experience they had with the brand/product. Brand community members explain what phones their friends and family members use or have used, and why they use that particular device. Members tell stories related to brand and product features.

     Brand community members also shared experiences other then their own. Each story highlighted someone else’s use with the phone. The stories told were regarding the same phone as the speaker, and the competing Smartphone brand. An Apple brand community member shared experiences one had with an Apple device, or a story regarding a Samsung device. Below, examples of storytelling are grouped according to who communicated the narrative, Apple or Samsung brand community members.

The following four examples are Apple members sharing experiences:

F3-A2: My friend doesn’t like to use iTunes, but that how Apple makes you use iTunes to protect your information.

The notion of information security was being discussed at this time. Participants were conversing whether a Samsung was more secure than an iPhone and vice versa. This participant told that his or her friend does not like iTunes, for whatever reasons.

F2-A1: I had a Blackberry pearl like 2009 and that broke then I had another Blackberry and that one broke and so I just realized that… that app store was really bad and you couldn’t really do anything on it. I knew a lot of people who had [an Apple] phone and really liked it so I got it.
This participant explained how he or she came to own an Apple iPhone. He or she articulated that they knew a lot of people who were fond of the device, which is why he or she purchased it.

F2-A2: I guess my whole room has all the exact same phone… like you will be sleeping in bed and you will hear a phone vibrating and you will be like oh my phone is vibrating, and you go check it and its not your phone. ‘Cause they are like all the same. Like all my friends have the same phone… like a bunch of iPhones will be on the table and you won’t know which one is yours….

This Apple user, F2-A2, told a story about their experience with his or her roommates with relation to the iPhone. They often do not know whose phone is whose because every one owns an iPhone.

F1-A2: Like I have buddies who have [Galaxy] kind of phone and other Androids and I use to have an older style laptop and ever since I got the Mac I just think the layout and the way I am able to use the different programs is a lot easier for me. And this just my preference I don’t think I love Apple as a company more than any other thing. I still think those phones are really cool like my friend has one still simple lay out easy… its easy…

This brand community member discussed the types of devices his or her friends have.

The next three examples present Samsung brand community members’ narratives of friends and family members’ brand experiences:

F3-S1: Like my brother has an iPhone. He loves it. He actually had a Galaxy Note too the big one the tablet, and he was like I need to get a smaller more usable phone and he got the 5. The iPhone 5. And we still argue about it…
In this situation, the brand community member, F3-S1, discussed his or her brother switching from a Samsung device to an Apple product.

F1-S1: Like my brother has the iPhone 5 and he even said he was disappointed with it ‘cause it isn’t anything new really. I feel like with Samsung each, like S1 S2 and S3 they all progressed so much with adding new stuff to each one. I feel like with iPhone it is just like slowing down just doing the same stuff… you know what I mean. I am sure if a S4 comes out it will be more powerful than this one and different right.

Similar to the previous example, this Samsung users mentioned his or her sibling’s experience with an Apple product. His or her narrative regarded the improvements made to each Apple models compared to the Samsung Smartphone models.

F1-S3: … Like my mom likes the smaller phones so she would like the iPhone. I like bigger phones ‘cause I like the big screen cause I read documents, I read PDF, I create files, I do the word documents, and that screen is just way too small for me. I need the much bigger screen

This monologue is consistent with the statements made previously. This brand community member highlighted the preferences of his or her mother and compared it to their own needs and wants. Overall, these statements reflect past experiences one has had relative to the experiences of his or her friends and family. Since these shared experiences do not develop into conversation between brand communities this subtheme has been categorized under the monologue theme.

The theme of dialogues also emerged from the data. Dialogues are the idea that the two brand communities engaged in conversation with one another. Dialogues are discussed in more detail in the subsequent section.
4.3 Dialogue Between the Two Brand Communities

The second major theme that manifested from the data were dialogue between the two brand communities. The data suggests interplay (dialogue) between the two brand communities. Brand communities interacted with one another with relation to the brands; the data also indicated two subthemes within the broader idea of dialogue. The two subthemes manifested as brand rivalry and the exchange of knowledge. Brand rivalry subtheme was negative in nature; while the subtheme exchanging of knowledge dialogue is positive in nature. Samsung and Apple brand community members engaged in these types of conversations. Dialogues were different from the monologues as the contexts of the interplay were functional in nature rather then function and emotional. Below supporting evidence related to brand rivalry and brand sharing is presented.

4.3.1 The Interplay of both Brand Communities: Expressing their Opposition for the Other Brand

When evaluating the dialogue data, this study found manifestation of conversations. Brand community members from the opposite brand communities engaged in conversation that communicated his or her own brand as superior and challenged the opposite users’ preferences. For instance, one of the statements expressed to the focus group by the facilitator was, “Apple doesn’t need to innovate, the isheep will follow”. In response to that statement, a Samsung users stated, “so sometimes I feel like people don’t look for new things, they look for Apple. They don’t look at Galaxy. They just see Apple and there are like ok”. In response an Apple user articulated that, “They see Apple and know it can do it all…” It is evident that the Samsung users derogate the Apple users by
agreeing that the “isheep” will follow. The use of isheep suggests Apple users will continue to use Apple products regardless of changes made. The Apple user retaliated by arguing Apple users do not need to shop around, because their brand is the best. More examples are listed below in the form of conversation sets.

Conversation set 1:

F4-S1: Yes widgets. The big ones. You can have full pages sets of calendar and music mixing on pages and not just little boxes. You can actually do it.

F4-A2: That’s kind of Apple’s consistency. They try and be consistent. With all the same sized squares and stuff…

F4-S4: I think it makes it feel more personalized or something. Like you can or even I can change. So if I decide I’m more like not into my calendar and more into whatever then I can do it.

The Samsung users expressed why they think his or her brand is great, however, the Apple user saw this as a threat and responded by expressing the strength of their brand: consistency. A different Samsung user joins the conversation and explained the benefits of widgets. This data is indicates that one is trying to prove why their brand is the better brand; it demonstrated rivalry.

Conversation set 2:

F3-A3: Yeah, so the whole package.

F3-S2: Well, you can get the whole package with Samsung as well.

F3-A4: But they don’t connect to each other.

F3-A1: Yeah.

A2: Like the iCloud.
S2: See, my phone I can backup everything and its all on my computer or anything. Like all my music and stuff without plugging it in, it is all in iCloud. It is all in cyber space somewhere. It’s private.

In this case, the Apple user challenged the Samsung user by communicating the iPhone’s ability to connect to other Apple devices seamlessly. The Apple users suggested that Samsung does not have the same connectivity abilities as the Apple. Like the previous example, both brand community members attempted to communicate why his or her respective brand is superior.

Conversation set 3:

F2-S1: Um, I would not say it is less easy, because it is open source. So like a lot of developers always post bug fixes and stuff. Ah and I know there are forums where Apple users go on to address problems and they are usually consistent problems. It is pretty much the same this with Android. It is the same type of community across the boared. People are just…

F2-A2: I don’t ever remember the last time I had a problem with the iPhone. Like I have had it for like forever and I have not had a single problem with it so.

The Samsung user communicated that while Samsung Galaxy is relatively new compared to iPhone does not mean seeking assistance with problems is any more difficult than it would be with the iPhone. The Apple user interrupted and articulated that his or her phone does not need assistance, as it is a better device. Like the previous two examples, the data shows that the opposite brand communities opposed one another when engaging in conversation.

Conversation set 4:

F1-A3: I like to have the iPod. Samsung doesn’t really have an iPod built in.

F1-S1: No, I listen to the music player.
F1-A3: It’s not like an iPod then.

F1-S1: Well no cause it’s a Samsung right?

F1-S2: You can put music on any phone.

In this example, the Apple user challenged the Samsung user’s device, by saying the Galaxy lacks an iPod. The Samsung user retaliated by defending his choice by stating the Samsung Galaxy does have a music player. The Apple user communicated that a music player is not an iPod (as to imply an iPod is superior to any music player). Again, both between the brand communities are engaged in dialogue that was competitive in nature.

Conversation set 5:

F3-S3: This [picks up Galaxy] is clean. The big screen. It is perfect.

F3-A3: I just like the simplicity of this [shows iPhone]

F3-A4: Yeah, same.

During this portion of the conversation, members of the brand community were discussing the look of each phone. The Samsung user picked up his or her phone and proclaimed how great him or her thought their phone was. Two Apple brand community members retaliated by stating their phone is better, as it is simpler. This conversation set makes evident that these two brand communities engage in rivalry.

Conversation set 6:

F3-A3: What about the battery life?

F3-S1: It is actually really good.

F3-S3: Better than the iPhone.

F3-S1: Like, I charge it every night like before I go to sleep and it lasts me like a day and half.
F3-S3: Like, the battery life is great.

F3-A1: I charge it on Monday and its Wednesday… I think iPhone is better. 3 days I didn’t charge it.

F3-S2: He didn’t use it.

F3-A1: I used it. I listen to music.

This conversation set discussed the battery life of the two phones. It begins with an Apple member asking about the battery life. The Samsung member described the battery life is on his or her Galaxy. Finally, an Apple user reacted by arguing the battery life on the iPhone is better, as they charge it every other day. A Samsung user comments that the Apple user never used his or her phone that is why it lasted so long.

Conversation set 7:

The focus group facilitator asked a probing question related to Samsung Smartphone users’ thoughts about the durability of their phone: “Galaxy users are you worried about the durability…”?

Participants responses:

F3-S1: I have dropped it a couple of times. Not intentionally. It happens. I have a few scratches on the bottom. At least this feels more durable than the iPhone. I don’t know why? ‘Cause I think it is a bit bigger.

F3-A3: See, I would be more scared to drop that one.

F3-S1: yeah?

F3-A3: This is stronger. The other one would just slip. It looks like you can break it.

In this conversation set 7, the Samsung user, F3-S1, commented that he or she feels her phone is more durable than the iPhone. The iPhone user responded by stating
that since the Samsung Galaxy is thinner, he or she would be more worried about dropping it.

Conversation set 8:

F3-A3: The viruses? See that is partly why I switched to Apple too. ‘Cause even with your phone. I mean with your computer if you have any virus you cant do anything.

F3-A2: Yeah.

