Health messages during the COVID-19 pandemic

An analysis of the framing of health messages and the response of the public

Student Name: Chrystel Laura Philipsen
Student Number: 528745

Supervisor: Dr. Marco Scalvini

Master Media Studies - Media & Business
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master's Thesis
October 2020

Health messages during the COVID-19 pandemic

An analysis of the framing of health messages and the response of the public

ABSTRACT

Health is a concept that is prevalent in today's society. Health messages and campaigns are continuously spread in the media. The quest for health has become performative through specific behavioural actions and the purchase of health-improving products. The COVID-19 pandemic sparked a new type of health messages. The health crisis sparked responses not only from institutional organisations but also from commercial organisations. Commercial organisations feel the need to be involved in the conversation as the pandemic also affects them internally and externally. The new health messages raise the question of how organisations, both institutional and commercial, respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The present research explores how institutional and commercial organisations respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in their campaigns. In particular, this study seeks to understand how organisations use the concept of taboo to frame their message. Additionally, this research aims to uncover the main themes in the response of the public. The sample consists of ten videos (five institutional campaigns and five commercial campaigns) that were published on official YouTube channels and the accompanying comments. A mixed-methods approach was used to explore the content of the campaigns. Semantic network analysis was used to visualise the linguistic patterns in the transcript, and multimodal critical discourse analysis was used for an in-depth analysis. The YouTube comments were analysed using thematic analysis. Regarding the conceptual framework of taboo, this study found two overarching strategies through which taboo is exemplified in the campaigns. The first overarching strategy is the appeal to community feeling, and the second strategy is the visibility of taboo. The health measurements are continuously visually and textually reiterated. Positive and negative traits are attributed to objects and certain behavioural practices. The public response to the campaigns was both positive and negative. Positive comments supported the campaign and health measurements. The negative comments expressed disagreement with the campaign and often did not belief the severity of the pandemic. This thesis concludes that organisations use their campaigns to adjust the behaviour of the public by reiterating the health measurements set by government institutions. Furthermore, the message of the campaigns is framed using the concept of taboo. Lastly, the public's response is mainly mixed. This thesis contributes to the understanding of campaigns published during the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, health communication, taboo, health crisis, public response

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

At the end of 2019, the world began to take notice of a new, highly infectious disease called COVID-19. This disease slowly spread amongst the world population, causing a pandemic. It has greatly impacted social climates and practices around the world. The measurements taken against the spread of COVID-19 has changed the way consumers interact with each other and with brands and official government organisations. Social distancing has become the new normal. For instance, the Netherlands have implemented 'the 1.5-metre economy' which means that people will have to social distance from other people by at least 1.5 metres (Kraaijenbrink, 2020). This affects the entire social climate and context of the current society.

Public health crises are defined by their health consequences and risks (Nelson, Lurie, Wasserman, & Zakowski, 2007). They have the ability to disrupt social order and routines. More often than not, health crises concern infectious diseases or risks from lifestyle habits (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic is considered a public health crisis as its consequences disrupts social routines and regards a highly infectious disease. The responsibility for the crisis lies with governments, commercial organisations, and health professionals as they can inform the public of the risks and consequences (Nelson, Lurie, Wasserman, & Zakowski, 2007). The dissemination of information can lead to a better understanding of the risks, and it can help protect the public.

A crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic requires a prompt response of an organisation. An increase in media attention or actions from within the organisation can trigger the response (Cornelissen, 2017; Eriksson, 2015; Zaremba, 2015). There are different types of crises, such as natural disasters, corporate crises, or cultural problems that may urge companies to respond (Cornelissen, 2017; Zaremba, 2015). The life of a crisis, according to Sturges (1994), follows a supposed life cycle which can be seen in figure 1. Crises are inevitable and can severely affect an organisation's perception negatively (Zaremba, 2015).
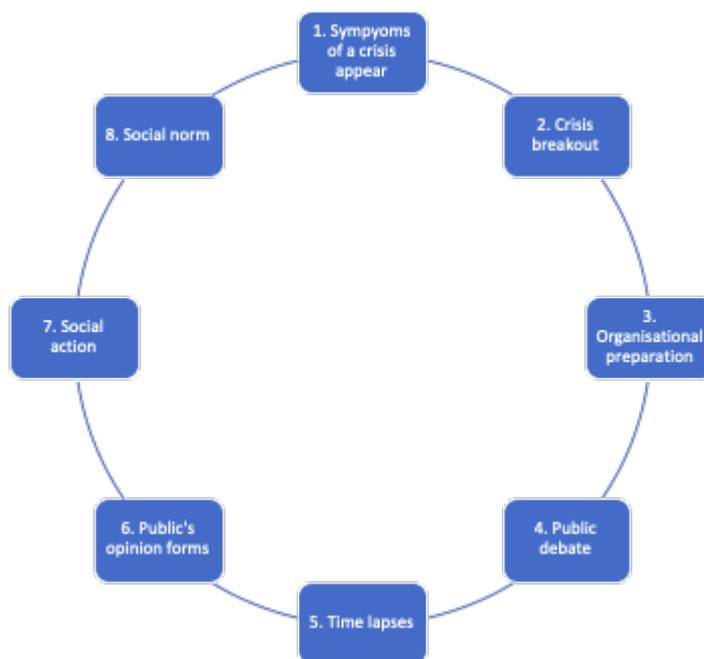
Figure 1. The life cycle of a crisis (Sturges, 1994).

In the beginning, symptoms of a crisis appear. These symptoms or clues help organisations foresee the crisis, helping them make preparations before the crisis emerges (Sturges, 1994). When the crisis emerges, it will receive a lot of media attention, and phase three and four of the life cycle begins. Organisations prepare a response, and the public will form their opinion based on available information and reactions in the media. Then, time-lapses as public opinion is formed and responses of organisations are sent out into the world. During this time, both the public and organisations reflect on the available information and responses. In phase six, a general public opinion is formed, which leads to stage seven, where organisations respond appropriately according to the public's response. This establishes a norm for similar crises in the future.

Organisations are forced to rely on agility and dynamic capabilities to identify, develop, and assess the crisis (Teece, Peteraf, & Leih, 2016; Cornelissen, 2017). Agility is defined as flexibility. In a business context, this is seen as the ability to react and to manage uncertainties quickly (Teece, Peteraf, & Leih, 2016). Dynamic capabilities go hand in hand with agility as dynamic capabilities entail a company's competence and resources to manage uncertain situations (Teece, Petera, & Leih, 2006). Accordingly, it is essential for organisations to address the crisis quickly and adequately.

Not only do institutional organisations respond to the pandemic, but commercial organisations like Apple and Uber also deem it necessary to be involved in addressing the public health crisis as it may affect their employees and reputation. Furthermore, commercial organisations may feel the need to be involved in the situation as it is part of their ethos. Ethos implies the values

of an organisation and the desire to do the right thing (Arnold, 2009; Shetty, Venkataramaiah, & Anand, 2019). This new focus on ethical and moral advertising has led to products being transformed into symbols of morals and values (Hopkins, 2015; Hodkinson, 2017; Murphy, Laczniak, & Harris, 2017). Objects have the power to associate themselves with the identity of consumers (Hopkins, 2015). Societal marketing can also lead to a change of the image of a company or brand which can result into desirable effects such as a higher perceived brand value (Bloom, Hoeffler, Keller, & Meza, 2006). More importantly, societal marketing's last aim is to influence consumers' behaviour and to point them to ethical and morally sound decisions (Eagle & Dahl, 2015). This is applicable in today's social context where organisations are facing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. They want consumers to make ethical and morally sound decisions.

1.1 Aim and research questions

Although there have been several academic studies about the effectiveness of health advertising and campaigns, the content of these messages has been relatively unexamined. Prior research has focused on anti-smoking advertisements, obesity, or AIDS campaigns (Beaudoin, 2002; Bush & Davies, 1998; Cohen, Shumate, & Gold, 2007). Nevertheless, there has been little to no research regarding health advertising and campaigns during COVID-19 as this situation is relatively new and still developing. Moreover, the content of health messages concerning the concept of taboo has been relatively underexplored. Campaigns help define the borders of low- and high-risk behaviour, which can help constrain the spread of the disease. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to illustrate how commercial and institutional organisations reply to the COVID-19 pandemic in their messages.

Research question:	How do institutional and commercial organisations respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in their campaigns?
Sub-question:	What kind of verbal and visual language has been used during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The persuasiveness of health messages is affected by the perception of the level of trustworthiness and expertise (Kreuter & McClure, 2004). This topic has mostly been studied with the help of quantitative methods. Considering that this research will look at campaigns posted on the social media platform YouTube, it is also interesting to see how the public responds to these campaigns. The consumer's response to a crisis can have a significant impact on the reputation of an organisation and how crisis communication is interpreted. The introduction of social network sites

such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, has given consumers a platform to communicate about the crisis and the responses of organisations (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). It is crucial to take into account the public's reaction as their reaction can be intense and complex (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018). This leads to the following sub-question:

Sub-question: What are the main themes amongst the responses towards the campaigns related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.2 Synopsis of the research method

A qualitative method has been selected for this research and consists of a critical discourse analysis that includes visual social semiotics as part of a multimodal approach. The multimodal dataset consists of ten commercial campaigns and ten government official public health campaigns. These campaigns were published between January 2020 and August 2020 on the social media platform YouTube. The dataset consisted of twenty videos: 10 institutional campaigns and ten commercial campaigns. In addition, the transcripts of the campaigns were analysed using semantic network analysis to visualise the language used in the campaigns. The results of the analysis are then interpreted regarding the concept of taboo. The YouTube comments that accompany the campaigns are analysed through thematic analysis to detect main and recurring themes amongst the public opinion. These themes are interpreted and compared to the discursive strategies used in advertising to interpret the effectiveness of the campaigns.

