Competitive Advertising: Examining the Effect of Advertising Attacks and Counterattacks on Audience Engagement

Case Study: Almaza Beer Vs Beirut Beer 2015-2024

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Abstract

Competitive advertising consists of attacks and counterattacks that are exchanged between two direct competitors to try and obtain the highest market share in their geographic region or target market. In the Lebanese beer market, Almaza and Beirut Beer compete to lure consumers toward their brands by using competitive advertising. The social media data gathered from both companies shows that the audience is more likely to engage with ads that show attacks and counterattacks between two direct competitors.

Keywords: Competitive Advertising, Lebanon, Audience Engagement, Framing, Active Audience, Identification. Advertising Attacks

1. Introduction

While advertising is considered a means of communication between the brand and its audience, the complexity of storylines used in advertisements has widened the scope and aim of an ad, wherein ads are now a marketing weaponry used by competing companies in order to gain a wider portion of the market share and lure the audience to choose one brand over its competitor. Competing businesses are now explicitly confronting their rivals for market supremacy, leveraging advertising strategies to outshine, outmaneuver, and outsmart their closest competitors to gain more audiences. Bonfrer et al. (2004) define competitive advertising as the exposure of "viewers of advertising for a focal brand" to other advertising messages from "competing brands within a short time period". Competitive advertising consisting of attacks and counterattacks has thus become one of the many strategies of advertising as an essential part of Integrated Marketing Communications.

Competitive advertising has proved to be "an effective means of conveying the differentiating advantages of a brand" by highlighting the competitive advantages of a brand over one (or many) of its direct competitors (Soscia, Girolamo, & Busacca, 2010). As market competition increases, it is essential for brands to establish advertising strategies that will allow their target audience to favor them over their other direct competitors by highlighting the competitive advantages that will make a product have the highest market share in a specific geographical range.

Many direct competitors that are known internationally have shaken social media platforms through their usage of competitive advertising. The United States of America's digital advertising campaigns have witnessed attacks and counterattacks between famous brands such as "the war between Procter & Gamble's Scope and Warner-Lambert's Listerine" and the universally known advertising warfare between Pepsi and Coca-Cola that is constantly supplying media platforms with new attacks and responses now and then (Beard, 2010).

In the Middle Eastern context, and especially in Lebanon, these scenarios are not unfamiliar to the Lebanese audience. Many direct competitors have crafted ads that trigger their direct competitors, and the latter have not been silent receivers but rather fueled up the battle even more. One of the most prominent examples of such adversaries is the battle between the two leading beer companies in Lebanon: Almaza and Beirut Beer. To better understand the rivalry between two companies, it is essential to initially know and define the brands to recognize the aspects on which they compete.

Brasserie Almaza is the first beer brewery in Lebanon that began in 1933. As a pioneer in the beer industry, Almaza has gained immense popularity in the Lebanese market because of its strong history, maintaining a strong bond between the Lebanese people and their heritage as it is the first Lebanese beer and acquired that title for a very long time. The word 'Almaza' means 'diamond' in Arabic, which is also reflected in their logo. The Lebanese audience recognizes the cultural and legendary value of Almaza in the Lebanese beer market.

The Beirut Beer project initially debuted in 2014 and was a great success in the Lebanese market. Beirut Beer was able to inflict a strong impact on the beer market, mainly because of its strong online presence and its creative ads. The launching of Beirut Beer was a turning point in the Lebanese beer market after Almaza dominated the highest market share in Lebanon.

What invigorated the launching of Beirut Beer in the Lebanese market was the fervent storytelling that was strategically woven into their ads. While Beirut Beer knew the cultural value of Almaza in the Lebanese market, they advertised their product by launching indirect competitive ads that showed their newer visions, values, lifestyles, and contributions to the Lebanese beer market. As their competitive advertising strategy develops in parallel with Almaza, it is essential to analyze the effectiveness of these categories of ads by taking into consideration multiple factors. Our study will focus on one of these factors: audience engagement.

It is essential to mention that both Almaza and Beirut Beer are national beer companies that dominate the Lebanese market rather than local small businesses that aim for minimal growth. Understanding the nature of these competing brands will help fortify the advertising warfare as companies engaging in such advertising strategies need to have a power symmetry (Molm, 1990).