F3-A3: … one of the reasons you choice Apple is because of the.

F3-A2: There are no viruses.

F3-S1: There are viruses.

A common debate among consumers is whether or not Apple products can contract viruses. Many purchase Apple products because viruses are not common for Apple devices. This Samsung user argued that Apple products can contract viruses.

Conversation set 9:

F2-S2: Yeah… They were also the first ones to use Flash player I know, which is kind of a big deal if you are always on the Internet and stuff on your phone. Now you don’t necessarily need mobile apps to go on the Internet. I kind of like the Samsung user face better. Like you can move things around anywhere. You have Youtube good search engines on the screen…

F2-A1: You can do that with iPhone. Like you can slide and slide and you have the search engine on the top.

F2-S2: Oh yeah

F2-A1: Yea…

Apple Smartphone and tablet devices do not support Flash player, a browser plug in that enables consumers to view videos and other media. Even though one is able to use Youtube on his or her iPhone, some videos may not be viewed due to absence of this plug
The Samsung Galaxy user highlighted that this as a disadvantage of Apple products. The Apple user feels this does not affect the functionality of his or her product.

Conversation set 10:

F4-S1: It is just really quicker text messaging. I really don’t see the point. It uses your data

F4-A2: It uses the wifi.

F4-S1: If you don’t have wifi, it uses up your data so you are paying more for texting people.

In this conversation set 10, the brand community members discussed iMessenger. The Samsung member does not see the benefits in this product feature. The Apple user tried to explain that it is free, since it uses wifi. However, the Samsung user highlighted that one needs to have wifi access, if not, the feature uses one’s data. Overall, these ten conversation sets indicated that brand community members have dialogue with one another, and that the conversations are rival in nature and focus on functional elements.

4.3.2 The Interplay of both Brand Communities: Exchanging Information

The findings discussed in the previous section shows the two brand communities interacting and engaging in conversation with the other brand community. The findings also indicate that the interplay between these two brand communities relates to brand rivalry. However, the findings also suggests interplay between brand communities is positive. Under dialogue, the subtheme of sharing has also manifested from the data. This concept is concerned with giving and/or seeking resources. In this context, participants shared information. For instance, if a participant did not have knowledge about an iPhone feature, other participants would inform that individual on that particular feature. Another
instance is when an iPhone user did not know what the interface look like on a Samsung and requested to see it. Below are more examples that highlight sharing dialogue.

Conversation set 1:

F1-S1: What exactly is the difference between the 4 and 4S?
F1-A4: The only thing that is different is Siri.
F1-S1: Oh, what is that?
F1-A4: Siri, the voice thing. I don’t use Siri very much.
F1-S1: Is it right that Siri doesn’t work in Canada?
F1-A4: Maps.

This set of data shows that brand community members shared their knowledge with the opposite brand community members. The Samsung user posed a question: what are the differences between the two devices? The Apple user explained the difference between the two models and what the Siri feature does. The Samsung user was curious if it was the Siri feature that does not work well in Canada. The Apple users explains that it is the Maps app the does not work well in Canada as it was designed for the United States of America. Overall, this conversation set indicates sharing of information between opposite brand community members.

Conversation set 2:

F3-A1: What did Apple sue Samsung for?
F3-S1: There is a bunch of stuff.
F3-A1: Something about the rough edges? Like, the fact that Samsung copied the rounded edges.
F3-S1: Its all patents right.
Similar to the previous example, the Apple user did not challenge the opposing brand. Rather an Apple user sought information about the existing company oriented rivalry between Samsung and Apple. The Samsung user shared information with the Apple user.

Conversation set 3:
F3-S1: Isn’t it the same as the Samsung?
F3-A2: I don’t know. How about the camera? How many mega pixels?
F3-S2: 8
F3-A2: Yeah. 8 too. Ok.
F3-S2: 8 in the back 5 in the front.
F3-A2: Yeah. It is the same.

Brand rivalry was not present in conversation set three. Brand community members shared information about their device with the opposite brand community member. It is also important to point out that participants engaged in a dialogue. They are communicating to each other, back and forth.

Conversation set 4:
F4-A3: It’s weird ‘cause like I look at the old iPhone and then I look at mine cause I have the new retina and it is so.
F4-A1: I can’t relate. I have the old one so I cannot say.
F4-S1: Let me see.
F4-A3: See.

In conversation set four, the Samsung user wanted to see the Apple iPhone’s display. The Apple user gave the Samsung user his or her phone. Again, the conversation indicates that positive dialogue is present between brand communities.
Conversation set 5:

F3-A1: Do you use your phone for phone for music? Like an ipod? Like do you listen to your music on it?

F3-S1: That’s all I use it for. Like music 24/7. Like I even carry headphones all the time.

F3-A1: Oh there is one thing about the music thing. It is called music square. It is actually so insane.

This dialogue conveys the exchanging of knowledge with the other brand community. The Apple user, F3-A1, sought information regarding a music player feature in the Samsung Galaxy. A Galaxy user articulated that he or she uses it all them time.

Conversation set 6:

F2-A3: Like when you where getting your Samsung had you ever used one before?

F2-S2: Hm like yea I was just using in the store for the first time and thought it was really neat and it was really different from the iPhone. I don’t know…

F2-A3: Like when I got my iPhone I pretty much knew what I was going to get. Like all my friends had it… so I knew siri and stuff. I don’t know if you like I have never used one before, so I would not know what I was getting.

F2-S3: Was it just as fun … getting it?

F2-A3: I guess… like going from a blackberry is a lot of fun cause blackberry had awful games and stuff.

Here, the two brand communities discussed the experience each member had when getting their devices. The Apple user asked if the Samsung user had any previous experience with the device. The Samsung user asked the iPhone user if getting his or her new iPhone was enjoyable. The Apple users discussed that some of the features made the experience fun.
Conversation set 7:

F1-A4: I jail broke my iPhone so I can do something Samsung can and still have my iPhone

F1-S1: Isn’t your warranty void once you jailbreak your it?

F1-A4: Then I just restore it.

F1-S1: Oh!

Brand community members discussed jailbreaking. Jailbreaking is when one unlocks the phone, enabling the user to make adjustments to the operating system as they please.

Conversation set 8:

F1-S1: Do you actually use the iCloud?

F1-A4: Yes.

F1-S1: What does it do exactly?

F1-A4: All my music from my computer goes to my Apple TV so I can play it from right there with my speakers. If I send a text from here, I have my iPad in my bag… it will show up on that conversation, and on my computers conversation.

F1-S1: Ok.

The topic of the iCloud is discussed amongst the two brand communities. The Samsung user sought information regarding this brand feature. The Apple user freely shared his or her knowledge about the application.

Conversation set 9:

S2: I like how my apps show up on my screen… everyone has an app store, but I can design my screen to how I want… if I only want to use 2 pages then that’s ok…

S3: I like the widgets on the Samsung
A1: The widgets?

S2: Yea...[shows them]

A1: Oh snap

S2: You have different things like weather and stuff

This conversation set was about widgets. The Samsung user shares information regarding the product feature and demonstrated it to the Apple brand community.

### 4.4 Summary of Findings

Overall, two major themes have been derived from the data collected. The notion of monologues and dialogues indicates that brand community members communicate unidirectional as well as engage in conversation with opposite brand community members. Thus, there are instances where statements are made by brand community members as a way to express their thoughts, however, exchange of thoughts between two or more parties does not occur. On the other hand, the data also indicates that the exchange of thoughts between the two brand communities also takes place. By evaluating the data more in-depth, subthemes are visible. Thus, with relation to monologues, in a simple form this study found statements expressing functional and emotional elements as well as in a complex form, this study found statements manifest as one displaying their loyalty to a given brand, stating their opposition for a brand, acknowledging the benefits of the other brand and communicating consumption experiences. Nonetheless, some of these monologues acknowledge the competition positively.

Finally, when observing the context of the conversation, when there is interplay between the two brands, the conversations tend to be surrounding just the functional
elements of the brand and product. This is different than the monologues that discuss functional and emotional elements. Two subthemes emerged here, one theme relating to brand rivalry and the other theme relating to the exchanging of information.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

This chapter first offers discussion section and conclusion section. Conceptual and managerial contributions, limitations of this study and future research directions are offered last.

5.1 Discussion

The discussion of the findings relates to the objective of this study, as well as extends understanding of the nature of consumers’ brand rivalry. First, discussion of the findings regarding monologues: brand loyalty and opposition towards the other brand community will be presented. These two themes will be discussed in terms of existing brand community literature and oppositional brand loyalty literature respectively. The finding pertaining to the interplay of brand communities expressing their opposition for other brands will be discussed in terms of brand rivalry literature in a subsequent section. Following these three themes, discussions about the positive nature of brand rivalry will be explored. Acknowledgment monologues and monologues about stories associated with brand experiences will be discussed in relation to social identity/group literature and word-of-mouth storytelling literature respectively. Finally, discussion in connection with the knowledge exchange dialogue findings will be offered relating to the word-of-mouth literature.
5.1.1 Discussion – The Indication of a Brand Community

Brand community literature stresses members are true believers and have a connection to the brand. The findings from this study are consistent with previous literature, as the findings offer brand loyalty comments.

In an initial study on brand communities, Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) identified that brand community members are committed to the brand. These members are described as true believers. Similarly, McAlexander et al. (2002) found evidence that consumers within a brand community have a relationship with the brand and product. Zhou, Zhang, Su, and Zhou (2012) extended the previous findings as their research indicated that brand communities are committed to the brand via the commitment to the community. The findings from this study also indicate loyalty within the brand community. Specifically, focus group results show that the brands’ community members are loyal to their respective brand. Reflections of their positive connectivity to their phones and the brand were captured.

In this study, participants communicated positively about their brand, products associated with the brand, and augmented features. For instance, an Apple user stated: “I just like Apple. I don’t know”. A Samsung user stated: “I love it!” when participants where asked to comment on the their phones. An Apple user stated: “Well I like my phone...its fun. It does everything I need. Don’t really have problems with it, never have problems with it” when asked the same question. These examples express brand community member’s loyalty to both the brand and its products. The examples show participants have a strong connection to the brand. This is consistent with the literature
pertaining to brand communities. Thus, the findings from this study support the previous literature on brand communities.