1.3 Relevance of the research

The context of the present research focuses on campaigns that include a health message. The concerns of a health crisis are often voiced through advertisements or campaigns to the public. The messages in the advertisements are often informative about the risks. They can also include warnings, information about the symptoms, and where to seek medical treatment. These messages can also be focused on lifestyle aspects (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). For instance, advice about staying healthy and ways to decrease the risk of getting infected is often given. The dissemination of information typically relies on mass media such as social networking platforms and traditional media (Glik, 2007; Reynolds, & Seeger, 2005). There are several communication strategies about how to deal with infectious diseases such as COVID-19. Some of these theories find their foundation in crisis communication and others in from risk communication. Prior research about health campaigns has mainly focused on anti-smoking or on sexually transmitted diseases.

Social relevance

There has been a constant stream of information about COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. The continuous exposure to health messages can affect the public in several ways and raises the question of whether it is morally permissible. Considering that organisations engage more often in societal marketing, it is of social relevance to examine how organisations react to the COVID-19 crisis given that a pandemic with such societal impact has not been experienced before. Moreover, it is of ethical significance to understand how brands communicate with their consumers. Organisations are forced to make use of their dynamic capabilities to stabilise the social and economic situation. In doing so, they depict moral values and attitudes to influence the public's perception and behaviour (Adams, 2020). Rothschild (2020) states that brands are more willing to change their communication strategy and want to address the COVID-19 pandemic directly. The pandemic can also be seen as an opportunity for commercial organisations as it gives them the chance to be morally favourable in the eyes of the consumer. Furthermore, the uncovering of central themes in the response of the public helps uncover patterns in the responses.

Scientific relevance

Health campaigns are an essential and powerful tool when it comes to the dissemination of health information, and they have the ability to influence the public's behaviour (Cohen, Shumate, & Gold, 2007). Prior research on health campaigns explored topics such as anti-smoking campaigns or AIDS. The focus was put on exemplifying common themes within the campaigns, the effectiveness of the campaign, or the role of campaigns regarding the dissemination of health information (Bush & Davies, 1998; Cohen, Shumate, & Gold, 2007; Beaudoin, 2002). Research related to health and taboo has focused more on health as a moral performance (Williams, 1998) or the taboo of mental health and sexually transmitted diseases. However, there has been little to no research regarding health campaigns and the notion of taboo. An analysis of the use of taboo in COVID-19 related campaigns has benefits for marketers and academics as it provides new insights and a different perspective.

1.4 Overview thesis structure

The thesis is divided into a total of five chapters. The current chapter is the first chapter which presents the rationale or the study. Moreover, it discusses the social and scientific relevance of the current research. The following chapter is divided into two sections. The first section introduces a review of the existing literature on health messages. It discusses the context of health messages, communication strategies, and the ethical implications. The second section exemplifies the conceptual framework for this study. The conceptual framework is built on the concept of taboo and

is defined with the help of five other notions. First, the notion of the public and private sphere is explained. Then, the use of metaphors and myths in relation to illnesses and diseases. Lastly, the notions of purity and pollution are discussed. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the theoretical framework. The methodology makes up the third chapter. It lays out the research design of the current research and justifies the choices made regarding the research. Besides, it discusses the sampling and data collection process. A detailed description of the analysis framework and analysis process is given. Lastly, the credibility of this research is discussed. The chapter that follows the methodology is the results which discuss the results of the analysis. It will give an overview of the main themes found in the campaigns and comments of the public. The last chapter regards the discussion and conclusion. The results of the analysis are discussed concerning the theoretical framework. Furthermore, the theoretical implications and limitations are discussed. Suggestions for further research are also given.

2. Theoretical framework

Chapter overview

The introduction laid out the foundation for the present chapter. This chapter is divided into two sections: a literature review and conceptual framework. There is an extensive amount of literature about communication during crises and epidemics. The theoretical focus of this chapter arises from a communicative perspective.

The literature review will go in-depth about the concept of health and health messages from the field of communication. The concept of health is seen from a sociological and psychological discourse. The section discusses the use of social media platforms for health messages and the accompanying communication strategies. Lastly, this section will discuss the ethics surrounding health messages. The second section introduces the conceptual framework based on anthropological views that provide insight into the taboo of health.

2.1 Literature review on health messages

Health is a concept that has been prevalent in human society for centuries and conceptions of health change according to the social climate (Williams, 1998). The concept is tied to medical research as the search for a prolonged and healthy life has become a goal that is integrated into human life (Crawford, 2006). Health moves freely between the human body and its environment as the state of one's body is influenced by external factors (Williams, 1998).

The 19th century is marked as the turning point of health becoming a more performative action (Crawford, 2006). The public's fear of loss of vitality and fear of illnesses and diseases sparked a health reform (Crawford, 2006). Health became a goal that could be won by consciousness, professional advice, and commercial products. It was mostly considered a private matter. The downside of health becoming increasingly important was that medical research was not as accurate as today. Ideas about health were often based on false biases during the 19th and early 20th century. For instance, racial health concerns encouraged segregation in the U.S.A, and sexual health campaigns often portrayed women's sexual freedom as a taboo (Crawford, 2006). Individuals who diverged from what was seen as healthy behaviour or habits were seen as deviant. More importantly, failure to achieve health is associated with the inability of controlling one's desires. As a result, the pursuit of health became performative.

In the light of health becoming performative, health is used as a marketing strategy by institutional and commercial organisations. Products and practices that may improve health have turned into symbols of morals and values (Hopkins, 2015). Consequently, objects and abstract concepts have the power to associate themselves with the identity of an individual (Hopkins, 2015).

Health messages have gone from purely institutional towards a more consumer perspective shift. Crawford (2006) comments that health has become synonymous with good behaviour and individual autonomy. For example, during the 1980's AIDS epidemic, several communication strategies focused on the attribution of positive and negative traits to certain behavioural practices.

Furthermore, these attributions were associated with an individual's identity. Although health may be considered as a superficial layer of an individual's identity as illnesses and diseases, the dangers to health are often not evident. Symptoms of illnesses and diseases can develop over a wide period of time. The dangers that can jeopardise an individual's health take time to either become visible or affect one's health. Furthermore, health is often discussed in relation to the human body, while mental health is taken out of the equation as it is more abstract. The state of health requires constant observation and consciousness (Crawford, 2006).

The constant state of being aware of your health also means that individuals are reminded of their fragility and mortality. Health requires commitment and awareness of potential (fatal) risks (Crawford, 2006, Williams, 1998). Goldenberg, Pyszczynski, Johnson, Greenberg, & Solomon (1999) call this awareness of risk *mortality salience*. This concept is part of the Terror Management Theory. According to this theory, people who experience anxiety regarding the uncertainty of their mortality try to find comfort in imaging themselves as part of something bigger and meaningful (Pyszczynski, Solomon & Greenberg, 2003). Regarding health, the state of being healthy helps individuals identify themselves with a larger group. Hence, individuals regarded as unhealthy, become out-group (Arndt et al., 2002). The act of being part of a larger group helps individuals feel secure against the dangers that oppose their healthiness.

Health messages and social media platforms

Public health campaigns and health messages can be published on a variety of media channels. Before the introduction of the internet, health messages were published through traditional media such as newspapers, print advertisements, and television commercials (Noar, 2012). The introduction of Web 2.0 and the newer versions, Web 3.0 and 4.0, have changed how organisations communicate with the public and vice versa (Erregcha & Romdhane, 2014). Web 2.0 gave consumers the ability to play an active role. Marketing messages and health campaigns were directly focused around and at the consumer (Erregcha & Romdhane, 2014). Web 3.0 introduced a new factor to the internet sphere: access to social media platforms. Through social media platforms, it is easier to communicate with the public. Additionally, the public is able to provide feedback to organisations and communicate with each other. Each communication channel has its own characteristics and should be critically considered before choosing which channel will be used.

Social media platforms play an increasingly important role in the dissemination of public health campaigns (Shi, Poorisat, & Salmon, 2018; Yoo, Kim, & Lee, 2018). This is not surprising as the characteristics of social media platforms allow for quick dissemination of information. It allows for interactivity and quick communication between organisations and the public (Shi, Poorisat, & Salmon, 2018). Publishing health campaigns on social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter is valuable for institutional and commercial organisations. Not only does it aid interactivity, but it also valuable because of the increased engagement (Freeman et al., 2015). Engagement appears at different levels. A like or dislike is considered a low level of engagement. Sharing the original content on a different platform or reposting the content on the same platform is considered medium engagement.

In contrast, high engagement is defined as discussing the content on- and offline within an individual's social network and adjusting their behaviour. This sharing feature of social media increases the dissemination and word-of-mouth of health messages (Yoo, Kim, & Lee, 2018). Communication on social media platforms enables organisations to reach a broader audience regardless of the public's age, ethnicity, race, or income (Heldman, Schindelar, & Weaver, 2013; Moorhead et al., 2013). The online discussions allow organisations to read the reaction of the public quickly and to process feedback in real-time. Moreover, it gives the public the ability to have an open conversation directly with organisations so that they can find a solution together (Heldman, Schindelar, & Weaver, 2013). This also makes it easier for organisations to create an online community.

Sharing health messages on social media create different expectations than messages published through traditional media (Shi, Poorisat, & Salmon, 2018). On social media, health campaign managers can expect the message to be shared, liked, disliked, and taken out of its original context either by adding or omitting from the original message by the public. Therefore, the original publisher has little to no control over the message after publishing the campaign. Campaign developers should use functions that social media users are already familiar with to increase the effectiveness of the health campaign. A pre-existing, strong social media presence helps with the dissemination of content and building an online community (Freeman, Potente, Rock, & McIver, 2015).