Similarly, understanding the Lebanese discourse is essential to better analyze the strategies behind advertisements. The Lebanese audience is divided into multiple subcategories. While many people fall into the traditional category who care about customs and patriotism – a stereotypical Arab and Middle Eastern ideology, the Lebanese youth has diverged from such views to a more open, diverse, and innovative ideology that seeks change. This category of Lebanese people preaches freedom and liberation and seeks new ideas and practices that might not align with the old and traditional Lebanese mindset. Understanding the diversity of personas in the Lebanese context is essential, so the brand can identify how its preferred target audience engages with an attack and and try to craft its ad in a way that might allow viewers to take one side over the other.

2. Hypothesis

Our study will examine the effect of competitive advertising on audience engagement in Lebanon to check whether these advertising practices are successful strategies to be implemented by direct competitors in their advertising campaigns, especially when showing their competitive advantages. Our model will compare audience engagement on normal ads versus competitive ads by measuring engagement factors such as the number of views, likes, comments, and shares (whenever the data is presented and available). Our study will analyze specific characteristics used in competitive ads of Almaza and Beirut Beer that instigate attacks and counterattacks between the two companies and how they use specific aspects of storytelling, identification, and enhancement to discredit and reframe a competitive advantage of one ad as they strive for market supremacy. Our study will use the VALS typology, the Framing theory, the Active Audience theory, and the Identification theory to analyze the components of competitive advertising used by Beirut Beer between 2015 and 2024 and examine how direct competitors participating in advertising warfare will witness more engagement in their digital advertising campaigns.

3. Literature Review

Many theoretical principles analyze the concept of wars of ideas in multiple discourses such as religion, politics, literature, and more. Echevarria (2008) argues that advertisements "are arguably the most pervasive, and thus the most common, wars of ideas" because they consist of "a series of messages, often packaged as sound-bites or slogans, carrying a central idea about a person, place, or a thing". As we have previously mentioned, the advertising warfare between Pepsi and Coca-Cola remains one of the leading examples of competitive advertising worldwide as the "war of slogans and images between Coca-Cola and Pepsi" is translated into advertising attacks and counterattacks "in an attempt to convince consumers that its product tastes better and is more refreshing" (Echevarria, 2008). The study reported that whenever the audience favored one attack over the other, the company would have increased market shares during the period of launching the ad (Echevarria, 2008).

Initiating competitive advertising is based on behavioral motives of competitive reactions that brands take into consideration before launching their attacks. These three factors are "awareness of the competitive attack, motivation to react, and ability to react" (Steenkamp et al., 2018). Engaging in such advertising strategies can be influenced by "the characteristics of the

attacking and the defending brand" (Steenkamp et al., 2018). The characteristics include "the market power of the attacking brand, the power asymmetry between attacker and defender, and whether attacker /defender is a private label or a national brand" (Steenkamp et al., 2018). That is to say, if either Almaza or Beirut Beer decides to engage in advertising attacks, the company should make sure to analyze its strength in the Lebanese market before using such advertising strategies as targeting a brand with a higher/lower market power than that of the brand itself will backfire at the brand. These characteristics are further analyzed by Bacharach & Lawler (1981) in terms of what we have previously mentioned: the competing brands' "power asymmetry". When one powerful brand decides to attack another one, it should also analyze the motivation of the reacting brand as well as "the power of the defending brand" and "the defender's ability" (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981). It is not in the favor of a brand to attack a more powerful one because it will guarantee the loss of the battle, nor should a brand attack a less powerful one as it will lose its power by doing so.

Other advertising wars have been the subject of many studies such as "Johnson & Johnson and Bristol-Myers battled over the non-aspirin market" as well as the "battle of the Burger Wars" between Burger King, Wendy's International, and McDonald's Corporation (Beard, 2010). There are different aspects to analyzing whether competitive advertisements are effective practices or not such as measuring "ad recall and recognition", "brand evaluation", and "impact on sales" (Bonfrer et al., 2004). However, audience engagement is also an essential measurement as it increases brand awareness because it merges two audiences of the same brand category. While such attacks and counterattacks can increase the "likelihood of a lawsuit" (Meyerowitz, 1985) and can result "in a poor response" that will cost attacking companies "a pretty high price to pay for feeling good" (Brock, 1982), many preachers of this practice focus on its engagement value. Following Burger King's agreement for an extrajudicial settlement with Wendy's International and McDonald's Corporation, the executive who gave the order for the attack recognized and applauded the importance of the war's publicity as media attention alone might have been worth up to $20 million in additional sales (as cited in Moran 1984). Following his statement, we can better understand that in competitive advertising campaigns between brands that have the same nature, power symmetry, and the ability and motivation to respond, audience engagement can be guaranteed.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 VALS Hierarchy: Values and Lifestyles