5.1.2 Discussion – The Indication of an Oppositional Brand Loyalty

Opposition towards the other brand was a monologue subtheme that was presented in the findings (section 4.2.3). This theme is consistent with the oppositional brand loyalty concept found in brand community literature. Consumers engage in oppositional brand loyalty behaviour as a way to show their commitment to their own brand. The literature on brand communities articulates that brand communities partly create their identity by uniting against the enemy as a way to make their own brand more powerful (Ewing et al., 2013). Brand communities do this by positioning themselves in opposition to other brands and building group egotism as a way to communicate their brand as superior (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; Hickman & Ward, 2007; Ewing et al., 2013).

The findings of this study clearly indicate the presences of oppositional brand loyalty within brand communities. Brand community members talked negatively about the opposite brand. “I just find [Apple] boring…” and “I think iPhone is a stupid device…” are two examples presented in the findings that show Samsung brand community members communicating negative opinions about Apple and iPhone. Apple brand community member also showed their devotion for their brand by opposing Samsung. An Apple user stated: “[Samsung] haven’t done a good enough job to get [their phone] out there”. Another comment made by an Apple brand community member was similar to the previous stated; the Apple user makes reference to the marketing of the
Samsung Galaxy: “[Apple] is being smart. If Samsung could do that they would too”. These examples show adversarial views of the other brand presented by brand community members. Overall, opposing monologues findings has supported the existence of oppositional brand loyalty. Next, the following section discusses the opposing interplay between brand communities relative to the existing concept of brand rivalry.

5.1.3 Discussion – The Presence of Brand Rivalry Intensity

The results of this study support previous literature about the dark side associated with brand rivalry. Specifically, previous literature suggests that brand community members need to resist other brands in order to create their meaning and experience with their own brand community (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; Hickman & Ward, 2007). The resistance expressed between brand communities has been examined as brand rivalry (Ewing et al., 2013). Research done on brand rivalry has focused on the dark side, the resistance or opposition between two competing brand communities. Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) discuss that brand community members communicate their brand as superior, and can challenge the opposite brand community members’ choice. Muniz and Hamer (2001) further investigated the dark behaviour of brand communities. Their finding indicated consumers communicate to the other brand community about their brand preference through playful rivalries. The rivalries have been classified as playful; nonetheless, they are oppositional in nature. More recently, Ewing and colleagues (2013) found that brand rivalry type could be classified further. The themes identified in their study were: humour, epithets, ridicule, and hostility. Hickman and Ward (2007) identified
the negative (dark) communication engaged in by brand communities as trash talking.
The finding in this section highlight dialogues between brand communities that were
oppositional in nature as well.

Overall, the findings indicate that members of brand communities engage in
oppositional interplay with the other brand community. The members of brand
community communicated their brand as superior and challenged the other brand
community to defend their choice. The results demonstrated that Samsung and Apple
users articulated adverse views about the competition. This is in support of brand rivalry
literature, especially Hickman and Ward’s (2007) concept of trash talking. In the
findings, for example, conversation set highlights two Samsung users and an Apple user
who are trying to communicate their respective brand as superior. In conversation set four
of the same section, an Apple user challenges a Samsung user to defend the music player
feature in the Samsung Galaxy.

The results of this study are similar to the findings of previous research, as they
indicate that consumers engage in opposing conversations with the other brand
community. Both Samsung and Apple community members argued their brand as
superior or challenged the other brand community members’ choices. Interestingly, the
major themes humour, epithets, ridicule, and hostility identified (Ewing et al., 2013) and
playful rivalries (Muniz & Hamer, 2001) did not emerge as predominately as major
themes in this study. Nonetheless, there were some incidences of epithets and ridicule in
the language used by the participants. Thus, this study differs from existing work as this
research found support for other types of dialogue. Past literature focused on the
oppositional dialogue between online brand communities, while this study also observed
the two communities working with one another, as well as, expressing positive views about the competing brand.

In addition, unlike what has been discussed in existing literature on brand rivalry, this research indicates that brand community members’ disposition to the competing brand is not only negative. The data collected in this study indicate that brand community members also positively acknowledge the other brand based on functional and emotional elements. This is an additional insight to build upon previous literature that tells us about brand communities.

5.1.4 Discussion – Acknowledgement of the Strength of Other Brand

Existing literature suggests individuals and groups work to positively portray them self and their group. Literature also suggests people are motivated to view others not associated with their group negatively. The subtheme acknowledgement, one of the findings from this study indicates that brand community behaviour is not just constrained to the behaviour as outlined in existing literature. Overall, the findings demonstrate that brand communities discuss their loyalty to their respective brand, however, the members also reflect negatively about their own brand and positively about the other brand. Findings from this study will be explored relating to the theories of: social identity, group, self-brand connection/identification, and brand community.

Social Identity Theory proposes the groups people belong to are important in shaping their identity (Beal, Ruscher, and Schnake, 2001). Scholars also suggest consumers use brands in the development of the self; creating a self-brand connection/identification. Specifically, when one is closely tied to a group, like a brand
community, members are strongly motivated to portray their group positively (Hickman & Ward, 2007). Libai, Muller, and Peres (2009) stated: “brand owner’s positive word of mouth is more common than negative word of mouth” (p. 21). In addition, Beal, Ruscher, and Schnake (2001) suggest that groups are motivated to develop negative views with respect to non-affiliated groups. Furthermore, the development of the negative views is ongoing, and is communicated via inter-group communication (Hickman & Ward, 2007).

Overall, group members are working to communicate their community as positive compared to other groups (Schnake & Ruscher, 1998; Hickman & Ward, 2007).

Nonetheless, the results of this study suggest otherwise. Literature suggests groups form negative views about other brands; however, the findings from this study indicate brand community members have negative views about their own brand and positive views about the other brand communities. While brand communities were still devoted to their own brand and communicated their passion for their brand, they did make favorable comments about the other brand. Specifically, participants commented on a number of brand and product features like the look, and quality of the other product. For example, an Apple user’s positively commented about the look and design of the Samsung Galaxy: “Competitor’s phones look bigger, sleeker, better designed” Samsung users also discussed usability of the iPhone: “…I could just pick up an iPhone from anywhere and use it right away”. One explanation for this change in results may be related to younger consumers’ willingness to be open or try other products compared to an older demographics (Helm & Landshulze, 2013).

Brand community members also admitted they did not like features of their brand and product. For example, some Apple users communicated their dislike for the slight
differences between iPhone models, and how frequent models are released. A Samsung user acknowledged they did not like the way their phone looked. These findings show different behaviour then what is normally discussed in brand community and group literature. Usually, groups of people see their group more positively compared to others and communicate about other groups more negatively. Overall, in this study the findings indicate brand community members also reflect negatively on their own brand and positively acknowledge features of the other brand. Thus, this study extends the conceptual understanding of brand rivalry as found within the context of Smartphone users.

5.1.5 Discussion – Consumers Narratives in the Form of Storytelling

Storytelling, from a marketing perspective, is consumer narrative regarding consumption experiences. Storytelling, a form of word-of-mouth (WOM) communication, is considered a story if the structure is comprised of chronology and causality (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004; Woodside, Sood & Miller, 2008). WOM stories are temporal, they occur over time (for example, there is a beginning, middle, and an end), and there is a relationship between the story elements (for example, an action leads to a result). Storytelling takes place between consumer-to-consumer, or consumer-to-many consumers (Moore, 2012). These stories share more mundane instances rather than risky experiences (Woodside, Sood & Miller, 2008). WOM storytelling takes place in different environments. Online brand communities, face-to-face interactions, and blogs are some of the contexts which storytelling has been studied. Research by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) discussed the existence of storytelling within face-to-face and online
brand communities as a way to share consumption experience with other members. The sharing of these experiences helps others understand rituals and traditions associated with the use of the brand and/or product (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). The findings from this particular research support previous literature regarding the existence of storytelling within brand communities. Brand community members shared stories regarding their own experience with a brand or product. One of the participants described experience with a previous brand and consumption experiences associated with their current Smartphone. Overall, these stories are related to past experiences and how those experiences have driven the use of a particular brand and/or product in present time.

The findings explicitly indicate that storytelling is present within these brand communities: a finding inline with past literature. However, the results extend the WOM storytelling concept within the context of brand rivalry. Past literature offered various perspectives on WOM storytelling. Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) mention storytelling as a brand community element; where as Moore (2012) investigated how WOM influences the storyteller. Delgadillo and Escalas (2004) used a longitudinal study to understand the effects (biased memory for story, and story gist) on WOM story recall. Woodside et al. (2008) focusing on consumer storytelling theory examined how consumers use brand and products as props to tell stories about themselves. These articles are examples of the different vantage points WOM storytelling has been studied from, nonetheless, these articles mainly focus on stories from one’s own lived experience. Woodside et al. (2008) even describe WOM storytelling as people describing their own lived experience.

The findings of this study suggest another type of storytelling: the sharing of other’s consumption experiences. Brand community members shared friends and family
member’s Samsung or Apple brand experiences. The storyteller discussed others’ consumption experiences relating to the same brand as the storyteller and about different brands. In one example, a Samsung user told a story about his or her mother’s experience with an iPhone, an iPhone story. The evidence offered other stories relating to Smartphone consumption of close friends, family, roommates, brothers, and parents. Delgadillo and Escalas (2004) propose the use of stories to make sense of the events around an individual. Overall, the findings relating to the stories, the sharing of experiences supports previous literature on WOM exchange and extends literature by showing evidence of the storyteller sharing other’s brand experiences.

5.1.6 Discussion – Exchanging of Resources in the Form of Interplay between Communities

Evidence of exchange of resource was found in this study. The conversation sets showed the two brand communities sought and shared knowledge about the two brands. Overall, these findings extend the understanding from previous research on word-of-mouth literature.

Word-of-mouth communication is not only about storytelling, but can also be in the form of exchanging resources (Brown, Broderick & Lee, 2007). A fraction of the value consumers receive from a brand and/or product is through consumer-to-consumer exchange (Gruen, Osmonbekor, Czaplewski, 2005). The sharing of physical, intellectual, emotion, or monetary resources are exchanged between consumers within a brand community (Gruen, et al., 2005). Brand communities represent WOM networks, where interpersonal exchanges of consumption-related information take place (Brown et al., 2007). More specifically, Gruen et al. (2006) discuss the notion of customer-to-customer
know-how exchange. They describe it as “…the interactions among individuals that serve as an information source that enhances competency and knowledge” (Gruen et al., 2006, p. 451). Brown et al. (2007) discuss that there is an information seeker and an information source.