Communication strategies

Nowadays, it is relatively easy to find health information on the internet and social media platforms. The situation theory of problem-solving is a frequently used framework for understanding how the public takes part in different types of communicative behaviours to solve specific problems

(Yoo, Kim, & Lee, 2018). When a problem occurs, the public is more inclined to look for solutions by seeking out information. Increased media attention for an illness or disease triggers the information-seeking behaviour of the public (Lee & Rodriguez, 2008; Yoo, Kim, & Lee, 2018). Thus, it is vital for organisations to know how to communicate health messages to the public.

Risk communication is generally used as a communication strategy when it comes to public health campaigns and advertising (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). It regards messages that seek to change behaviour by inducing fear and visualising the threat to the public (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). It is based on the presumption that the public has the right to have access to knowledge about the disease. Communicating openly about risk ensures transparency (Guidry, Jin, Orr, Messner, & Meganck, 2017). Some campaigns use fear as an incentive to adjust the public's behaviour. For instance, HIV/AIDS campaigns in Africa have used fear tactics in order to discourage unsafe sex (Green & Witte, 2006). Prior research has found that fear tactics, if they work, only work in the short-term (Green & Witte, 2006).

The spread of information also allows the public to make informed behavioural decisions, and it allows the public to assess the risk for themselves. Credibility and reliability are essential factors for the effectiveness of the message (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018). Reynolds and Seeger (2005) state that messages are generally more effective if they are modified to meet the public their needs, values, experience, and culture. Generally, the message should be clear, easy to understand, appealing to reason and emotion, and presenting solutions for reducing risk (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). The main objective of risk management is to inform and protect the public about the health crisis in order to decrease the overall risk (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005).

The public often has trouble with visualising risk during a health crisis (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018). Visualisation helps the public visualise, personalise, and assess the risks at the same time. Photos are often used in health brochures, but visualising risk or the consequences in video campaigns is also helpful. In addition, visualisation helps with the understanding and retention of information (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018). It can also help the public's understanding of abstract concepts such as infectious diseases spread without the public's knowledge. Additionally, it helps the public put the information in context.

Health campaigns do not always lead to positive results, despite the expectations of organisations (Kim & Choi 2014; Kim, 2013). Organisations need to consider how they frame health messages. The use of representational characters affects the effectiveness of the health message (Cohen, Shumate, & Gold, 2007). According to the social cognitive theory, representational characters makes it easier for the public to identify with the message (Bandura, 2002). The public will also feel as if the message is addressed to them and their behaviour. Campaigns should also be

careful with how they are framing the new health measurements. According to the reactance theory, the threat of limited freedom induces a feeling of reactance amongst people (Kim & Choi, 2014; Kim, 2013). The public is continually exposed to news and campaigns about the health crisis. The continuous exposure and restrictions on their daily lives may evoke feelings of resistance (Kim & Choi, 2014). Thus, it is crucial to carefully communicate with consumers in order to lessen the feeling of resistance (Kim, 2013).

Ethics and health communication

Certain illnesses and diseases can be prevented by implementing specific behavioural actions. For instance, COVID-19 is highly contagious, and it is advised to wash your hands frequently to lower the chances of infection and the chances of dissemination. Accordingly, health campaigns often focus on adjusting an individual's personal practices and place responsibility on the public (Guttman & Ressler, 2001). This has moral consequences as specific behaviour becomes associated with wrong, weakness, or even sin. Guttman and Ressler (2001) comment that the emphasis on personal ethics and responsibility is a Western cultural orientation. It is the Western idea that one can control one's fate.

The emphasis on controlling one's fate places an enormous responsibility at the individual. Organisations often frame their health messages in what is considered acceptable and unacceptable. This leads to behaviour either being associated with sin or virtue. Indulging in sin leads to an unhealthy lifestyle and is perceived as a moral weakness (Guttman & Ressler, 2001; Williams, 1998). Even though illnesses and diseases are often external factors, the responsibility placed on the public makes health a public notion (Williams, 1998).

The personal responsibility in messages is often disguised in several manners. First, health messages appeal to the good of people. The messages often appeal to the feeling of community and respect for others. Hence, the responsibility of public health is placed at the individual. However, an individual only has full control over their own health and not of others. This bares the ethical question of whether it is ethical to place this responsibility at the individual (Guttmann & Ressler, 2001).

Second, health messages often overemphasise the responsibility of the individual. Health messages often regard solutions to a health problem or offer advice on how to stay clear of any threats (Guttman & Ressler, 2001). Consequently, the blame is attributed to the ill individual when they fall ill. Though having full control over one's health is practically impossible as health is often threatened by external factors (Williams, 1998). It is often infeasible to exercise control over these factors as they may not even be apparent or known to exist. Hence, placing the responsibility of

health at an individual level seems morally questionable. Even more so, the products that supposedly improve your health and immune system may not have the impact and effect that is advertised.

On the other hand, imposing on people's personal responsibility can have positive effects as it makes them feel that they have control over the situation (Guttman & Ressler, 2001). It encourages them to change their behaviour according to health messages. However, it can also lead to the attribution of blame towards marginalised groups as they do not or cannot change their behaviour accordingly. Consequently, it leads to negative identity labelling (Guttman & Ressler, 2001). Increased personal responsibility can affect an individual's mental well-being. It can provoke increased feelings of guilt or self-blame, which in itself hinders proper health behaviour (Guttman & Ressler, 2001). These feelings are enlarged when individuals are not capable of changing their behaviour or cannot adopt certain practices due to external factors (Guttman & Ressler). The big ethical question with personal responsibility in health messages is whether it is ethical to expect and to ask of people to adjust their behaviour and adopt certain practices when they are not able to do so.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The following section exemplifies the conceptual framework. It starts with the introduction of the concept of health as a taboo. It focuses on the portrayal of taboo in society and consumer culture concerning health. First, the concept of taboo is introduced, and how it is used in advertising/communication is clarified. The relevant discourses within taboo are then illustrated.

Concept of taboo

Campaign developers can use different strategies to capture consumers' attention and to make an impact. One of these strategies is using taboos in order to make provocative and persuasive messages (Sabri & Obermiller, 2012). This strategy enhances information retention and encourages word-to-mouth marketing (Freitas, 2008). Taboos are considered social, behavioural practices that overstep societal norms (Sabri & Obermiller, 2012). It functions as a way to protect human integrity and body (Gressier, 2018). Thus, taboos can be closely connected to one's identity (Gressier, 2018). According to Freitas (2008), taboos can be split up in two categories: taboos regarding uncleanliness and religious taboos (holiness).

Taboo advertisements either present taboo related products or have a taboo theme that promotes a product (Sabri & Obermiller, 2012). However, the product itself is unrelated to the taboo. For example, the fashion brand Benetton used photos of the Mafia killing of Benedetto Grado

in their 1992 spring/summer campaign. The taboo of murder and death does not relate to the products of Benetton but are exploited for marketing purposes. These advertisements are often seen as provocative as they use shocking themes. It also increases consumers' attention and retention of information. Commonly used taboo themes include sex, nudity, violence, death, and religious taboos (Meyers, Deitz, Huhmann, Jha, & Tatara, 2020). The use of taboos in advertisements and campaign aid the social order as it makes predictability possible (Gressier, 2018). Furthermore, predictability helps define dangerous behaviour.

The COVID-19 pandemic is considered a health crisis. Thus, many campaigns published during this time are related to health and illness. Williams (1998) explains that health is seen in an overly optimistic way. Campaigns regarding health often promote a lifestyle that encourages good behaviour and rituals to keep one's health good. On the other hand, illness is seen as deviant and divergent from the social norm of being healthy (Williams, 1998). This includes unhealthy behaviour such as not exercising, eating too much fast food, and illnesses in general. Unhealthy behavioural practices are considered behavioural taboos because they can generate disapproval of others (Sabri, Manceau, & Pras, 2010). As a result, the quest for health and a healthy lifestyle becomes a manifesto and moral performance (Williams, 1998). Hence, the moral performance of health is conducted in the public sphere, whereas health is mainly considered a private matter.

Corporate advertising plays into the quest of consumers by offering embodied symbols that are supposedly the key to success (Williams, 1998). The focus is put on slim, fit, and sexually attractive bodies in advertisements. This cultural pressure leads to consumers putting more emphasis on their own health and their bodies become a project that needs to be maintained, worked at or enhanced according to cultural and societal norms as it has become performative. Hopkins (2015) also comments that the act of purchasing certain products has become performative as products are regarded as symbols. This is also the case in the health discourse as certain products are associated with 'healthy' whereas other products are connotated with negative implications for a person's health.

Health in the private and public sphere

Health is, first and foremost, a private notion. It is tied to an individual's identity and is something an individual strives for on their own (Williams, 1998). Nevertheless, health has made its way into the public sphere through commercial health promotion, as illustrated in the literature review. Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher, introduced the concepts of the private and public sphere. According to Habermas (1989), the public sphere can be traced back to the 18th century, where the increase in salons, newspapers, and journals encouraged discussion of a critical nature.

Prior to public opinion, there was one party that sought out to represent every individual of the public (Habermas, 1989).

Susen (2011) states that the private and public sphere can differ on three different levels. First, there is a distinction between society and individuals. The private sphere consists of individuals, whereas the public sphere is made up of private people coming together and discussing societal matters. Second, the public sphere is visible, whereas the private sphere occurs in concealment. Everyone can enter the public sphere and participate in it. The private sphere, however, is more personal. It is not fully concealed as individuals share private spaces and matters with the people close to them. Nevertheless, it happens on a smaller scale than in the public sphere. Moreover, the matters that occur in the private sphere can drastically differ from the matters in the public sphere. This brings up the last point: the public sphere is more open than the private sphere.