Niefield's (1989) elaborates on SRI International's VALS typology and analyzes multiple typologies in psychographic analysis that help define the right audience and how to target it. The first of these VALS typographies is the survivors or old and poor people who are "far removed from the cultural mainstream, misfits" (Niefield, 1989). Sustainers are resentful and angry people who are "involved in the underground economy" (Niefield, 1989). Belongers are part of the sentimental, conventional, "family-oriented, intensely patriotic, deeply stable" group of people (Niefield, 1989). Emulators are the youthful category who "want to appear successful, to make it big" (Niefield, 1989). Achievers are the most affluent group – they are leaders, "materialistic, self-assured, and successful" (Niefield, 1989). I-Am-Me's are the category that is "narcissistic, fiercely independent, individualistic, impulsive, and dramatic" (Niefield, 1989). Experientals are the "youthful, artistic,

seeking direct experience and inner growth" group (Niefield, 1989). Societally conscious are also affluent people and the "most highly educated of all VALS" (Niefield, 1989). They are mature leaders who are concerned about societal issues. Finally, the Integrateds typology combines "the power of the Achievers with the sensitivity of the Societally Conscious" and consists of understanding, tolerant, and mature people (Niefield, 1989).

In competitive advertising, while attacks target the brands directly, some tactics aim at showing how one brand is targeting a specific audience. Understanding the VALS typographies is essential to help us analyze whether the brands engaging in such attacking practices are targeting the same audience or are trying to address a new category of people that is the opposite of who their competitors usually target. By considering this idea one question relates this hierarchy to the scope of our study: Was the attacking brand competing with the other over the same target audience or was it aiming to attract an opposite category of people?

4.2 Framing Theory

In Mass Media and Communications, the framing theory is when "the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning" (Arowolo, 2017). According to Gregory Bateson, the founder of the theory, the framing theory focuses on how a message is presented to the audience and affects their choices on how to analyze and understand this message (Bateson, 1972). Goffman (1974) introduces basic frameworks that have two distinctions: natural and social. Both help people understand data so that a broader societal context might be used to understand their experiences. The two are different in a functional way.

In the natural frameworks, events are recognized as physical events, which take natural principles literally and do not attribute social influences on the causes of events. However, in social frameworks, events are driven by other social participants' goals, whims, and manipulations (Arowolo, 2017). Natural frameworks are essential in social frameworks as the latter are built on them. These frameworks significantly impact how data is processed, transmitted, and understood because of the frames they generate in our interactions (Arowolo, 2017). The fundamental premise of Goffman's theory is that people are competent consumers of these frameworks daily, whether or not they are conscious of them (Mass Communication Theory (Online), 2017).

While framing, the picture in an advertisement "demonstrates the verbal message, typically through a display of the advertised product or through a demonstration of the use(s) of the product" (Shimp, 1988). When a brand frames its competitor's product adversely while showing its own products as better alternatives, they are indirectly creating a gap between two products of the same category, elevating one and lowering the other.

In competitive advertisements, the script is not the sole tool for a brand to attack the other, but "the verbal message reinforces and can be reinforced by the picture" (Shimp, 1988). That is to say, when an attacking brand is familiar with its opponent's representation, using part of its branding and identity (such as its colors, characteristics, history, symbols, and more) through implicit visuals and symbols in the ads can be an indirect attacking tactic that strikes at the competitor without leading to direct violent conflict between the competitors. This aspect of framing is related to the concept of characterization.