The findings of this study indicate that WOM exchange takes place within the context of brand rivalry. However, the findings indicate WOM exchange or consumer-to-consumer exchange within a brand community (Gruen et al., 2005; Brown et al., 2007) rather than between brand communities. A study by Libai, et al. (2009) did investigate WOM within-brand and cross-brand communication with relation to brand switching and the first entrant and product followers. Nevertheless, their study did not focus on brand communities, just users of the brands within a marketplace. Their focus was not on brand community members who are committed to both the brand and other similar brand users.

The findings of this study show evidence of WOM exchange (consumer-to-consumer information exchange) between two brand communities. The Samsung and Apple users in this research shared information relevant to their brand or device. Often times, Samsung and Apple users asked questions to the opposite brand community, in order to gain more knowledge or learn something new. For instance, an Apple user asked a Samsung user: “What did Apple sue Samsung for”? In a different example, a Samsung user asked an Apple user about the mega pixels in the iPhone’s camera. Brand community members freely sought answers about features of the other phone. Brand community members also demonstrated their phone’s features when explaining a feature to the opposite group in order to provide a better explanation. This interplay between the brand communities was never combative, but supportive. As the findings show, one
brand community would act as the information seeker, and the other brand community would act as the information source.

Overall, the context of WOM exchange is different than what has been discussed in previous literature. Previously, WOM exchange has been discussed in terms of within brand communities. This current study extends previous literature on brand rivalry and WOM exchange by offering the existence of WOM exchange between competing brand communities.

5.1.7 Summary of Discussions

This research supports past literature pertaining to brand communities and brand rivalry. Nonetheless, this study also provides evidence for other incidences that are taking place in brand rivalries. First, literature relating to brand community loyalty was supported. The findings showed evidence of brand community members expressing their loyalty for their respective brand. In addition, the monologue theme, opposition towards the other brand, supported oppositional brand loyalty literature. Brand community members communicated adverse views about the other brand. The third theme discussed was the oppositional interplay between brand communities. The evidence showed brand communities trash talking to one another. Brand communities also communicated their brand as superior and challenged the other brand to defend their choice. Overall, the findings of this research support indications of brand communities (loyalty to the brand, oppositional brand loyalty, and brand rivalry).

Furthermore, the findings within this study extend literature pertaining to social identity/group literature, WOM storytelling literature, and WOM exchange literature. For example, the monologue theme of acknowledgement indicated that brand communities
also reflect on their brand of choice negatively and recognize positive features about the other brand. Discussion pertaining to WOM storytelling indicated that brand community members share consumption experiences other than their own; thus extends existing literature on WOM storytelling. Finally, WOM exchange literature was extended as evidence indicates brand community members seeking and sharing brand information between two brand communities.

Overall, the findings coincide with the dark side of brand rivalry discussed by Muniz and Hamer (2001) and Ewing et al. (2013). However, this study also lends insight into new phenomena within the context of competing brands: acknowledgement, WOM storytelling and WOM exchange. These concepts demonstrate a positive side to brand rivalries. Opposite brand communities can still be rivals and oppose the other brand; nonetheless, they can recognize positives in the other brand and share resources with the other brand community members.

5.2 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to offer better understanding of the context of brand rivalry between consumers of competing brands and to gain an insight of the nature of communication between brand communities. Four research questions drove this research initially: 1) How do brand community members communicate to one another? 2) What do they communicate? 3) Do the conversations manifest as: humour, epithets, ridicule, and hostility (Ewing, Wagstaff & Powell, 2013)? 4) Do brand community members communicate as “I” or “we”? 
The findings from this study lend insight into the first research question about how brand community members communicate to one another. The study has demonstrated that brand community members communicate in monologues, an opinion about a brand spoken by a person occurring in the course of a conversation, and dialogues, a conversation in which two or more person exchange information. Furthermore, brand loyalty, opposition, acknowledgement, WOM storytelling, brand rivalry and WOM exchange of resources were found within the communication of monologues and dialogues.

The second research question was: what the brand community members are communicating? Reflecting on the findings, the context of the conversation depends on whether it is a monologue or dialogue. The context of the conversation is functionally and/or emotionally oriented for monologues, and functionally oriented for dialogues. When statements without discussion were made, features of the brand and product, and feelings in relation to the brand and product were also communicated within the monologue category. However, during discussion between the two brand communities, only the features of the brand and product were discussed.

It is interesting to note that both brand communities discuss similar brand and product features (for example, screen size, applications, voice recognition software, etc.). This is interesting since brand communities are proposed as exerting efforts to differentiate themselves from other brand communities (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). An article by Pendola (2013) discusses that Apple will continue to win the Smartphone wars as it has mindshare. That is, consumers think about iPhone as the leading Smartphone, demonstrating that consumers view one brand as being better, or different compared to
other brands in the market. In other words, it has been accepted that brand communities work to differentiate the brand community. Nonetheless, one needs to acknowledge that all the phones are virtually the same in today marketplace. An article: *How to buy a Smartphone? Which is better Android, or iPhone* states the phones basically do the same thing (Rowinski, 2012). This study also found the conversations each brand community have are quite similar.

The third question aims to investigate the nature of the dialogue between brand communities. Ewing’s et al. (2013) themes: humour epithets, ridicule, and hostility, were evaluated. Some findings in this study suggested epithets and ridicule were present. For instance a Samsung community member (F3-S3) communicated that he or she felt the iPhone was boring. This statement is inline with the epithets theme. Ewing et al. (2013) articulate that ridicule is a joke that lessens the seriousness associated with a comment. Laughter and tone of voice was used throughout the focus groups. Thus, the notion ridicule was present within this data. The data indicates that only one instance of extreme hostility was present. A Samsung member (F3-S2) articulated: “the Apple device is stupid”. Nonetheless, this did not manifest as a major theme. This study also found brand communities can also recognize positives in the other brand and share resources with the other brand community members; this differs from previous literature.

The final question was concerned with brand community members communicating as “I” or “we”. This study found that brand community members did share their thoughts independently, however, also shared the experience of other brand community member. For example, brand community members might discuss their experience with the brand and product, but also share a story regarding a friend or family
member who uses the same brand or the competing brand. Therefore, the findings indicate members communicate both individually and collectively.

5.3 Contributions

Contributions are offered as conceptual contributions and managerial contributions.

5.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

The objective of this study was to extend brand rivalry literature by observing the phenomenon in real time. Previous literature had focused on the dark under tones present in the interplay between two competing brand communities. Taking a grounded theory approach enabled the researcher to extract major themes present in the phenomenon of brand rivalry. The findings from this study provided supporting evidence of the oppositional nature of brand rivalry in this particular context. Thus, this research helps strengthen previous literature as it supports brand rivalry findings from other contexts in the context of Smartphone brands. Nonetheless, the findings indicated interplay other than the dark side of brand rivalry discussed in other literature. Overall, the findings provide support for the oppositional dialogue present between competing brand communities; nevertheless, concurring communication was present. Thus, the major contribution of this study is the positive communication present in this context of brand
rivalry. In the subsequent section discussion relating to the positive natured communication will be offered, more specifically the themes of: monologues: acknowledging the benefits of the other brand and the interplay of both brand communities: exchanging information.

While, the objective of this research was to look at the interplay between the two brand communities, when analyzing the findings, an important theme that manifested was the notion of monologues. Despite the lack of interaction between the two brand communities within this theme, this findings lend insight into the nature the brand community. A major theoretical contribution that was derived from these findings is the notion of monologues: acknowledging the benefits of the other brand. Brand communities strive to differentiate themselves from other communities. Brand communities tend to see the competition more negatively compared to their own group. However, in this paper, despite expressing adverse views about the competition, brand communities acknowledged benefits in the other brand. Therefore, the brand communities highlighted positive brand and product attributes associated with the competing brand.

The monologue of acknowledging benefits in the other brand is an interesting conceptual contribution to the concept of brand community and the brand rivalry phenomenon because it suggests in this context brand communities were not always adversaries with the other brand community. Part of the brand community dynamic is to differentiate from the competition by uniting against other groups and viewing one’s own groups as positive compared to others (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; Libai et al., 2009; Ewing et al., 2013). Nonetheless, as found in this study, this is not always the case. The
presence of oppositional communication is present, however, concurring monologues also occurred; why is this? A number of inferences can be made to why this theme is present. When reflecting on past brand community and brand rivalry literature, what might be labeled as ‘traditional’ or ‘older’ products and brands have been investigated. For instance, Harley-Davidson and Coca-Cola have largely been examined. The Smartphone is a significantly newer product and Apple and Samsung are relatively younger brands compared to Harley-Davidson and Coca-Cola. Also, the technology in this product is constantly advancing. The age of this product and the brands that produce this product combined with the progressiveness of the product may cause brand communities to be more open to competing brands or interested in what the competing brand’s product has to offer.

The age of the participants might also play a role in why these brand communities were willing to acknowledge benefits in the other brand. The participants in this study were between the ages of 17 and 24. While the age of the participants in other studies is not known, when looking at a product like Harley-Davidson, it can be assumed the brand communities’ overall age is quite older compared to the age of the brand communities studied in this paper. Research on brand loyalty and different generations suggest the younger generations are more willing to switch brands (Helm & Landshulze, 2013). While the participants in this study expressed their commitment and loyalty to their respective brand and there were instances of opposition, there were times where brand communities spoke positively about the benefits of the competing brand and product. The theme of acknowledging benefits in the other brand could be contributed to the generational difference of the brand communities studied. Overall, acknowledging
benefits in the other brand emerged as a major theme. This theme lends insight into more positive views about the competition within a given brand community.