Purity and pollution

The terms purity and pollution are closely linked with the health discourse of taboos as it defines the borders of the taboo (Freitas, 2008; Gressier, 2018). The distinction between purity and pollution regarding health and health-related items helps with the construction of identity by attributing negative and positive traits to behavioural practices and items (Douglas, 1996). For instance, Paleo dieters often distinguish between 'clean' and 'bad' food for the human body (Gressier, 2018).

As a result, practices and items that are associated with pollution are perceived as a risk to one's health (Williams, 1998). The notion of pollution within taboo is closely connected to purity as purity, in this case, health, which is something individuals strive for and aim. Regarding health, purity is seen as behavioural practices that improve your immune system, personal hygiene, and physical condition (Williams, 1998). Pollution is seen as dirt and danger. Hence, illnesses, diseases, and unhygienic practices are considered pollution and undesirable behaviour. This stigmatises patients of illnesses and diseases (Sontag, 2001) as blame is shifted on them for not living a pure life.

Metaphors

The concept of health is often portrayed linguistically using metaphors and myths. Crawford (2006) argues that it is metaphorically constructed. Being healthy is often correlated with values such as self-control, will power, and self-discipline. The state of being healthy has become associated with these values. Unhealthy behaviour, lifestyle, or appearance is linked with negative values such as weakness, lack of determination, and so on.

Furthermore, capitalism encourages these metaphors of health (Crawford, 2006). Health and fitness products often use metaphors such as "no pain, no gain", "what you eat in private, you wear in public", or "you can't out train a bad diet". Metaphors that use the physical body further stigmatise the human body and a healthy/unhealthy lifestyle (Crawford, 2006). The divide between being healthy and unhealthy becomes even more apparent through constant media exposure to health-related products and campaigns.

In her book *Illness as Metaphor*, Susan Sontag (2001) challenges the vernacular that is used when illnesses and diseases are described. She argues that the use of metaphors increases the stigmatisation around the illness or disease and around the patients (Sontag, 2001). The media uses metaphors as it increases the retention of health information (Sontag, 2001). Sontag (2001) states "disease is regularly described as invading the society, and efforts to reduce mortality from a given disease are called a fight, a struggle, a war" (p.122). Military metaphors are also often found in media articles regarding illnesses and diseases. The use of metaphors increases stigma by inducing (often) irrational fear in public (Sontag, 1978). This has dangerous implications as a proportion of the population is stigmatised and perceived as dangerous. Sontag (2001) also reports the different ways in which illness and disease are portrayed with metaphors. Illnesses that develop from within the body are more likely to be portrayed in the line of casualties, whereas infectious diseases are often talked about as invaders (Sontag, 2001)**.** Talking in stages is essential to the discourse about illness and disease as it indicates the level of health.

Theoretical framework in brief

The theoretical framework contextualised the use of health messages by organisations. Additionally, it discussed the communication strategies and ethical implications of the messages. The conceptual framework explored the taboo of health and how it is used in campaigns. In particular, the way in which health is framed from a taboo discourse. This has been illustrated through the notions of the public and private sphere, purity and pollution, and myths and metaphors.

3. Methodology

Chapter overview

The present chapter introduces the research design and methodology of this thesis. The aim is to exemplify a methodology that is used to understand the language used in institutional and commercial campaigns. The research design will be explained in detail, and justification for the chosen method will be presented. Next, a detailed description of data sampling and collection are outlined. The key concepts from the conceptual framework and the operationalisation of these concepts are reintroduced and explained. Lastly, the process of analysis is explained in detail, and the credibility of this research is discussed.

3.1 Research design and justification of method

The objective of this thesis seeks to understand the response of organisations to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the second objective is to understand the verbal and visual language used in institutional and commercial organisational campaigns and how the public responds to these messages. A qualitative research method has been chosen to answer the research question as it enables research methodologies that interpret and analyse phenomena in regard to the social context (Golafshani, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It seeks an understanding of the phenomena and explores meanings using casing studies (Silverman, 2011).

The dataset of this research study consists of ten YouTube videos of official organisation channels and the accompanied YouTube comments in the comment section. The video analysis combines critical discourse analysis and a multimodal approach to visual social semiotics. A multimodal approach to the analysis of the videos is necessary as the verbal and visual language come together to communicate various meanings (Van Leeuwen, 2012). Furthermore, it allows for an in-depth exploration of communication strategies used in video campaigns. The YouTube comments are analysed through thematic analysis to uncover main themes within the public's opinion and experiences (Eddington, 2018; Guo & Vargo, 2015).

Semantic network analysis

Semantic network analysis is used to visualise the linguistic patterns in the transcripts of the YouTube campaigns. It explores the relationship between and among words and themes (Alexa, 1997; Lee, 2020). Analysing the transcripts using a semantic network analysis ensures that there is less bias from the researcher. Semantic network analysis can analyse and extract information that researchers may overlook (Huang, 2017). Furthermore, manual methods such as content or thematic analysis rely on inter-coder reliability. This factor is omitted as semantic network analysis is

done with the help of a computer programme. The use of a quantitative method can support the qualitative analyses of how the public responds to these campaigns by analysing the verbal and visual language they use (Drieger, 2013).

Critical discourse analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a method used to analyse texts and verbal language (Machin & Mayr, 2012). This method considers language as a social practice for which context of the language used is of great importance (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). More importantly, the relation between language and power is of great interest (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). It finds its origin in critical linguistics which looked critically at texts and how they make meaning (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). CDA looks at how language is composed (grammar and context) to convey a particular meaning in relation to social context (Aiello, 2006). Texts and their meanings are used to persuade, manipulate, or inform people. How people, objects, events, places, and action are portrayed and categorised in a text can affect the meaning. For instance, events can be either fore- or back-grounded, which affects the importance of an object or event. Looking at these power relations in a text can help understand the communicative intentions and how texts do this (Machin & Mayr, 2012). CDA also allows the researcher to uncover overlooked concepts and assumptions by looking at discourse (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

According to Chouliaraki (2006), critical discourse analysis allows the uncovering meaning through analysis of how power connects and organises social positions. Instead of using codes, CDA uses semiotic resources that exist of representational and symbolic meaning. Representational meaning is the first layer, also known as denotative meaning, and regards what or who is being depicted. On the other hand, symbolic meaning is the second layer and regards the types of ideas and values that are represented (Van Leeuwen, 2004). Aiello (2006) labels these meanings as representation (encoding) and interpretation (decoding).

Multimodal CDA: verbal and visual analysis

CDA can be useful for analysing advertisements and campaigns, as most of the information is communicated through visuals. The public comprehends information through text and visuals. Campaigns make use of both verbal and visual language and, thus, can be called multimodal devices that use visual language (Harrison, 2003). Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) state that the use of verbs accomplishes action in a language. Visualisation of action in images and videos are composed of several elements which create 'language' by fore- or back-grounding objects. Horn (1999) adds that you cannot remove objects or words in the visual language without drastically altering the meaning

of the text. Consequently, a multimodal approach, such as visual social semiotics is essential in understanding video campaigns.

Visual social semiotics

Social semiotics provides a detailed analysis of the public health campaigns, which includes the multimodal function of videos. Furthermore, social semiotics does not only focus on signs but socially meaningful processes and enables researches to analyse how the mirror reality is presented (Iedema, 2004). This study will use visual social semiotic analysis as it includes the description of semiotic resources (what is depicted within the images) and how it can be interpreted to answer the research and sub-questions. Social semiotics mainly revolves around textual structures and not with the social discourses (Jewitt & Oyama, 2004). Thus, the combination of CDA and visual social semiotics is a proper fit for this study.

Thematic analysis

The comments and analytic notes will be analysed through a mixed method of thematic content analysis and grounded theory. Thematic content analysis is a systematic process that assures constant comparison of the data, analytical memos, and observations (Boeije, 2010). The grounded theory emphasises data driven theory (Dawson, 2009). Moreover, grounded theory has clear analytic strategies and implicit guidelines that will help analyse the data (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2014). Coding within qualitative research entails categorising data based on conceptual themes, concepts, or similar features (Neuman, 2014). This is done with the guidance of the research question; however, all of the categories will be data-driven, as is usually the case with grounded theory.

3.2 Data sampling and collection

The dataset of this study consists of five commercial campaigns and five institutional campaigns. The institutional campaigns were either posted by an American politician or American health department. These ten videos were published on YouTube between January 2020 and August 2020, the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media play a crucial role in the dissemination of health literacy and information regarding the pandemic (Kreuter & McClure, 2004). According to Tellis, MacInnis, Tirunillai, and Zhang (2019), YouTube is a suitable social media platform for sharing Campaigns. The text corpora are transcribed before the analysis and thoroughly checked to ensure there are no mistakes.

Corpora	Source	Number of texts
Visual corpus	YouTube	10
Textual corpus	YouTube	10

Table 1. Overview of the number of texts

The datasets were chosen by employing a purposive sampling approach. Purposive sampling is specifically chosen to select campaigns concerning COVID-19. The goal of purposive sampling is to focus on institutional and commercial campaigns that respond to the current health crisis that best answers the research question. The sample is selected according to specific criteria. The chosen dataset consists of videos that focus on the COVID-19 pandemic and addresses at least one of the notions of taboo. The dataset is heterogenous in order to ensure saturation (Scheier, 2013). During the sampling process, attention has been paid to guarantee diversity in the content.