As Edell and Staelin (1983) explain, a characterized ad associates the brand that is advertised with a positively appraised person, place, situation, or object in an effort to convey a favorable image of the brand. In competitive advertising, the attacking brand uses positive characterization when representing itself, and negative representation when portraying its competitor. When brands associate themselves and others with a concept, idea, physique, or other, these portrayals of specific symbolisms (whether the same symbol is depicted twice in the same ad, both positively and negatively) have a strong impact on the audience's perception of these elements. That is to say if the advertiser includes both an old, ignorant person as well as a young, full-of-life, and bright character in the same ad, the significance of both personas varies and has a deeper significance. In such cases, the attacking brand would show the young person using their product while the old person using another product – all of this is based on who the target audience is and the tactics used to reach it. This other product that would be attributed to the negative symbolism (the old person) would indirectly represent the competitor's product. By doing so, the advertiser is transferring "positive impressions/images to the advertised brand by associating it with some object, situation, person, or place which the advertiser feels will be favorably evaluated by the consumer" (Shimp. 1988). Therefore, it is essential to understand the VALS (Values and Lifestyles) of the desired target audience before choosing these elements of identification.

This concept of characterization is essential to the theory of framing advertisements as it attributes indirect characteristics to the brand (adding to its branding and identity) by using outside sources and symbols that are more familiar to the viewers. In competitive advertising, and specifically in the scope of our study, it is essential to analyze the characterization traits that Almaza and Beirut Beer are using in their attacking ads as they are essential elements that frame the viewers' minds into choosing the product that they believe is better and the one that they associate with. An essential question relates the framing theory to the scope of our study: what are the contrasting symbols that Almaza and Beirut Beer are using in their competitive ads and how are they portrayed to represent both the attacking and the attacker to frame the consumers' mind and make them engage with these ads?

4.3 Active Audience Theory

As we have previously analyzed in the framing theory, characterization plays an immense role in how a product is framed and advertised to the public. While specific elements play a major role in the understanding of an ad, the pragmatics of the elements used are understood by the audience depending on other factors such as culture, gender participation, age, political participation, and more. With symbolism playing a crucial role in enhancing the ideas and motives of an ad, the active audience theory stresses the importance of the consumer and their roles when perceiving an ad: "They must learn the codes and conventions of all aspects of their culture" (Livingstone, 2000).

The audience theory in mass communication deals with both the active audience in which the receivers are "individualistic, impervious to influence, rational, and selective", as well as the passive audience where receivers are "conformist, gullible, anomic, vulnerable, victims" (Biocca, 2012). In mass communication, there is a drive to merge both conceptions to understand "the sociopolitical role of the media, the audience member's cognitions of self and "reality," as well as

the moment-to-moment cognitive processes by which the individual decodes media content and form" (Biocca, 2012). In competitive advertising, the active audience plays a crucial role in analyzing the symbols used in the attacks by associating them with their culture and understanding the purpose of the ad.

Audience activity is "both cognitive and sociostructural, normative and objective, socially variable yet innate" (Biocca, 2012). This can be considered both a strength and a weakness because of its "extraordinary range of meaning" (Blumler, 1979) and its "undeniably complex and multidimensional" meta-construct (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rosengren, 1985). Audience activity has multiple facets, one of which is intentionality. Intentionality in audience activity "emphasizes the more cognitive dimensions of activity" which "points to schematic processing and structuring of incoming information" (Biocca, 2012). These patterns of memory and conception hold a clear trace of the audience member's cognitive processing structure, personality, and motivation (McQuail & Gurevitch, 1974). Therefore, when framing an ad in competitive advertising, the brand should build schemas that resonate with its targeted audience and representations that viewers will be able to decode the symbols as they place the ad and its content in its appropriate dimensions. In competitive advertising, when brands use symbols that get decoded by the active audience, the latter are more likely to deeply engage with the ad, as they understand the attack and take part in the attacking brand's propaganda.

In competitive advertising, and especially when one brand launches an indirect attack on its competitor by using implicit attacking strategies, some audiences might not be able to decode the hidden meanings of these attacking tactics at hand, making them passive audiences – "grey, uniform, anomic, faceless, gullible, and defenseless against the power of the propagandist" (Biocca, 2012). This type of audience might not engage with the ad in terms of a brand attacking the other because of the passiveness of this watching practice. Instead, the passive watcher feels a sense of neutrality and simplicity toward the ad.

When focusing on audience activity, and especially because of external factors affecting the understanding of an ad, "audiences diverge in their interpretations, generating different understandings from the same text" (Livingstone, 2000). That is to say, every active consumer might pick up on an aspect of the competitive ad (such as symbolism, a joke, a character representation, or else) and define it as an attack. This process of viewing and discerning meaning "stands at the interface between the media (and their interpretations) and the rest of viewers' lives, with all the concerns, experiences, and knowledge which this involves" (Livingstone, 2000).