The focus of this research was to study the interplay between brand communities to gain a better sense of the brand rivalry phenomenon. Examining the dialogue between the two brand communities provided interesting insight into the nature of the interaction between two competing brand communities. Previous literature discussed the opposing nature of the dialogue present between brand communities. The findings of this study supported previous literature, as adversarial dialogue was present. Nonetheless, the theme of interplay of both brand communities: exchanging information was also present. These findings indicated that brand communities willingly, openly, and positively sought and provided information. WOM exchange, particularly consumer-to-consumer know-how (Gruen, et al., 2005; Brown et al., 2007) was exchanged between the two competing brand communities.

This finding is an interested contribution; literature on brand rivalry has suggested brand communities communicate their loyalty by trash talking the competing brand, nonetheless, the findings discussed in this study indicate that brand communicates are not entirely opposing in nature. While oppositional dialogue is present, brand communities also work together to increase their knowledge about the brands and products being discussed. Can generational differences be contributed to the compatible behaviour observed in this context? Since a younger generation has been found to be less loyal to a given brand explain why brand communities are willing to share and seek information? Whatever the cause may be, the research identified a shift in dialogue compared to previous literature. While the opposing communication highlighted in brand rivalry
literature is present, the idea of WOM exchange and consumer-to-consumer know-how is also present.

Overall, two major themes emerged which contribute to previous literature by extending the current understanding of brand communities and brand rivalry. The theme of acknowledging the benefits in the other brand and WOM exchange indicate brand communities’ communication is not always adversarial in nature. Brand communities positively recognize benefits in the other brand and engage in positive interplay with the competition brand. Overall, this research indicates that brand rivalry is not always antagonistic.

5.3.2 Managerial Contributions

The results of this study have important implications for managers with respect to the current use of brand rivalry in marketing campaigns. Overall, the findings indicate competing brand communities do not completely oppose the competing brand or product; thus, company driven brand rivalry may not be transferred to consumers as intended by the company. Two main thoughts are discussed in this section. First, a discussion relating to company level brand rivalry will be offered. This section will explore the themes of monologues and dialogues in relation to company driven rivalry. The second idea offered will evaluate the nature of dialogues and make industry related suggestions based on the interplay between brand communities in this context.

Media is saturated with examples of brand competition and brand rivalry. A number of news articles and commercials communicate the competition and rivalry present between Apple and Samsung (International Business Times, 2011; Forbs, 2012; Samsung Mobil USA, 2012). The findings demonstrate that if a brand community
member is communicating in a monologue, that message is not initiating conversations with the opposition. In media, examples of consumers opposing the competition and arguing with others regarding the superiority of their brand are communicated to the public. Nonetheless, this is not necessarily what is being observed in this study. First, while participants where in the presences of the competing brand community, opposing dialogue did not always manifest. For example, if a Samsung user stated: “iPhone is boring”, but no dialogue manifested from that statement, opposing rivalry between the competing brand communities is not taking place.

Second, the dialogues between competing brand communities is not always adversarial as suggested by media. In this study, the theme of acknowledging benefits in the other brand emerged. This theme indicates that competing brand communities communicate with one another in a positive way. WOM exchange, particularly consumer-to-consumer know-how, was present in the findings and demonstrates that competing brand communities sough and shared information freely and willingly. The intense opposing behaviour viewed in media is not necessarily the sole behaviour observed in the study. Since the dialogue between these two brand communities extended beyond the opposing nature viewed in marketing campaigns, the brand rivalry fostered by companies may not be transferring to the consumers. Thus, it is suggested that companies revisit brand rivalry approaches in order to assess whether they are achieving what the company intends.

The findings also suggest that brand community members communicate more than just opposition. Brand community members acknowledge and discuss the benefits and strengths of the competing brand. Also, when opposing brand community members
are in dialogue with each other, the context of the conversation is more functional in nature. For example, competing brand users discuss the features of the brand (connectivity, safety, and quality etc), and, the phone (screen size, display, ease of use etc). Therefore, if brand community members communicate with others and acknowledge superior features of competing products and brand, it may be useful for managers to focus on product features of a superior nature when communicating to consumers. There is a need for companies to acknowledge that competition, particularly in the Smartphone market, is tougher than before and one needs to be accountable beyond portraying just emotional related images.

These results also provide support to managers regarding what consumer deemed to be important. For instance, when evaluating how and what competing brand communities communicate to one another, these results shed light on the topics of particular interest and relevance. An example includes Apple users’ frustration with new models being released quite frequently and the minimal change to each model. This information needs to be taken into account when coming up with new product innovation in the future.

5.4 Limitations

Every methodology has several inherent limitations. This research experienced limitations in relation to participant recruitment, the number of groups utilized, and participant dispositions. These limitations are discussed further in the following section.

The first limitation of this study addresses participant recruitment, specifically regarding to whom the study was advertised. The study was advertised to a small portion
of marketing students between the ages of 17 and 20. Ideally, more individuals between the ages of 18-24 should have been included in the sample since that age demographic makes up the primary segment of individuals who use a Smartphone. Additionally, the study was not advertised to all students on campus. Therefore, participants who express stronger brand loyalty towards one of the Smartphone brands may have been missed.

Another limitation has to do with the number of focus groups that were conducted. Research suggests that there is not a definitive number of focus groups that should be conducted, nonetheless, it is suggested that conducting more groups decreases the diversity between answers (Morgan, 1998b). Therefore, the number of appropriate groups conducted is therefore subjective. For the purposes of this research, four focus groups were conducted.

Also, the disposition of participants is an unavoidable limitation. As suggested by Krueger (1998) some behaviours may have acted as barriers within the focus group. Outspoken, dominant talkers as well as shy participants may affect the data being collected (Krueger, 1998). The focus group facilitator attempted to gain more insight from the more reserved participants by directing questions to him or her. Additionally, dominant participants were politely asked to allow everyone a chance to speak and provide their input before continuing the conversion or bringing up new topics. Overall, it is ideal to gain insight from all participants; however, facilitation of participants’ behaviour may have stunted the natural flow intended by the use of focus groups.

A final limitation of this study pertains to the timing of the focus groups. Between focus group two and focus group three the Samsung Galaxy S4 was launched. Consumer exposure to the new device for the first time may have affected participants’ opinion. It
was observed that the topic of conversation did shift towards the new S4 after the press release. Samsung participants seemed excited and passionate about the new phone; therefore, the launch of the Samsung Galaxy S4 influenced or enhanced the Samsung users’ loyalty or excitement about the brand. Similarly, the launch could have also impacted Apple users’ thoughts about Samsung and Samsung Galaxy. Since the feature of the new Samsung Galaxy S4 are radically different then the current phones on the market, it may have impacted the participants’ view of their current phone.

5.5. Future Research Directions

In conclusion, this research found similar insights as previous research, as well as, offered new understandings. Further studies can be done to make the understandings of this study stronger. For example, the idea of acknowledgement could be evaluated further. Previously, it was suggested that younger consumers might not be as loyal to brands as older consumers (Helm & Landshulze, 2013). Despite the brand communities studied in this research displayed brand community characteristics, they were not always adversarial to the other brand community. The age of the brand communities studied in this research may be younger then the age of brand communities studied in the past. Has there been a change in brand community dynamics? More research done on generational difference and its relation to brand communities could be investigated; especially, the characteristics of a brand community as discussed by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) might want to be revisited.

The notion of exchange of resources between competing brand communities is quite surprising, as it had not been discussed in previous literature. Thus, future research
addressing this incidence of exchange of resources could be investigated more deeply. In particular, WOM exchange or customer-to-customer know-how exchange literature can be utilized as a conceptual framework when studying competing brand communities. There is no doubt that brand rivalry is present between brand communities. However, just because brand communities are rivals, does not mean other communication patterns are not taking place.
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Betanews.com Description

Betanews.com, founded in 1998, advertises itself as the “leading online source of technology news and analysis” (Beta News, 2011). The website provides readers information and analysis on technology as well as members the opportunity to participate in polls and discussions regarding various devices, operating systems, and programs. Betanews.com is also a platform for free software downloads and has a software store.

The information on betanews.com is open for anyone to read, however, a membership is required to participate in discussions. On all the forums, except for betanews.com, new members accept an agreement clause during registrations which prohibits participants to communicate messages in a hurtful, hateful, obscene, offensive, etc way (Mobile Phone Forums; Mobile Syrup; Wireless Forums). Betanews.com is different, as it does not require its members to agree to such a clause, allowing participants the ability to communicate holistically. This is reflected in the comments made by participants: “I don't need no stinkin iPhone 5 - I got most of the "new" iOS features in 2010 with my Fascinate and enjoy even more of them with my Galaxy Nexus :P”, “The day I buy an iPhone is the same day you should buy yourself a really nice pair of skates and a carbon fiber stick for a friendly game of ice hockey with the devil" and “entirely new design" .... ? are you high ... on ACID ? ... maybe magic mushroomz ???”.

Betanews.com allows members to participate is a number of ways. Members can post a new comment in a thread or a reply to a comment. Participants can also ‘vote’ comments. This seems to be similar to the Facebook ‘Like’ button. The ‘vote’ button allows participants to ‘vote up’ comments or promote a message and ‘vote down’ or demote a message. Participants can also Facebook ‘like’ the discussion, make a Facebook
post, tweet, inshare (a Linkedin tool), as well as use the Google + 1 tool to participant in the same discussion. Threads are started daily; within one week, twenty-two threads were started regarding smartphones. In one thread titled “Who will buy the iPhone 5? Not you.” within 5 days 66 comments were made along with 18 tweets.

Membership statistics is not known; nonetheless, some data regarding members was extracted while observing activity on the site. Thus, while the number of members on the particular site is unknown, betanews.com has over 5000 twitter followers, and 1500 Facebook ‘likes’ (Beta News). Information on the members themselves is also sparse. If the user chooses to, others are able to know the participants name, see pictures of the individual, know where the person is from, and other personal information. When searching through various posts, it came apparent that people were from Mexico, the United States, India, and the United Kingdom; however, the location of every member was not explored. Both women and men participate in conversations. This information was found through participant user names and pictures.

Overall, it was apparent from the early stages of site selection that betanews.com was an excellent site to use in order to observe brand rivalry. First it was not tailored to one particular brand, operating system, or device. Second, the dialogue observed on this site was interesting as it seemed to have a variety of perspectives, participants seemed to have different levels of knowledge regarding smart phones, and arguments were not always factional or scientific in nature.
Appendix B: Betanews.com Screen Shots

Figure 1: A screen shot of Betanews.com’s homepage.