This research only focuses on Western institutional and commercial campaigns. The videos are narrated in English or contain English text. Dutch campaigns were excluded from the sampling process to avoid any personal bias regarding the dataset. Furthermore, the campaigns were published on the official YouTube page of the organisation. The last criteria for the dataset was that comments needed to be available. However, most campaigns that were posted by institutional organisations had the comments turned off, or there were less than ten comments. Thus, only two out of five campaigns by government officials have comments. One of the campaigns has more than 500 comments which compensate for the lack of commons from the other institutional campaigns. An overview of the dataset can be found in table 2.

| Video	Title	Organisation	Published	Duration	Comments
1	Wanna Bet	Washington State Department of Health	02/08/2020	00:30	Turned off
2	Keep Hawaii Healthy	Hawaii State Department of Health	30/03/2020	00:30	10
3	Mask Up America | For the Love of | Paul Rudd	Governor Andrew M. Cuomo of New York	19/08/2020	00:30	Turned off
4	All 5 California governors agree: Wear a mask, do your part, save lives[1]	Former governor Arnold Schwarzenegger	22/07/2020	00:56	594

---

[1] Is also posted on the California Governor Gavin Newsom. However, only 13 comments

5	Stay Careful :30 (Coronavirus)	Michigan HHS	12/05/2020	00:30	Turned off
6	No mask. No ride. |#MoveWhatMatters| Uber	Uber	01/07/2020	1:00	174
7	We Got You America	Kraft Heinz	14/04/2020	01:00	38
8	Burger King | Stay Home of the Whopper	Burger King	09/04/2020	00:30	98
9	Back to the Bars	Heineken	23/07/2020	1:02	179
10	#ThisIsUs. Humanity Prevails.	Hyundai	06/04/02020	0:25	100

Table 2. Overview dataset public health campaigns.

3.3 Operationalisation

To reiterate, the objective of this thesis is to investigate the response of organisations to the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, this response will be analysed through the discourse of health taboo. The conceptual framework in chapter two gave insight into the discourse of taboo and presented five notions. The five notions can be found in figure 2.
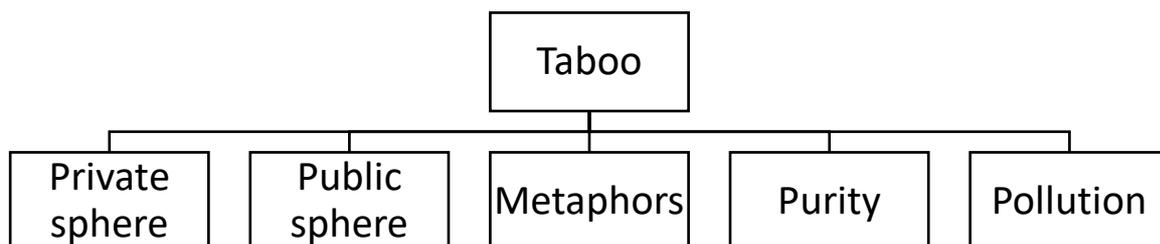
Figure 2. Overview conceptual framework.

These five notions are essential for the taboo of health and help determine how organisations use the taboo of health in their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis used both an inductive and deductive approach. The multimodal analysis was all data-driven with careful consideration of the conceptual framework. The thematic analysis was purely data-driven but interpreted with the help of the conceptual framework insofar as possible.

3.4 Analysis framework and process

The following section outlines the analysis process of the dataset. To reiterate, this research used several methodologies. First, the critical discourse analysis and visual social semiotics analysis are presented. Then, the semantic network analysis on the YouTube comments is explained. The CDA analysis focuses on illustrating how the concept of taboo is integrated in institutional and commercial campaigns. Thus, an extensive analysis is needed.

Semantic network analysis

The transcripts of the sample of campaigns were put in Infranodus. Infranodus is a website that generates insights using text network analysis. Additionally, Infranodus offers relevant insights such as main topical groups analysis and bigram analysis. The Gephi file was downloaded from Infranodus and visualised in Gephi for further analysis. The first step of the visualisation of the semantic network involved choosing the undirected graph type due to the co-occurrence of edges. Next, a modularity test was conducted to detect the different communities. Modularity classes were also used to give the visualisation colour. Furthermore, tests for network diameter, average weighted degree, and betweenness and closeness centrality were conducted.

Videos: critical discourse analysis

The critical discourse analysis that was conducted was based on Fairclough's (1995) analytical framework presented in his book *Media Discourse*. The framework consisted of three levels (see figure 3).
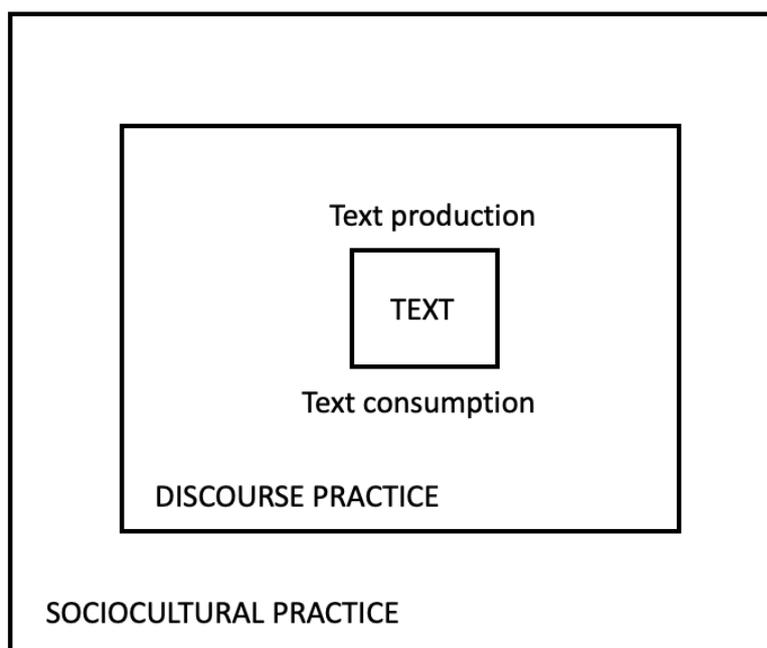

Figure 3. Fairclough's (1995) framework for critical discourse analysis.

The first level of analysis revolved around textual practices. This implies an examination of a linguistic nature (Fairclough, 1995). All videos were transcribed (provided that they use a voice-over or verbal texts). The textual analysis, thus, analysed the vocabulary and semantics used in the voice-over of the video. This phase of the analysis aimed to look at the following questions:

- How is health represented linguistically?

- How is health represented visually?

The textual analysis also included visual social semiotic analysis. The dataset was consisted of videos, which means that not only verbal and textual language is used, but also visual language. Consequently, meaning was created through the combination of verbal and visual language and were complementary to each other.

The visual language was analysed on three different meta-function levels. The campaigns were visually analysed according to figure 4. The visual analysis was conducted in Atlas.ti in order to keep the visual analysis structured and organised. This programme allowed for an organised work process and kept track of notes during the coding process.
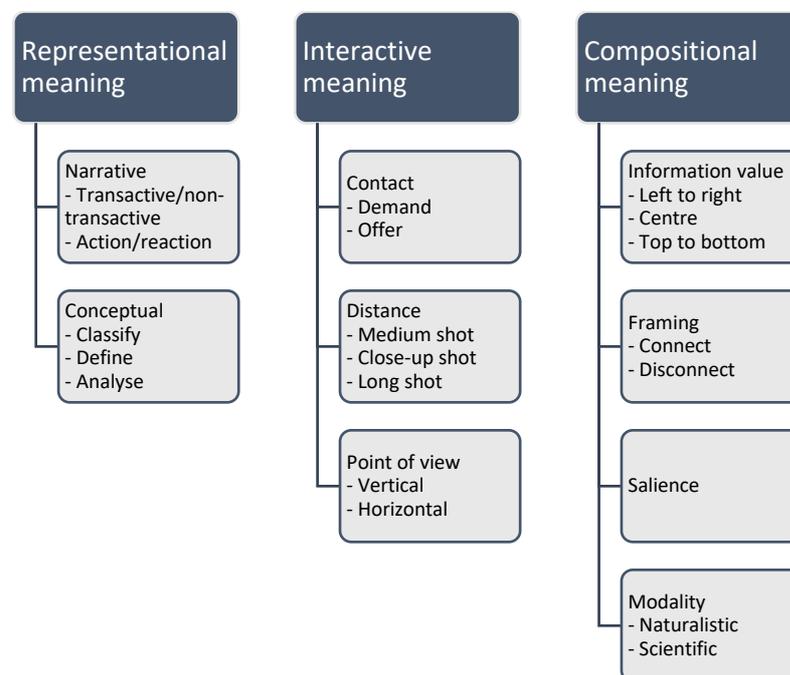
Representational meaning	Interactive meaning	Compositional meaning
Narrative - Transactive/non-transactive - Action/reaction	Contact - Demand - Offer	Information value - Left to right - Centre - Top to bottom
Conceptual - Classify - Define - Analyse	Distance - Medium shot - Close-up shot - Long shot	Framing - Connect - Disconnect
	Point of view - Vertical - Horizontal	Salience
		Modality - Naturalistic - Scientific

Figure 4. Overview visual social semiotics (Seevinck, 2016)

The first meta-function is the representational meaning which concerned the descriptive function of the analysis. The representational meaning can either be narratively or conceptually presented (Jewitt & Oyama, 2004). The use of a vector characterised narrative representations. This is a line that connects the objects in the picture and shows how they interact with each other. This analysis clarified the actions and the objectives within the text. Images without a vector were analysed by classifying the objects within the pictures. These conceptual classifications have been labelled as symbols by Iedema (2004) and were given meaning by the researcher interpreting the objects in the text.