As the active audience theory suggests, viewers play an important role in understanding and analyzing the attacks and counterattacks in competitive advertising. Through this theory, we can question the efficiency of a competitive ad: Does the active audience's ability to decipher the framed symbols in an indirect attack cause the audience to engage more with the message?

4.4 Identification Theory

Kenneth Burke's identification theory can be defined "as a process or negotiation toward identification and away from division" (Overall, 2017). In advertising, this process can be translated to a sense of belonging that viewers feel toward the elements of an ad, whether it be the feeling that the advertised product evokes or the characterization that we have previously spoken of in the

framing theory that viewers identify with. When we merge both previously mentioned theories and analyze them in terms of the identification theory, the relationship between all three theories explores the "expression and meaning through attention to the psychology of an audience" (Overall, 2017).

In mass media and especially in the 21st-century communication models such as Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), identification practices aim to "persuade a target audience" and "connect with that audience on some level" (Chonticia, 2013). In competitive advertising, "this connection can be achieved through identification" which can be defined as "the feeling of relating to a person, issue or organization" and can lead to "empathy, sense of community or feeling of responsibility created by rhetoric" (Chonticia, 2013).

Researchers who conducted studies aiming to analyze the consumers' level of identification (Algesheimer et al., 2005), communication (Adjei et al., 2012), and participation (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006) in terms of brand community found that whenever the audience identified with a brand, they were more likely to engage, trust, commit, and purchase of this specific brand. Goh, Heng, & Lin (2013) analyze consumer behavior on social media by analyzing the degree to which the audience engages with the brand and suggest identification strategies that increase consumers' engagement level. According to their study, "identification strategies" increase "the consumer's economic impact of joining social media brand communities" and engage with the content of a specific brand (Goh, Heng, & Lin, 2013).

Based on Burke's theory and its importance, brands can implement identification strategies in their advertising campaigns to try to resonate with the appropriate target audience. Based on the previously mentioned research, it is essential to analyze the effectiveness of identification in competitive advertising specifically. Will the advertisement with the elements the target audience identifies with attract more audience engagement in the face of two direct competitors commencing advertising attacks?

5. Method

This study will rely on raw social media data collection from social media networks where Almaza and Beirut Beer post their advertisements in order to investigate the aforementioned hypothesis and find answers to the theoretical questions derived from the theories. Because the subjects of our study are known brands that have public data that is available and is not derived from Almaza and Beirut Beer's private data analytics—rather, they are a public study of easily accessible statistics—the kind of data collection used for the creation of this research will be raw social media data collection: number of views, likes, comments, and shares. The social media platforms taken into account for the execution of this data collection are Facebook and YouTube where longer ads are usually posted. Initially, both Beirut Beer and Almaza posted their video advertisements on these applications. It was not until 2023 that they started posting some of their digital ads on their Instagram accounts, making YouTube and Facebook their favorable platforms when it comes to digital advertisements. To better understand the degree of engagement and whether these types of ads are a preference of the audience, we will go into a brief content analysis of the comments that were posted. Analyzing the comments might also help us understand whether

these ads are direct or indirect attacks and whether the audience was able to pick up on these advertising strategies.

6. Results

The effectiveness of competitive advertising was analyzed by an assessment of Almaza and Beirut Beer's advertisements. Through data collection and analysis, we gathered information regarding views, likes, shares, and types of comments. This information revealed how the public responded to competitive advertising efforts in contrast to other forms of advertising, which are listed in each of the following tables.

Our study's conclusions revealed several intriguing trends and patterns regarding the effectiveness of Beirut Beer and Almaza's competitive advertisements. The subsequent sections include a detailed examination of these findings, offering insights into audience engagement, opinions, interests, and the influence of advertising attacks on social media interactions.
The titles of the ads and advertising campaigns are translated from Arabic.

	Number of Views	Number of Likes	Number of Comments	Number of Shares
A1	532,000	9,600	442	944
BB1	535,000	3,400	908	736

Table 1: Audience Engagement on Direct Competitive Advertisement by Beirut Beer Attacking Almaza – Facebook

A1: A Facebook ad posted by Almaza on July 19, 2016, highlights the history of how Almaza first began in Lebanon up until the date posted and gives it the title of "Lebanon's beer".