Figure 2: A screen shot of Betanews.com’s Smartphone page.
Appendix C: Betanews.com Smartphone Article

Who will buy iPhone 5? Not you

Last week, I asked “Will you buy iPhone 5?” and more than 1,000 of you responded. Whoa, are you so not interested in this handset? 74.55 percent answered no. Now compare that to the poll about iPhone 4, following its announcement: 19.6 percent “no”. Well, well, perhaps Stephen Baker. NPD’s head of industry analysis, is right in his pre-launch prediction that US iPhone 5 sales won’t be as big as many people predicted.

Just suppose that early sales — 2 million preorders in the first 24 hours, which sure would seem to indicate big, big success ahead. That’s double the number during the same time period a year ago. Well, hell, how do those reconcile? Broad distribution is easy answer — one more than seven countries — and many more retail outlets in each. Then there’s the obvious. The poll reflects a select audience of techno-oriented readers whose buying priorities are different. Even so, when compared to last year’s poll, a startling buying trend emerges, and it’s not good.

Many ways of “no”

Among the 1,034 respondents to the iPhone 5 question, 24.01 percent answered “no” because they “don’t buy Apple products.” Meanwhile, 24.27 percent say “iPhone 5 isn’t compelling enough.” I’m surprised to find only 2.2 percent of the no sales folks “don’t qualify for discounted price.” Last year, I didn’t have the “don’t buy Apple products” response. The majority of “no” buyers, 23.53 percent, didn’t find iPhone 65 to be “compelling enough.”

The previous poll’s number is considerably higher — 6,483 respondents — and as such more reliable. NPD, the current number of respondents certainly is trustworthy enough. In 2011, the majority planned to upgrade from iPhone 3Gs or earlier — 24.05 percent. By contrast, just 9.87 percent this year. But, again, the percentage planning to upgrade overall is much smaller — 25.65 percent.

Recalling the numbers, about 40 percent of “yes” respondents last year planned to upgrade from iPhone 3Gs or earlier and 35 percent of “yes” respondents say they will upgrade from iPhone 4 compared to 21 percent to the 4S last year. That’s exactly the percentage planning to go to iPhone 5 from 4S now.

There’s little overall difference between polls, comparing to the newest iPhone from Android. 14.6 percent last year and 13.1 percent in the newest poll. Among Betanews readers, then, Android looks like the same or less than iPhone 5's 15% — and overall not that much. The majority of “yes” respondents plan to upgrade from an existing iPhone. 76.4 percent this year compared to 81.1 percent in 2011. That’s good for customer retention, but deserves little iPhone games from other platforms.

The reason why anyone asking why no Windows Phone year to year comparison. The numbers upgrading from the platform to either iPhone is too insignificant to be statistically reliable.

Few New Customers

There’s a certain resonance to these numbers: 74.55 percent of respondents say they won’t buy iPhone 5, while 76.4 percent of those answering “yes” plan to upgrade from another Apple handset. Customers cost more to acquire than to keep, which is good for Apple and carriers — well, assuming buyers don’t switch when going from iPhone to iPhone. Assuming the Betanews poll is any way indicative of broader trends (even if only techs), then Apple’s market share is potentially stagnant.

Some analyst data already shows this. For example, Apple’s share of mobile handset sales was 80.3 percent in second quarter compared to just 18.8 percent for iPhone, according to Canals. Year over year, that’s up from 43.4 percent and 18.2 percent, respectively. From 2011, Apple gained 20 points against 9.8 points for its rival.

Some analysts expect much stronger iPhone sales than the Betanews buying poll suggests. For example, 941 supply analyst Daniel Gleeson sees larger display (8 inches, up from 3.5 inches) and 4G LTE as big upgrades that will drive big sales. He calls iPhone 5 a “significant departure”, with supply predicting fourth quarter will be the biggest in iPhone’s history.

For the year, the analyst firm expects global iPhone sales will rise 63 percent from 2011, to 149 million from 93 million units. For techs looking at features long available from, say, Android or Windows Phone handsets, iPhone 5 sales appeal. But for existing customers — again, the majority of which will be iPhone 5 buyers based on the poll — the larger display and LTE mean much more.
Appendix D: Betanews.com Discussion

Info Dave 7 months ago

I find that BetaNews readers (at least the commenters) tend to look to the past rather than to the future. They tend to cling to Microsoft in the hopes that their inane mastery of XP will somehow be worth something. Those days are over Softies.

It’s a new world order, the Post-PC era has begun. Get used to it. Apple and Google are leading the charge. Not to the puck, but to where the puck’s going to be. BetaNews readers are skating to where the puck was. All that’s going to get you is a 2 minute penalty for interference.

Roger_Ramshit → Info Dave 7 months ago

It appears that MSes old tried and tested methods of FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt) and EEE (embrace, extend and extinguish) while copying like mad has failed it this time around. WP8 is a lemon because apps are completely incompatible with Windows applications.

markyym 7 months ago

Mr Joe “Boycott Apple” Wilcox and Betanews has about as much journalistic credibility as a supermarket tabloid. Of course many of your readers are attracted to your hypocritical anti-Apple crusade and so your poll is naturally skewed. Spare us your tabloid journalism and to quote an old adage, “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.”

woe → markyym 7 months ago

+100000

Roger_Ramshit → woe 7 months ago

I only read his articles now for the humour...It is generally the last place I go after reading the more serious articles on the web.

Roger_Ramshit → woe 7 months ago

+100000

SparxxzK7 → markyym 7 months ago

Spoken like a true iSheep with no thought behind comments.

Well done, troll.

Sportmac → SparxxzK7 7 months ago

SNAP! you use iSheep as your argument and then claim his comments are thoughtless! What a retort! And the beauty is you’ll never see it. Now reply with a few iFan’s and Fanbois and you’ll be all set. Well done ladde. Impressive.

ToeKneeC87 7 months ago

You do know, over all Betanews.com is a heavy Android fan base. Take the same pull at an Apple site, or Blackberry site.

Davido17 → ToeKneeC87 7 months ago

I don’t think it’s even that. If you check out other Tech sites most user comments tend to be pro-Android BUT the majority of smartphone buyers are not tech savvy and just don’t get hung up on tech specs. For them the brand is everything and Apple have established a very strong brand for well designed products which are easy to use. For Samsung et al to really beat Apple in the market place they don’t have to be better (which IMO they certainly are) they have to be really streets ahead.
Appendix E: Preliminary Findings

Functional Statements:

Samsung +/- Apple --:

- I always need to laugh or burst into tears when I read the Apple fan boys talk about the Galaxy phones being made of cheap plastic... Its the same cheap "plastic" that is used for the A380 cargo and passenger doors, rudders and fuselages of many different airplanes, and entire bodys of 80% of ALL helicopters being manufactured.

- I won't buy Apple ever again. Apple can't stand in comparison with new Android phones like coming Galaxy Note 2, Galaxy s III. iPhone 4s 's Siri... Bulshit!!!. iPhone 5's large Screen... Bulshit. Its not even proportional to height and width. They just made it long. iOS 6.. We all know that its bulshit

- Tech-wise, the iPhone5 is more like the SGS 2 (not the 3)...4" screens were over a year ago...LTE was over a year ago.

- Samsung alone is outselling Apple. Get with the times

- The other reason some people may go out and buy it is rather simple I think. They incorrectly feel they are tied to iTunes and moving their music to another device won't work or will be difficult. They aren't completely wrong

- Hardware: Samsung Galaxy S3 has a 1.4 GHz, quad core processor. The iPhone 5, 1.2 GHz dual core. The iPhone is behind.

- I like my Samsung S III, won't do any banking on it, but I do like the SNES Emulators (something Apple won't allow).

- Tech-wise, the iPhone5 is more like the SGS 2 (not the 3)...4" screens were over a year ago...LTE was over a year ago

- I'm happy with my Samsung S II with version 4+. This should have been the first release version and not use consumers as beta testers

Apple +/- Samsung --:

- Just one more hacking/virus/malware issue for Android. I really like my Samsung S III but this type of crap is like Windows 98 all over. Yes one could argue - who cares - I do. I don't want to worry about crap like this...There is the Android, iPhone 5 wars going on. And in the end, Android is losing at work :) Mainly because it seems every week or day something seems to hit Android
• Personally, even though I have an Samsung S III. The hype is over for me. I'm looking for more…mainly do more like integrate into my home, tablet, desktop - all of it

• The iPhone 5 has the best display ever

• Apple leads in ease of use, smoothness, design, ecosystem etc.

• Well I can't say why everyone else wants it, but I can tell you why *I* have one. It's an improvement over my aging iPhone 4. It's has a faster processor, faster memory, faster network (both WIFI and LTE), bigger screen, the most apps available for it, it streams to my Apple TV's, and will work with most of my peripherals (Car stereo, A/V receiver), it syncs to my iTunes both wirelessly and over USB.

Can you tell me why I would want so switch to a Galaxy? Would that stream to my Apple TV's? Would that work with my car stereo or receiver? Did Google finally fix all their issues using my company's exchange server? Will Google give me free versions of my apps that I paid for?

• Have you even tried an iPhone5 yet? The camera is amazing

• Want to know why I bought an iPhone 5. It’s because I can move my contacts from one phone to the other via iTunes, and all my settings are preserved.

• Its not made out of plastic. All of the other phones feel like a cheap bit of plastic.

**Emotional Statements:**

**Samsung +/Apple --:**

• I LOVE my new Samsung phone and find it in EVERY way superior to anything Apple, including my friends Iphony 5…

• One thing Apple has done is make people very ignorant

• Nowadays, people using Apple products are being laughed at. Thank you guys for making these hard times more bearable !”

• People still think owning an iPhone is for cool kids. Love how everyone talks so highly of its design even though....they spend 99.9% of their time looking at a rubber case. Yeah look at this sweet sports car I bought with this protective casing that totally covers up the sexy look.

• It seems obvious that upon Steve Jobs death, the Apple lawyers convinced Cook that Apple doesn't need to innovate anymore when they can litigate and the iSheep will follow
• I remember when Apple was the 'Think Different' company. People still like to think to think that using Apple products is some how a sign of creativity or individuality, when it's in fact quite the opposite

• Nowadays, people using Apple products are being laughed at. Thank you guys for making these hard times more bearable!