The second meta-function regarded the interactive meaning or orientation, which entailed the relation between the text and the interpretation of the viewer (Iedema, 2004). The interactive purpose was established with the help of three aspects. The first aspect is the contact. This referred

to how the video is communicating with its viewer. Videos offer a mirror and imagined reality to the viewer (Hopkins, 2015; Iedema, 2004). The next aspect was the distance which analysed the size of the frame; close-up, medium shot, or long shot. The distance hinted to the social interaction between the video and the viewer. For example, a close-up conveys the feeling of intimate, close interaction. The last aspect was the point of view. This aspect analysed the camera angle as it, just like the second aspect, conveyed a specific social interaction. The social interaction was analysed from a vertical and horizontal perspective. The vertical or horizontal angle could be high, low, or straight and conveys the power relationship between the video and the viewer. A low angle means the viewer is looking up at the subject, which implies the objects in the video have power over the viewer. A high perspective suggests the opposite and a straight angle suggests equality. Horizontal angles communicate the level of involvement. A front angle implies maximum involvement, whereas a side angle indicates a level of remoteness.

The last meta-function was the compositional meaning which consisted of information value; framing; and salience and modality. Information values analysed the placement of the objects in the video as it indicated the object's importance in the picture. Framing analysed how the objects were connected within the image and also looked at the contrast of colours. The salience analysis looked at objects that stood out in the picture. This could either be through contrast or by size. Modality analysed the degree of realism and was divided into two categories: natural and scientific modality (Jewitt & Oyama, 2004). Natural modality was defined as close to reality. What the viewer saw in the picture is what the viewer would see in real life. Scientific modality showed objects from a more abstract view and referred to a 'deeper' meaning (Jewitt & Oyama, 2004).

Discourse practice

The next step in the analytical process was the discourse practice. The discourse practice regarded the interpretation of the production and consumption of the text. This step involved looking at intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Fairclough, 1995). It looked at the campaigns in relation to the social context, other media texts, and how it affected the meaning the campaign produced. The following questions were looked at during this phase in the analysis:

- How is taboo associated with purity and pollution?
- How is taboo associated with the public and private sphere?
- Is taboo metaphorically portrayed?

Furthermore, this analytical step included the interpretation and analysis of discursive strategies used in the campaigns. An overview of the strategies can be found in table 3.

Strategy	Objective
Referential	Establishing in- and out-groups
Predication	Labelling social actors positively or negatively
Argumentation	Justification of positive or negative attributions
Perspectivation	Expressing involvement
Intensification	Modifying the epistemic status of a proposition

Table 3. Overview of discursive strategies by Wodak & Meyer (2001, p.73).

The discursive strategies posed the following questions during the analysis:

- In what way are people referred to and presented?
- How is social behaviour labelled in the campaign?
- How are the actions of social behaviour accounted for?
- How are these actions portrayed and conveyed?
- Are certain actions or things emphasised and in what way?

Sociocultural practice

The final step in the analysis was the sociocultural practice analysis. The campaign is analysed in relation to the broader social and cultural contexts of which the campaign is a part of (Fairclough, 1995). This step aimed to uncover the ideals behind the campaigns.

- How do the campaigns relate health to broader notions of health and well-being?
- How are the campaigns placed within the current political, social and cultural context?

Thematic analysis of YouTube comments

The thematic analysis of YouTube comments was conducted in Atlas.ti to ensure an organised process of analysis. Atlas.ti kept track of open codes which made it easier to review and revisit the open codes and researcher notes. The thematic analysis was divided into three stages. The first stage of the thematic analysis was open coding, which involved breaking down the data into smaller pieces, examining, comparing, and conceptualising data (Boeije, 2010). For that reason, familiarisation with the data set was essential. The dataset was read at least once before the beginning of the coding process in order to identify the smallest unit of meaning. After the initial read-through the dataset and careful consideration, it was decided that each comment was seen as a unit of meaning. Thematic analysis of sentence-level was considered. However, careful examination led to the decision of analysing per comment as a large number of comments used more than one sentence to convey the full message. For example, the first sentence would convey a

positive attitude and was followed by a second sentence that made clear that the first sentence was sarcastic. Thus, the coding process was on a comment level.

The open codes emerged from the dataset. This means that all the open codes are data driven (Schreier, 2013). Within the open coding phase, the dataset was coded multiple times and compared to ensure the exhaustiveness of the dataset, the unidimensionality and mutual exclusiveness of the open codes, and saturation (Boeije, 2010; Schreier, 2013). In other words, the codes were compared multiple times, similar codes were merged, and redundant codes were excluded from the list of open codes.

The second phase, axial coding, helped identify the relationships between the open codes. It also highlighted dominant elements, whereas the open coding phase focused on the actual data (Neuman, 2014). Once again, the open codes were compared to each other to see whether or not there were overarching categories amongst the codes. The concealed categories, symbolism, and messages within the open codes were identified (Zakia & Nadin, 1987). As a result, groups of open codes emerged that highlighted the overarching categories (Boeije, 2010). These groups were given an axial code, and this resulted in a separation between primary (axial codes) and secondary concepts (open codes) (Boeije, 2010).

Lastly, the whole dataset and all prior established codes were reassessed within the selective coding phase. The axial codes were compared to each other to identify connections. This helped make sense of the data and resulted in establishing the central themes in the data (Boeije 2010; Scheier, 2013). Then, axial codes that threatened the mutual exclusiveness of a theme were merged to create one central theme. After establishing the themes, the themes were once more compared to prior codes and dataset to ensure unidimensionality. The selective codes (themes) are the most abstract codes of the three because it covers a substantial amount of data.

During the coding process, analytical notes were made. These notes contain comments on method, research strategy, and notes on the data and data collection (Neuman, 2014). It was crucial to include these memos into the analysis as it can be seen as the foundation for the analysis and reflects the reflexivity of the process (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2014). Keeping track of analytical memos also helped structure the analysis and incorporates reflexive thinking.

3.5 Credibility

The quality of qualitative research is assessed in terms of credibility (Silverman, 2011). Credibility regards the trustworthiness and plausibility of the findings (Tracy, 2010). Credible qualitative research should be reliable, valid, and accurate (Tracy, 2010). To achieve credible research, several strategies can be employed. Tracy (2010) states that presenting a thick, in-depth

description of the results helps achieve more credible research. Furthermore, credibility entails two crucial concepts: reliability and validity.

Validity refers to the extent the results portray the social phenomena to which it refers (Silverman, 2011). Reliability usually refers to the soundness of the method and transparency (Silverman, 2011). It regards whether the same results will be generated when the same tools are used. One strategy to enhance the reliability of this research is reflexivity (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; Silverman, 2011).

To enhance credibility, this research combines two methods as a means of triangulation. Neuman (2014) argues that triangulation ensures multiple measures of the same phenomena. The multiple perspectives can lead to alternative views and perceptions. Hence, credibility is enhanced. This research combines critical discourse analysis with visual social semiotics for a more in-depth analysis. CDA addresses questions of power and domination, whereas visual social semiotics helps in identifying semiotic strategies.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Golafshani, 2003; Watt, 2007). This affects the research as the data collection and analysing process are subconsciously affected. Therefore, reflexivity is crucial. Reflexivity entails the researcher's ability to reflect on their own personal background, experiences, and culture and the way these factors may affect the results generated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A researcher's ability to be reflexive affects the quality control for qualitative research (Berger, 2015). The results of qualitative research are generated by the researcher's ability to analyse and make connections. Therefore, it is essential that the researcher understands the role of their past experiences, culture, and beliefs influence these generated results (Berger, 2015; Watt,2007). Reflexivity is a continuous process of internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation (Berger, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Watt, 2007).

The goal of reflexivity is to enhance the accuracy of the results, trustworthiness, transparency, and credibility of the research. According to Berger (2015) and Watt (2007), keeping a research journal is a proper method for critical self-evaluation. The research journal allows the researcher to write down initial thoughts, assumptions that may not be included in the results, and personal experiences. It enables the researcher to engage in a dialogue with themselves which may lead to in-depth insights (Watt, 2007). Additionally, the journal can give the researcher insights into subconsciously editing the results and provide (Berger, 2015). Overall, it is vital to be aware of your own reflexivity. This thesis will include a research journal in the appendix, and a table that includes relevant researcher's positioning derived from Berger (2015) (see table 4).

Relevant researcher's positioning	Researcher details

Gender	25
Race	Asian
Nationality	Dutch
Native language	Dutch
Political stances	Liberal/democrat

Table 4. Relevant researcher's positioning adapted from Berger (2015).

Research design in brief

The research design for this study is based on qualitative methods mixed with quantitative semantic network analysis to visualise the linguistic relationships in the transcripts of the campaigns. The multimodal critical discourse analysis ensures close analysis of both the verbal and visual language. Additionally, the relationship between verbal and visual language is analysed in-depth. The accompanying YouTube comments are analysed using thematic analysis to uncover main themes in the response of the public. The multimodal critical discourse analysis and thematic analysis are done with the help of the programme Atlas.ti to ensure an organised and structured analysis.

4. Analysis and results

Chapter overview

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of institutional and commercial campaigns. The findings are organised into two sections. The first section starts with the visualisation of the transcripts through semantic network analysis. These results are briefly discussed. Then, the results of the critical discourse analysis and visual social semiotic analysis are exemplified. The second section reviews the thematic analysis of the responses on YouTube. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the results.