BB1: A direct attacking ad made by Beirut Beer on Almaza's A1 ad, titled "Which country's beer are we?" (using sarcastic Arabic articles) on August 2, 2016, using a similar storyline and the same mood board in the background yet adding a narrator that talks over the actions happening in the background, criticizing Almaza's storyline. Many of the comments on this ad showed a direct understanding of the attack made. Some comments enjoyed the propaganda and showed an interest in the value of this warfare while others chose sides.

	Number of Views	Number of Likes	Number of Comments
BB2	17,000	124	6

Table 2: Audience Engagement on Direct Competitive Advertisement by Beirut Beer Attacking Almaza – YouTube

BB2: A direct attack called "Be Aware of Imitations" made by Beirut Beer to address Almaza on April 12, 2018, labeling the ad as a direct message to the competitor through a written format before the start of the ad. They wrote a foreword at the beginning of the ad, mentioning its purpose and announcing that the competitor will be called "Mjadra" (a traditional Lebanese dish that is part of the Lebanese culture) to avoid lawsuits. The ad calls out "Mjadra" for copying Beirut Beer's mini-sized bottles which they have previously introduced. Another purpose of the ad was to launch an extra mini-sized bottle. The ad portrays a young, different, and unusual CEO persona to represent Beirut Beer, and a traditional, formal, and well-composed CEO persona to represent Almaza. The ad

uses elements that target Almaza and calls it out for copying Beirut Beer and shows Almaza throwing its product at the end. Comments on this ad showed an interest in this marketing campaign, for even consumers of the competing brand acknowledged the effectiveness of this advertising campaign (e.g. " Great job guys u really did well, im also sry because i really think that the mjadra tastes better. But really great job you have my respect!" – via YouTube).

	Number of views	Number of Likes	Number of Comments
BB3	36,000	212	10
BB4	21,000	141	2

Table 3: Audience Engagement on Indirect Competitive Advertisements by Beirut Beer – YouTube

BB3: An ad called "Mjadra every day?" – one of the initial TVCs made on March 1, 2015, by Beirut Beer to launch their product in the Lebanese market. It used the "Mjadra" nickname which was the first step into labeling Almaza as "Mjadra" in all their next ads. The ad shows users that the habitual "Mjadra" is for people who do not seek change, but there is a new world full of changes, and it is time to try it by choosing to drink Beirut Beer. Many comments acknowledged the creativity of the ad and understood the indirect correlations made by Beirut Beer to indirectly attack Almaza.

BB4: Another ad called "A Beer on the Rise" made by Beirut Beer on May 10, 2016, talks about two brothers. The storyline includes their mom who explains how one of them is loved by all regardless of anything because he is the firstborn, and another who is full of potential but doesn't have a chance to show all his abilities because he is ignored by his family who only focus on his brother. The ad also shows the older brother (Almaza) eating his favorite meal "Mjadra" to intensify Beirut Beer's concept of Almaza equaling "Mjadra" in their ads. The mother explains that the older brother is used to being pampered and spoiled; so when the younger brother won a game of chess, the older brother withdrew from the game, and everyone was surprised at the younger brother's hindered capabilities.

	Number of views	Number of Likes	Number of Comments
BB5	12,000	56	1
BB6	31,000	195	7
BB7	6,100	42	3

Table 4: Audience Engagement on Indirect Competitive Advertisements by Beirut Beer – YouTube

These ads are part of an advertising campaign titled "A Beer that Has a New Way of Thinking"

BB5: This ad, posted on October 2, 2017, titled "Your hair, son", talks about a young guy with a man bun sitting with his old father and his old friend. His father is telling him to cut his hair because he is a sound engineer, and sound engineers should look more presentable. The ad ends by saying "You have a new way of thinking, and we support you. Beirut beer, a beer that has a new way of thinking".

BB6: This ad was posted on September 19, 2017, and titled "Sound Engineer". It has the same actors as BB5, and both ads are complementary. The father and his friend are questioning whether a

sound engineer is a 'real engineer, and the father feels skeptical and somehow ashamed of his son's career choices because they are not compatible with famous jobs that he is familiar with. It also ends by saying "You have a new way of thinking, and we support you. Beirut beer, a beer that has a new way of thinking".

BB7: This ad titled "Your project will not work" and posted on October 9, 2017, includes three guys, two of them telling their friend that his project will not work by quoting famous Arabic sayings. It also ends by saying "You have a new way of thinking, and we support you. Beirut beer, a beer that has a new way of thinking".