• Honestly, Apple doesn't deserve a break. They earn too much money to take breaks. They were the ones who pushed for 1-year product cycles and emphasized product quality. I don't see why their own strategy shouldn't bite them in the ass if they can't deliver.

• it should obvious by now that Apple is a complete and total joke

• But it's ok for Apple to be a bully to others like Samsung???? Surely you must be kidding

• I don't need no stinkin’ iPhone 5 - I got most of the "new" iOS features in 2010 with my Fascinate and enjoy even more of them with my Galaxy

• When iPhone 4S came out, the already on the market Galaxy S2 was hailed as the better phone by the majority of the tech folks. Now iPhone 5 is out and is STILL a worse phone than the Galaxy S3 by most people you'll ask... So unless iPhone drops their prices to the floor (they won't...) they stand no chance to be the dominant force in smart phones.

• IPhone5 sucks sgs3 are the real deal why use 2010 technology in 2012?

• And if you hate Samsung so much, you should light your iPad 2 on fire & then jump up & down on it since SAMSUNG parts account for nearly 66% of it's bill of materials...Now go play with you Apple toy & dream sweetly of shiting unicorns & rainbows.

Apple +/-Samsung --:

• The fact is whether you love or hate Apple, they have a cult following like no other product in history. Samsung doesn't have lines around the block every time they release a new Galaxy....

• Apple’s iPhone 5 is indeed the fastest smart phone available in the market today. It bests every other high-end Android smart phone (Galaxy S III, One X, Galaxy Nexus, you name it!); doesn't matter if they come with four cores or are clocked at higher frequencies

• I don't think anyone will be buying SGS3 next year, while AiP4S and AiP5 will still sell even when AiP5S comes out.
• However, time and time again when the iPhone 5 and the SGS3 are squared off against in each other, the iPhone 5 generally ends up being the winner.

• Most people will see it as iPhone losing over Galaxy S III. I say it's short lived especially with the iPhone 5 posting a strong start.

• LONG LIVE IPHONE 5!!!!!!!!!

• The 5 is as good as it needs to be. Apple spends a lot of energy redefining categories (not inventing them), the iPod, the iPhone, the ultra book, the iPad. When they get a good formula they stick with it. You can still buy an iPod classic!

• I just love the sleek design of Apples products, they handle well, do the job asked and look great. That alone is enough for me to buy an Apple product whether it costs more or not

• The fact is whether you love or hate Apple, they have a cult following like no other product in history. Samsung doesn’t have lines around the block every time they release a new Galaxy....

• Too bad Samsung had no idea what they were doing....otherwise they could have trumped both Apple and Google and beat them both to market with a useable touch interface phone. Too bad they had to do an in depth comparison of their "ugly" user interface with Apples and realize they had a lot of work (err copying) to do to stay in the game

• The iPhone 5 smokes any smart phone on the market

• I want nothing to do with anything Samsung

• Just one more hacking/virus/malware issue for Android. I really like my Samsung S III but this type of crap is like Windows 98 all over. Yes one could argue - who cares - I do. I don't want to worry about crap like this.

• You had to CHERRY PICK one-off features from half-dozen phones and you still look like a fool BECAUSE PROFESSIONAL'S AND EXPERTS HAVE DECLARED THE IPHONE BEAT OUT ALL THOSE PHONES!!!! The scammy S3 is SLOWER THAN IPHONE!!!!!!!!!!!!
Appendix F: Focus Group Script

(Hand out consent forms) I am Alexandra Sponga. I am a second year Masters of Science student studying Marketing and Consumer Studies. I am glad you are all able to participate in this study and appreciate that you are willing to take the time to discuss your position regarding your Smartphone. Please feel free to help yourself to pizza.

[VIDEO-RECODING BEGINS]

You have signed the consent forms, but I would like to just clarify that all information is confidential. I ask that everyone participating not to reveal who took part or what is discussed during this focus group. Also, if you do not feel comfortable answering any of the questions you have the right to pass. Also, if you do not feel comfortable participating in the focus group at any time during the study, you are welcome to leave without penalty. Please raise your hand, I can walk you out and ask you a few questions regarding the information collected from you during the study. You have the option of allowing or not allowing me to use any of the data collected.

You also have the choice not to be recorded. Only my supervisor and myself will view these recordings. Verbatim quotations from the recordings may be used in the final paper. After the completion of this study these recordings will be destroyed. I will not use your name in any public report. Do you have any questions?

[NOTE: The group will be offered the following statements as a whole. Following their responses probing questions maybe asked to seek clarification, further understanding, or more details.]

[NOTE: Participants will be asked to put their Smartphone on the table.]

- What are your thoughts about your phone?

[NOTE: the order of statements will change between focus groups (i.e. Samsung + statement will be offered at the first focus group. Apple + statement will be offered first during another focus group)]

- The truth is, most of the top phones on the market right now are almost at par in terms of capability - it comes down to how complete the whole package is. On one hand you have iPhone in whatever form and on the other hand the Galaxy range.
Emotional

Samsung +/-Apple –:

• One thing Apple has done is make people very ignorant.

• Apple doesn’t need to innovate the iSheep will follow.

• I LOVE my new Samsung phone and find it in EVERY way superior to anything Apple, including my friends Iphony 5…

Apple +/-Samsung –:

• The fact is whether you love or hate Apple, they have a cult following like no other product in history. Samsung doesn't have lines around the block every time they release a new Galaxy....

• Too bad Samsung had no idea what they were doing…They did an in-depth comparison of their “ugly” user interface with Apples and realize they had a lot of copying to do.

Functional

Samsung +/-Apple –:

• I always need to laugh or burst into tears when I read the Apple fan boys talk about the Galaxy phones being made of cheap plastic… many different airplanes.

• I won't buy Apple ever again. Apple can't stand in comparison with new Android phones like coming Galaxy Note 2, Galaxy s III… iOS 6.. We all know that its bullshit

Apple +/-Samsung –:

• The iPhone 5 has the best display every.

• Just one more hacking/virus/malware issue for Android. I really like my Samsung S III but this type of crap is like Windows 98 all over.

• Personally, even though I have a Samsung S III. The hype is over for me. I'm looking for more…mainly do more like integrate into my home, tablet, desktop - all of it
Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in study. Here is a copy of the debriefing form. I hope you will get in touch with me if further thoughts occur to you about the subject of our conversation, particularly if you decide in retrospect that you would like to designate some of it for non-attribution. Should you have any comments or concerns you may contact myself, Alexandra Sponga at spongaa@uoguelph.ca. You may also contact S. Auld, University of Guelph Research Ethics Coordinator, 519-824-4120, ext. 56606, reb@uoguelph.ca.

If you wish you may receive a chapter of this report after it is completed in May 2013. Please contact me, Alexandra Sponga at 519-824-4120, ext. 58657 or spongaa@uoguelph.ca. Thank you again everyone. Have a nice day.
Appendix G: Screening Questions

Screening Questions – Focus Groups

Do you own an Apple iPhone 5/4GS?

Do you feel passionate about Apple iPhone 5/4Gs?
(Question is related to Muniz and O’Guinn’s, 2001 notion of conscious of kind and a strong connection to the brand)

Are you willing to switch to a Samsung Galaxy if there is an opportunity to do so?
(Question is related to Muniz and O’Guinn’s, 2001 notion of oppositional brand loyalty)

Do you consider your self committed to Apple iPhone?
(Question is related to Muniz and O’Guinn’s, 2001 notion of legitimacy)

Do you own a Samsung Galaxy SIII/SII?

Do you feel passionate about your Samsung Galaxy SIII/SII?

Are you willing to switch to an Apple iPhone if there is an opportunity to do so?

Do you consider your self committed to Samsung Galaxy?
Appendix H: Recruitment Advertisement

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENT

Brand Communities: What are your thoughts on Smartphone?

Do you love your Apple iPhone or Samsung Galaxy? We are looking for students on the University of Guelph campus who are loyal to their Smartphone brand to participate in a study. The goal of this study is to evaluate how groups of brand devotees communicate about their brand and the brands they do not use.

This study is a one-hour focus group. Participants will be provided pizza at the time of the study. For students whose course includes a research study component, you may receive up to 3% of your final grade upon the completion of this study and the required written report. Participants must be a University of Guelph student and consider themselves committed to their Smartphone brand.

To schedule an appointment or for more information regarding this study please email:

Alexandra Sponga at spongaa@uoguelph.ca

Thank you,

Alex
Appendix I: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Brand Community Study

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. May Aung, and Alexandra Sponga, from the Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies at the University of Guelph. The results of this study will contribute to the thesis component in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Alexandra Sponga (spongaa@uoguelph.ca; 519-824-4120 ext. 58567) or the Faculty Supervisor Dr. May Aung (maung@uoguelph.ca; 519-824-4120 ext. 58737).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to observe the dialogue between competing brand communities.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we ask that you do the following things:

1) An overview of the focus group procedures. (5 minutes)
2) A focus group discussion prompted by the facilitator (45 minutes)

It will take you approximately one hour to complete this study. Please contact Alexandra Sponga (spongaa@uoguelph.ca) if you have any questions.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Focus groups will be audio video taped with the permission of all participants involved in the focus group. While, it is not the intent of the researcher to expose participants to psychological or social risks, it is possible the conversation between participants may lead to participants feeling embarrassed or upset. Also, since the participants are being video and audio recorded, this may pose a slight risk to his or her privacy (social risk). With the consent of the participants the focus group will be video and/or audio recorded to ensure an accurate recoding of the participants responses. Only Alexandra Sponga and Dr. May Aung will view the tapes. The videotapes will be erased and destroyed at the completion of this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participants will not benefit from this study. Society may benefit from this study as this study provides insight regarding to opposing brand perspectives. The academic
community will also benefit from this research as I will be extending the conceptual understanding of the brand rivalry concept.