4.1 Semantic network analysis

The undirected graph type was chosen because of the co-occurrence edges, and 'self-loops' was unchecked as it provides non-informative information. This resulted in a total of 150 nodes and 436 edges. The visualised graph can be found in figure 5. The colours in the graph are based on modularity classes. There were a total of 13 communities that can be detected through their different colours. The modularity score was 0.693, which indicates the detection of discrete communities. A few communities only consisted of a few nodes. For instance, modularity community 10 consists only of the note 'Hyundai'. Thus, they do not appear prominent in the graph. The communities in the graph are near together, and the graph's total density is 0.038. This indicated that the communities are not highly distinct.
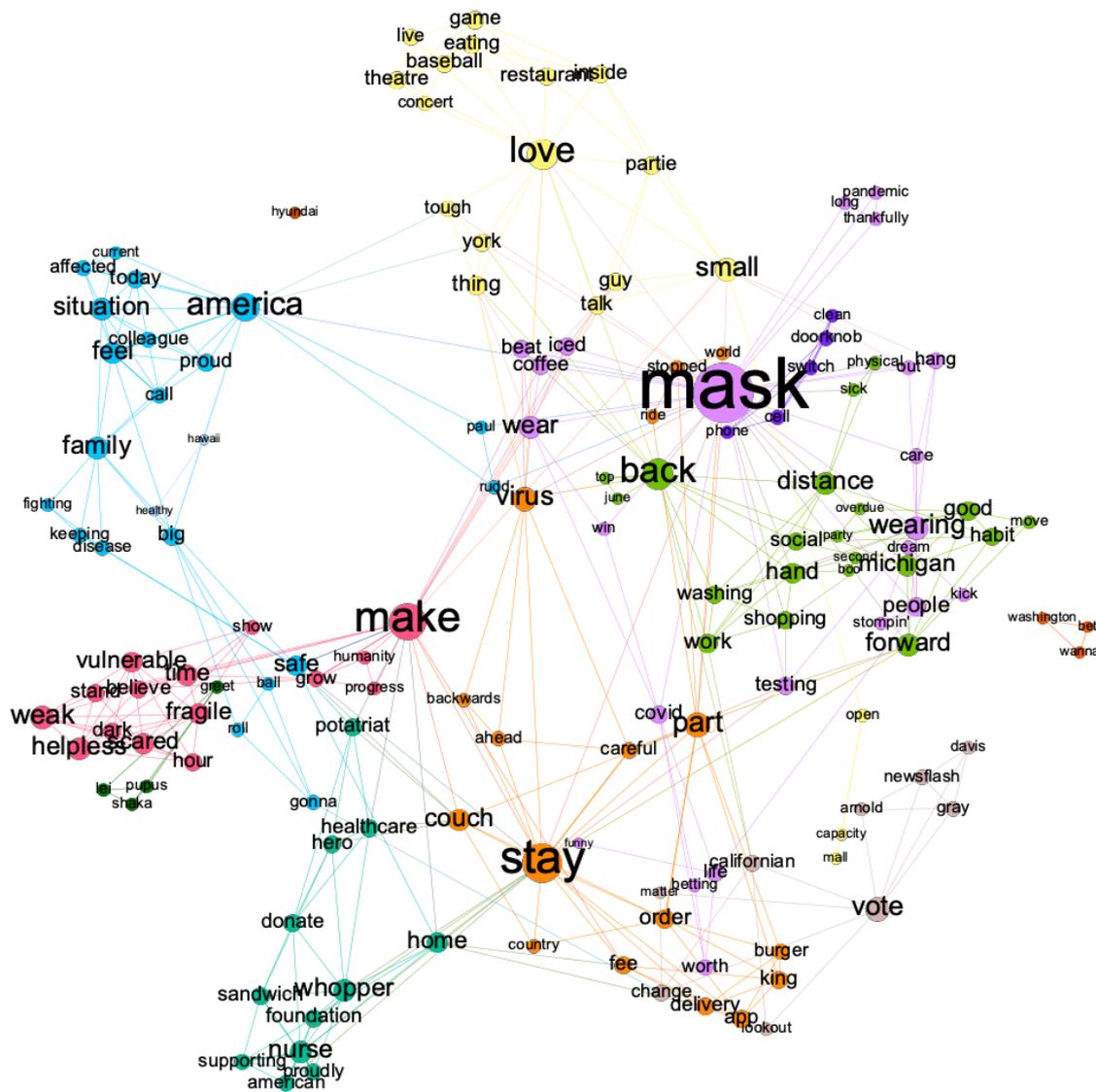
Figure 5. Overview semantic network analysis transcript campaigns.

The most prominent node in the graph was 'mask'. It had a weighted degree of 35 and betweenness centrality of 4130.99. This indicated that the node wass globally central and not a true gatekeeper. Furthermore, the node had a high position of power due to the many connections it had to other nodes. The node 'Californian' had a relatively low weighted degree (5) and high betweenness centrality (902.94), which made the node a better candidate for being a gatekeeper.

The main topical groups shown by Infranodus showed that the most globally central node 'mask' and 'wear' were also part of the largest topical group (table 5). According to the bigram analysis, the noun 'mask' is most frequently used with the action verb 'wear', which indicates a tone of demand rather than a suggestion. A closer look at the transcripts provided the insight that five campaigns used the word 'mask' in their campaign to emphasise the new health measurement.

The second main topical group comprised the nodes 'stay', 'part', and 'virus'. Closer inspection showed that the second topical group involved narratives of telling the public to do their part by staying home and that the virus is still present. This narrative also emphasises the new health measurements. Moreover, the 'do your part' section places responsibility in the public's hands. It also appeals to the feeling of community.

Percentage	Topical groups
17%	Mask – wearing – wear
13%	Stay – part – virus
13%	Love – small – thing
13%	America – feel – situation

Table 5. Overview main topical groups.

4.2 Multimodal critical discourse analysis

Community appeal

According to the analysis, the health messages evoked a strong sense of community and used the referential discursive strategy (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). The COVID-19 pandemic affects whole communities. The experience that everyone is going through the same hardships represents a sense of unity. Not only did that engage the audience by letting them feel included in a community, but it also established a relationship between the organisation and audience.

The health messages appealed to the public on a group level which stimulated unity, the feeling of inclusion, and a sense of a membership. This was done through the use of plural pronouns and addressing the audience directly. The use of the pronoun 'we' can be found in almost all campaigns that included a verbal voice over. This pronoun was either paired with an action verb or a possessive pronoun like 'us' or 'our'. The example below is an extract from the Hyundai campaign and made use of the plural pronoun:

We stand together. because we're in this together. We believe times like these make us grow. They make us progress for humanity (Hyundai).

The pronoun 'we' indicates that the organisation and the audience are experiencing the same event. The call for action is made clear by pairing the pronoun 'we' with the action verb 'stand'.

Extract 2 (Campaign posted by former Californian governor Schwarzenegger):

Gavin Newson: But no matter who you voted for or if you didn't vote at all. It doesn't

change that Californians lookout for each other.

Jerry Brown:	Look, nobody wants to wear these things.
Pete Wilson:	And thankfully masks have come a long way since the last pandemic.
Anold Schwarzenegger:	This is not about being weak.
Gray Davis:	It is about fighting the disease and keeping <u>our</u> families and <u>ourselves</u> safe.
Pete Wilson:	And it's about getting <u>Californians</u> back to work.

Extract 2 employs a different strategy to evoke a sense of membership and unity. The health video was published in California. Hence, the text calls all Californians to take action. The combination of 'Californians' of the possessive pronoun 'our' and the reflexive pronoun 'ourselves' defines the in- and outgroup members clearly. Everyone in California was seen as ingroup members who should do their best to safekeep their own and other people's health. Furthermore, the strong sense of community was employed by telling the audience that 'Californians lookout for each other' and that 'it's about getting Californians back to work'.

The sense of community was also presented by showing how the COVID-19 pandemic affected organisations and the public sphere. This was done by using the plural pronoun 'we' and 'you'.

Extract 3 (Michigan HHS):

As you go out, keep social distancing. As you go back to work, keep washing your hands. As you go shopping, keep wearing your mask (Michigan).

Extract 4 (Kraft Heinz):

Given the current situation, we are all affected by what is going on in America today. I was asking myself like what could I do?

The excerpts above stated that society as a whole is affected by the current pandemic. The campaign of Michigan HHS reiterated the importance of the current health measurements with the action verb 'keep'. More often, though, the campaigns restated the effects by emphasising the things the public used to do, but now cannot due to health measurements. For instance:

Extract 5 (Governor Andrew M. Cuomo of New York):

If you love concerts. And live theatre. Going to baseball games and eating in restaurants, inside. If you love parties and the small talk with the guy who makes you iced coffee the right way.

The images these words recollect serve as a feeling of longing for the audience. The aim was to emphasise the importance of maintaining current health measurements to flatten the curve so that social life can return back to normal.

Furthermore, the use of community appeal seems to put emphasis on the power the public has on their own and other people's health. The use of the plural pronouns established that the power is in the public's hand.

Extract 6 (Michigan HHS):

Stay careful, so <u>we</u> can stay ahead of the virus and not go backwards.

Extract 7 (Burger King):

So, staying home doesn't just make <u>us</u> all safer, it makes you a couch potatriat.

Extract 6 and 7 show that the responsibility of health is not only a private matter (private sphere), but it is the responsibility of the public sphere because by staying home 'we can stay ahead of the virus' and make the public sphere safer. Hence, it is implied that the public sphere can affect the health of private individuals and whole communities.

Not only does the use of plural nouns established a feeling of community, the use of the pronouns also indicated involvement of the organisation in the situation (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). This is especially clear in Hyundai's campaign. Hyundai repeatedly used the phrase 'this is us' to show involvement and that they are also affected. Additionally, it evoked sympathy of the public.