	Number of views	Number of Likes	Number of Comments
BB8	1,500	9	0
BB9	6.200	26	0
BB10	6,100	36	2

Table 5: Audience Engagement on Non-Competitive Advertisements by Beirut Beer – YouTube

BB8: An ad posted on October 6, 2017, that documents the "Happy Hour Event" organized by Beirut Beer in Mar Mikhayel – Beirut.

BB9: The first ad/episode from the advertising campaign titled "The Series" (consisting of 6 parts), posted on April 28, 2017, talks about two young Lebanese advertisers trying to search for the best idea to market Beirut Beer and seek their boss's approval.

BB10: The last ad/episode from the advertising campaign titled "The Series", posted on July 10, 2017, shows the two young Lebanese advertisers who finally found the perfect way to advertise Beirut Beer and gained their boss's approval.

7. Discussion

As the results show in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 (competitive ads) in comparison with Table 5 (non-competitive ads), the ads of Beirut Beer that are attacks on Almaza showed a higher level of engagement from the audience than other normal ads. If we look at Table 1, we notice a higher number of comments on BB1 because many of the viewers picked up on the attack and voiced their opinions. Whether they chose one side, liked the content, or criticized this attack, does not change the fact that such type of advertising strategy increased engagement, pushing the audience to be an active audience. If we look at the content of BB1 (which is considered an explicit attack on A1) in terms of framing and identification, we can notice that Beirut Beer structured its ad using the same elements of Almaza yet changed the script by criticizing Almaza's storyline. They addressed the same points that Almaza mentioned in a way that Beirut Beer would appeal to their audience, therefore framing Almaza's key message in a way that another audience can identify with. The interval of BB1 also conforms to the definition of advertising warfare that we have initially mentioned, as the ad was posted 2 weeks after Almaza posted its ad.

In BB2, Beirut Beer made a direct statement that they were attacking Almaza. The personas used in this ad can be analyzed thoroughly because of Beirut Beer's raw accusations. If we look at both males representing each of the owners of the beer companies, the narrator who represents

Beirut Beer is a younger, more relaxed person who doesn't look like a CEO/owner – that is to say, Beirut Beer wants to show its audience that they are a beer company with other non-traditional views, non-stereotypical values, and other morals, a complete opposite branding of Almaza; one that is more targeted toward the younger audience who seeks change and does not conform to stereotypes. However, they chose a traditional, formal, and well-composed actor to represent Almaza. This shows that Beirut Beer understands the historical value of Almaza and is trying to build another beer with a different personality.

This is similarly reinforced in BB3 and BB4 as both ads mentioned the "Mjadra" metaphor and showed the youth who seek fun and change as the main Beirut Beer drinkers. In BB3, Beirut Beer is saying how "Mjadra" was a comfort food, but it is time to try something new and more innovative. In the second ad, Beirut Beer crafted its ad in terms of an older achieving brother and a capable but forgotten younger brother. The storyline created by Beirut Beer in this ad is not a violent attack but an indirect approach that puts both brands in contrast with each other and asks the Lebanese audience to allow for a new beer in their market. In both these ads, Beirut Beer is indirectly attacking Almaza because it is not devaluing the opposing brand but rather suggesting a new alternative that has different values. In terms of content analysis, many viewers respected the tribute that Beirut Beer paid to Almaza by respecting its historical impact and addressing it as "the older brother".

In the "A Beer That Has a New Way of Thinking" series in Table 4, we can see an enhancement in the storyline of Beirut Beer versus Almaza. Although the ads are extremely implicit and almost unnoticeable in terms of their attack, we can see a recreation of specific elements that are present in the ads in Table 4. BB5 and BB6 distinguish between the young son (who represents the values and lifestyles of Beirut Beer drinkers: youthful and following trends) and the two old men (who represent the values and lifestyles of Almaza drinkers: old, traditional, and rejecting change). The name of this advertising campaign further stresses the values of Beirut Beer and allows beer drinkers to have another alternative that resonates with who they are. The tactic that Beirut Beer is using in its ads is to create a story, a lifestyle, and a value for its consumers so people wouldn't only buy the beer, but also invest in the feeling and lifestyle that it evokes and represents. BB7 elaborates on the challenge of creating a new project, which mirrors the Beirut Beer project that challenged Almaza. Similarly, Beirut Beer is seen selling a state of mind, a vision, and a lifestyle rather than a mere beverage.