**PARTICIPATION COMPENSATION**

You will receive pizza during the time of the focus group. You may also receive 3% course credit upon the completion of the study and the submission of a course required assignment.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your participation and contribution will be kept confidential by the research team Please respect the privacy of other participants, and do not reveal who took part and what was said during the focus group. Pseudonyms will be used in the final paper in order to ensure the names of the participants are concealed. All files will be stored on an encrypted laptop following University of Guelph’s Encryption Standards. The videotapes and audio recording will be kept in a locked drawer. The videotapes and audio recording will be erased and destroyed upon the completion of this study. The final disposal of transcripts will occur approximately 7 years after the completion of the project.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

Participants are able to view a final copy of this study’s results by contacting the researcher, Alexandra Sponga (spongaa@uoguelph.ca).

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

You may choose to withdraw your consent at any time and stop participation in the study without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact:

Research Ethics Officer
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: (519) 821-5236

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**
I have read and understood the information provided for the study “Brand Community Study”. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

Name of Witness (please print)

Signature of Witness

Date
Appendix J: Debriefing Form

DEBRIEFING LETTER

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the focus group. Your effort and openness has helped gain insight regarding how brand communities communicate their brand preference to opposing brand communities.

My project, Opposing Smartphone brands: A grounded theory approach to understanding brand rivalry between two brand communities, is preceding according to design, and in particular my evaluation of focus group dialogue is providing greater insight than I had expected.

The language used in the focus group statements was meant to guide the conversation. The statements read during the focus group were chosen to elicit your perspective of your phone and the competing brand.

This research will contribute to marketing, as a greater understanding of what aspects of the brand the users are defending will be achieved. Also, the type of language used (such as defensive, ridicule, humour, offensive) can be studied. The understanding arising from this study will extend the existing understanding of brand rivalry concept in the field of marketing and consumer studies.

The results of this study can enable managers to grasp an understanding on how to utilize the protective behaviour in situations where the brand may be threatened, i.e. the introduction of a devise from the competition. The results can also assist in the understanding of how to foster brand rivalries for competitive advantage, for example how can brands benefit from brand identification in order to use rival behaviour to their advantage.

All participants’ information, including transcripts and video recording will be kept confidential and secured, until the completion of this study when they will be erased and/or destroyed. Should you have any comments or concerns you may contact myself, Alexandra Sponga at spongaa@uoguelph.ca. You may also contact S. Auld, University of Guelph Research Ethics Coordinator, 519-824-4120, ext. 56606, reb@uoguelph.ca.

If you wish you may receive a chapter of this report after it is completed in May 2013, please contact me, Alexandra Sponga at 647-272-4408, or spongaa@uoguelph.ca.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Sponga
MSc Candidate
University of Guelph
Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies

XXX-XXX-XXXX
spongaa@uoguelph.ca
Appendix K: Partial Transcription of Focus Group One

F1-I: First I would like you to take out your phone and put it on the table if it is not already there. Perfect, so as you may see, some of you have a Samsung Galaxy and some of you have an iPhone. The first thing I would like you to do is share your thoughts about your phone.

F1-S1: I love it!

F1-I: So, ___ you love it! Why?

F1-S1: The Apple iPhone has always been the same. This is something different you know what I mean. Its fast.

F1-I: Your Galaxy is fast.

F1-S1: Yup!

F1-I: Ok, How does anyone else feel about their phone?

F1-A1: Like I mean I have had an Apple product. Like it was my first ever legitimate product was my iPod and like it lasted for ever. And just like seem like all of their products would be good quality because of that. I have never had a problem with it. You know what I am saying.

F1-A2: I feel like just the warranty on all Apple products are just like superior to any other brand. Like if it got one problem, you bring it in and if they cannot open it they will replace it right on the spot. They even don’t care. About the price or anything like that.

F1-A3: Like to have a store like to go to like Samsung doesn’t have a store really to go to like to fix them.

F1-I: Future Shop.

F1-A4: Like there’s Apple. Like Apple Store would replace the phone on the spot.

F1-S1: Future shop can’t?

F1-A4: I jail broke my iPhone so I can do something Samsung can and still have my iPhone

F1-S1: Isn’t your warranty voids once you jail break your it?

F1-A4: Then I just restore it.
F1-S1: Oh!

F1-A4: So it still connects to all my devices, but can still have some of the cool features Galaxy has.

F1-S2: You can still jail break Galaxy too. There is an app for it. And it’s free!

F1-S1: Plus… and a lot of the iPhone apps are free for Android too.

F1-I: Why do you like your Galaxy?

F1-S2: I Love it! I don’t know. It’s the best thing I have ever had. It is fast and powerful. All the updates I had the first Galaxy and it was soo slow. It was just killing me. It took like an hour to do all the updates. Here I click all the updates.. I turn to someone and back and its done and I am like WHAT?

F1-S3: Yup its fast.

F1-S2: I am like what happened.

F1-I: Its fast? Yeah?

F1-I: How does anyone else fee about their Galaxy or iPhone or even the brand in of it self.

F1-S1: Plus the battery on this is really good. I find on iPhone the batteries kind of die.

F1-S3: That’s one thing I do not like about my… this. Those tend to last a lot longer.

F1-A3: They are also a lot bigger to carry.

F1-S1: Not really its perfect size. iPhone 5… do you have a 4 or 5?

F1-A3: I have a 5.

F1-S1: Well is this much bigger than that?

F1-A3: Width it is still bigger.

F1-A1: Personally, I don’t think it matters that much. The size. Whether it is bigger.

F1-S1: I hear a lot of people talk its too big. It really is not!

F1-A3: I like to have the iPod. Samsung doesn’t really have a iPod built in.

F1-S1: No, I listen to the music player.
F1-A3: It's not like an iPod then.

F1-S1: Well no cause it’s a Samsung right?

F1-S2: You can put music on any phone.

F1-A2: I love the iMessage because I am from Turkey and I have been on a lot of exchange program in Europe so I have friends all over the world so I can message them immediately that’s why I love it.

F1-A4: I just like how everything is connected like my Mac book my iPad my Apple TV. Everything is just altogether iCloud.

F1-S1: Do you actually use the iCloud.

F1-A4: Yes

F1-S1: What does it do exactly?

F1-A4: All my music from my computer goes to my Apple TV so I can play it from right there with my speakers. If I send a text from here, I have my iPad in my bag… it will show up on that conversation, and on my computer’s conversation.

F1-S1: Ok

F1-A3: Everything is just sunk together.

F1-I: Can you share your thoughts why you purchased a Samsung product over an Apple product or vice versa?

F1-A1: I think probably cause honestly I do not know enough about Samsung… it seems just kinda new. Like Apple has been around for sooo long. Like you know that was the think like everyone had an iPod and then everyone moved to an iPhone… like I don’t even know much about Samsung at all I know it is competing but I don’t know if it is close or over taking. They [Apple] just has a really good brand. I unno they have built it very well.

F1-I: Samsung users any thoughts?

F1-S2: I have always seen Samsung as a pretty quality brand. And I wanted an android.

F1-S1: Even when the S3s came out they were say they were going to be way better then the iPhone as it was right. I unno. I do know exactly what the specs are. They had all those commercials like the “next big this is already here” you know what I mean.
F1-I: I will be reading some statements, I would like you to respond to the statements or anything in relation to the statements. I would like you to share your thoughts about it. One thing Apple has done is make people very ignorant.

F1-S1: I agree.

F1-EVERYONE: I agree

F1-S2: Because people think it’s the best phone out there cause it’s been out for so long.

F1-S1: People don’t look for their phone. Apple lovers just go straight to the iPhone. There is nothing you can do about it.

F1-S2: If you have a Mac you’re going to buy a Mac

F1-I: How do you feel about that statement and when you are using an Apple?

F1-A2: What do you mean?

F1-I: Do you feel that you are ignorant?

F1-A2: I do not feel like I am ignorant… but I do prefer Apple products over the majority of other products because it is so common in my life.

F1-A4: I feel the same way.

F1-I: You feel that you are ignorant?

F1-A4: Naww.. Ignorant how? Like when I go to the store and I need a new phone… like I have had iPhone 3g all the way up… like I don’t even look at the androids.

F1-I: You don’t even pay attention to the competitors. You don’t even seek knowledge. YOU ARE LIKE APPLE IS THE BEST?

F1-A4: Yes.

F1-A2: I would not buy the iPhone 5 though. I just got the 4S and I hate that they come out with a new freaken phone every single half of year every year may be.

F1-S1: What exactly is the difference between the 4 and the 4S?

F1-A4: The only thing different is Siri. Siri.
F1-S1: Oh… What’s that?

F1-A4: Siri.. the voice thing. I don’t use Siri very much.

F1-S1: Isn’t it right that Siri doesn’t even really work in Canada?

F1-A4: Maps

F1-A1: Siri is crap.

F1-A4: They just do it to just do more money.

F1-A2: This is out of date… it is no long cool. Cause everyone like the iPhone 5.

F1-I: Galaxy users, what are you are thoughts do you think Apple users are ignorant?

F1-S3: I think Apple has becoming a religion. Its not like, like ppl just buy a phone and are happy with the phone. They either buy an ipod and then they buy iPhone they buy mac and they buy everything from Apple they don’t see anything.

F1-S1: They are just suckered in by the brand.

F1-S3: Yeah…

F1-S1: They don’t even research like so many people have macs and stuff but macs aren’t really event he best computer. I can get a way better computer for the same price or even cheaper. But because it is a mac everyone is like jumping on it.

F1-A1: Its like an image right. If you have a mac you are in this class. Or like that what I think.

F1-I: Do you fit in that class.?

F1-A1: I don’t think I do. But most people want to be in a class like that… but that’s why the buy these products. Like the brand they did a good job making the brand like they were like this is what we are going to give and I unno.

F1-A2: Like a have buddies who have this [Galaxy] kind of phone and other androids and I use to have an older style laptop and ever since I got the Mac I just think the layout and the way I am able to use the different programs is a lot easier for me. And this just my preference I don’t think I love Apple as a company more then any other thing. I still think those phones are really cool like my friend has one still simple lay out easy… its easy..

F1-S1: It did take a little bit to get use to. But after a couple of days… now nothing is as better then this really.
F1-I: Anyone else has any comments to share.

F1-A1: I think Samsung are the better phone then the iPhone.

F1-S1: You just want the iPhone?

F1-I: What draws your to Apple?
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