8. Conclusion

Seeing that Beirut Beer's competitive advertising has increased audience engagement in its ads, understanding how they frame their ads and use identification elements and characterization is essential to understanding how an attack can be enhanced by a brand and allow not only viewers to engage, but also push them to choose sides. As our examples illustrate, Beirut Beer maintained the same tone, titles, and characterization when attacking its opponent such as "Mjadra", always choosing actors that represent how Beirut Beer wants to portray Almaza (old, out-fashioned, not following trends, traditional, stubborn, etc…), and showing Almaza personas doing outmoded things. The tactic that Beirut Beer chose in its competitive advertising strategy is not to directly

degrade Almaza (because Almaza has a cultural and historical significance in Lebanon that everyone is aware of and respects, so any degrading comment might backfire at Beirut Beer) but rather introduce their beer a new target audience – one that appeals with the younger Lebanese audience rather than the traditional old one. Through its attacks, Beirut Beer made it explicitly known that its beer is not for the traditional cultural audience – not for the belongers, achievers, and societally conscious, but rather for the innovative, creative, eccentric, peculiar, and unconventional category of Lebanese people who can be part of the I-Am-Me's, emulators, and experimentals categories. Through its attacks, Beirut Beer not only addressed the competition between two famous Lebanese beer companies but also adopted and tackled the difference in interests that these two categories of people are aware of. Beirut Beer is therefore supporting the differences, creativity, liberation, and rebellion of this target audience and inviting it to adopt a beer that shares the same views. Maintaining the same tone and representations of both Almaza and Beirut Beer in all the attacking ads of Beirut Beer made a major contribution to the success of these advertising attacks by framing the same ideas that would appeal to the desired target audience using similar characterization and identification elements. By effectively using these aspects of framing and identification theory in their attacks, and specifically in the storyline of the ad, Beirut Beer helped the audience understand the difference between its brand and its competitor's brand. By analyzing how Beirut Beer's attacks were crafted, we can conclude that while Beirut Beer repeatedly acknowledged the cultural importance of Almaza, launching attacks that address the same target audience might have negative outcomes. Hence, we can conclude that Beirut Beer's strategy to attack its main direct competitor using competitive advertising consisted of the brand targeting its competitor's opposite audience, allowing these new and different viewers to become active instead of passive audiences and indirectly making them engage and even take positions.

9. Limitations

The main findings of our study rely on raw data collection, but the content analysis is not as thorough as it needs to be because there is no real confirmation of whether these attacks are crafted to attack a brand. Furthermore, the values collected from views, likes, comments, and shares are prone to fluctuation as anyone can still access these ads and engage with them. Yet, because these advertisements were posted during previous years, any change will not affect the accuracy of our findings because the content posted achieves its maximum reach in the early stages of its life. Additionally, we didn't analyze many of Almaza's non-competitive ads because it never launched an attack on Beirut Beer. Moreover, because competitive advertising is one of many strategies used in advertising practices, there is no stable timeframe for the attacks, which is why the framework of our study extends over a large period – competitive advertisements do not follow a specific sequence. It is also essential to note that Almaza is not investing in its advertising campaigns as much as Beirut Beer is.

10.Appendix

A1	https://www.facebook.com/AlmazaLeb/videos/10153742512236762/
BB1	https://www.facebook.com/beirutbeerlebanon/videos/1750682595206194/
BB2	https://youtu.be/Hm2pEGCUivA?si=4-8CRKz58ygFLVXj
BB3	https://youtu.be/QZj3NtAbIiU?si=9B0mTKPijHXtNK7y
BB4	https://youtu.be/ggJOTJqVOVQ?si=i9-exoKiFnZA6Eu6
BB5	https://youtu.be/_C6D0Eu0B_k?si=N-pB-ike6wBHCGGq
BB6	https://youtu.be/2bIDIjWgXjw?si=Q8DuR1671w4QjxlB
BB7	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6Rb3PeIMas&ab_channel=BeirutBeer
BB8	https://youtu.be/pEhbwAHrum4?si=i4mzr83iI6tPrU7G
BB9	https://youtu.be/NQp9W36bMLs?si=-CiVK_RQKfCYvPPG
BB10	https://youtu.be/h2MJP2yWWuI?si=T22WikefqXwIcHB

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