The visual aspects of the campaigns supported the appeal to the community in different ways. An overview of the visual social semiotic analysis can be found in table 6. In two campaigns (CA governors and Heinz), there were two people directly talking at the camera and making a plead to the public on behalf of the public sphere. This reiterated the idea that power and responsibility are in the public's hand.

Representational meaning	Interactive meaning	Compositional meaning
Narrative:	**Contact:**	**Information value:**
• Transactive: people social distancing (Heineken, Michigan HHS, Hawaii, Washington); people helping each other (Hyundai, Kraft Heinz)	• Demanding gazes direct into the camera: (NY, Hawaii, Uber)	• Centre: laptop with a zoom group call (Washington), people wearing masks (Uber, NY governor, Heineken,
Conceptual:	**Distance:**	**Framing:**
• Former and current governors sitting in front of a camera	• Close-up • From the waist up: Heinz, CA governors, • Head and shoulders: NY	• Vector: people looking at each other or interacting with each other; looking into the camera

- Empty spaces (NY governor)

Point of view:	Salience:
• First person view: Washington	• Taking up the whole frame: phone in Burger King & Washington HHS (as well as laptop & mask Washington HHS)
• Horizontal	**Modality:**
• Frontal straight	• Medium – high: there is not much use of contrast. Images are close to real life contrast.

Table 6. Noteworthy visual social semiotic elements that support the referential discursive strategy.

Demanding gazes were used widely across the dataset. The demanding gazes used in the campaigns from institutional organisations were more demanding and serious (see Figure 6). They conveyed a feeling of a plea and demand in the hope that it will lead to the public adopting different behavioural practices, such as wearing a mask and social distancing. These gazes were often combined with verbal texts like 'wear a mask' or other urgent messages. As a result, responsibility was placed at the public watching these campaigns.

Figure 6. Demanding gazes in institutional campaigns (left Mask Up America, right Arnold).

On the other hand, the campaigns from commercial organisations included little to no demanding gazes. The facial expressions were softer compared to the ones in the institutional campaigns. Moreover, the messages that accompanied these gazes were more reassuring such as 'times like these make us grow', 'they have done their part', and 'we got you America'. These gazes and the accompanied text evoked a feeling of community and togetherness by showing empathy.

Figure 7. Gazes in commercial campaigns (left to right: Hyundai, Uber, and Kraft Heinz).

In addition, the visual language enhanced and supported the impact of the text. For example, the campaign posted by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo of New York accompanied extract 8 with visuals of people wearing masks with demanding gazes for the first sentence (figure 6, left image).

Extract 8 (Governor Andrew M. Cuomo of New York):

Then wear a mask and let's beat this virus. So, we can get back to the things we love.

Figure 8. Visual language in #MaskUpAmerica

The second sentence in the campaign by the governor of New York was supported by images that reflect how life used to be pre-COVID-19 to evoke a feeling of longing. Even more so, the last image in figure 8 shows a neighbourhood party. The image depicted the American flag and party decorations in the colours of the American flag. This image served as a semiotic symbol for community and the myth of patriotism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Visibility of taboo

The second overarching strategy was the implementation of the taboo of private and public health by reinforcing public health measurements. This helped legitimising the measurements and orders taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to safekeep everyone's health. Furthermore, the reinforcement of measurements helped define the borders of the taboo. In other words, what has and has not become socially acceptable.

The intensification occurs in different ways. Foremost, the verbal texts make use of commands which are legitimised orders of command. For instance, the institutional health campaigns use a demanding tone as seen in the following extract by the Washington State Department of Health:

Keep wearing a mask and keep hang outs small.

The pragmatics and tone in these excerpts were not suggestive. It was, however, demanding and told the public what to do as to imply that not implementing the desired behavioural practices was a sin and wrong.

The discursive strategy of predication was also widely used. There was a clear distinction between what was seen as socially acceptable and 'pure'/good behaviour and what was seen as dangerous behaviour. This was done by attributing negative and positive traits to behavioural practices.

Extract 10 (Hawaii State Department of Health):

Sanitize is what you do, so no give virus to our tutus. Clean doorknobs, switches, cell phones too. […] No touch face, cause it's taboo.

Extract 11 (Burger King):

Your country needs you to stay on your couch and order in. Do your part and we'll do ours.

The extracts above used action verbs to emphasise the practices the public should follow such as sanitising and cleaning extensively. Extract 10 used the negation word 'no' to attribute a negative trait to the act of touching your face. Even more surprising was that the verbal text literally labelled the act of touching your face as taboo. It is perceived as dangerous whereas extensive cleaning is perceived as purity and safe. Extract 11 start with a plead to the public's duty and demands the public from that point of view to 'stay on [their] couch and order in'. Then, the call to stay home and order in is intensified by appealing to the public's responsibility they have to protect themselves and the public sphere. Thus, the discursive strategy of argumentation is also used in these campaigns. However, the strategy is not explicit but rather implicit as it requires interpretation of the public.

Lastly, the intensification of the taboo was made clear through the use of several metaphors. The metaphors helped intensify and emphasise the public health measurements. They defined the borders of dangerous behavioural practices and could evoke fear in the public.

Extract 11 (Governor Andrew M. Cuomo of New York):

Then wear a mask and let's beat this virus

Extract 12 (Former governor Arnold Schwarzenegger):

It's up to all of us to fight it. So, do your part. Don't let COVID win. Wear a mask.

Excerpts 11 and 12 make use of military metaphors by using the words 'beat', 'fight', and 'win'. These words indicate that COVID-19 is an invader and enemy that society has to overcome as if we are in a war. This affects the public's perception of the disease.

Extract 13 (Former governor Kraft Heinz):

This is <u>bigger than all of us</u>. But together we can get through this.

Extract 14 (Burger King):

So, staying home doesn't just make us all safer, it makes you a couch <u>potatriat</u>.

The campaigns of commercial organisations also make use of metaphors. Burger king uses a wordplay on the word 'patriot'. They merged the word with 'potato' which resulted in 'potatriat'. The use of this wordplay signifies that the people who stay home support their country and are prepared to fight the enemy or enemies. Kraft Heinz and Hyundai use a metaphor to describe the social context and the COVID-19 pandemic as something larger than life and that 'we' as a society will grow and overcome this situation together. This is also seen in institutional campaigns and other commercial campaigns.

Textually, the campaign published by Heineken is noteworthy as the campaign was the only one that did not use a voice-over. Instead, Heineken used a cover of the song *That's Life*. Heineken visualised the taboo of health by depicting people in a bar who regulated the health measurements. The lyrics of the song reiterated that the visual language represented the new normal for social interactions.

Representational meaning	Interactive meaning	Compositional meaning
Narrative:	**Contact:**	**Information value:**
• Transactive: people social distancing (Heineken, Michigan HHS, Hawaii, Washington); wearing a mask (Hyundai, Heinz); Not sharing food (Heineken); no handshakes (Hawaii, Heineken); disinfecting and cleaning (Hawaii, Heineken, Hyundai); people working under COVID-19 measurements	• Demanding gaze direct into the camera: (NY, Hawaii)	• Centre: people wearing masks, people of authority talking,
Conceptual:	**Distance:**	**Framing:**
• Close-ups masks		

• Close-up to indicate what the public should do • Medium distance to give examples of good behaviour	• Vector: people interacting with each other
Point of view: • First person view • Horizontal, eye-level • Frontal straight • From horizontal to vertical whilst the frame becoming smaller: Hyundai	**Salience:** • Taking up the whole frame: laptop; mask in Wanna Bet → social distancing, rejecting parties The movement of what people are doing is central
	Modality: • Medium – high

Table 7. Noteworthy visual social semiotic elements that support the referential discursive strategy.

Several campaigns used close-ups of certain objects (laptop, iPhone, masks). These depictions evoke a feeling of demand which transmits ideas of active change. Furthermore, the public and private sphere have both become opportunities to reflect one's health. Going out in a mask has become a performative act of showing you are healthy while staying inside is associated with illness but also with staying safe. Going out or staying home are performative actions to show you take your responsibility during the pandemic and you try to safekeep other people's and your own health whereas prior to the pandemic this was not the case. This was also reflected in the campaigns by showing people wearing masks and keeping their distance from other people.

Visually, the campaigns made use of the discursive strategy of predication. They show empty places and crowded places. These images were attributed positive and negative traits. The campaigns also used visual depictions of social interactions that regulated the health measurements (figure 9). These depictions are contrasted to the retention of social interactions pre-COVID-19 by the public. Prior to the pandemic, the public was free to walk past each other, meet without masks, and be able to shake each other's hands. However, there is now a restriction to these simple social interactions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The depiction of the new standard helps remind the public that the pandemic is not over yet. Consequently, the change is social interactions and the health measurements were reiterated.

Figure 9. Example of change in social interaction in the campaign of Michigan HHS and Heineken.

4.3 Results thematic analysis comments

The following section discusses the observations made during the thematic analysis of the YouTube comments. The results are split up in three sections. First, the main themes found in the comments of the institutional campaigns are discussed. Then, the main themes found in the comments of commercial campaigns are compared. Lastly, a brief summarisation and comparison between the two code trees are presented.

Comments institutional campaigns

The thematic analysis of the comments on institutional campaigns resulted in the finding of six main themes. The main themes can be found in table 8. The themes are illustrated with an example of the dataset. The entire code tree for the comments of institutional campaigns can be found in Appendix A.

Main theme	Example dataset
Obeying health measurements	It really matters what Arnold says! Just do it! Nobody is a girly man just because he wears a mask. Wearing a mask is respect for my fellow human beings, because I probably reduce the risk of infecting him! I can infect other people before I know I have COVID-19! I don't want to sit at the grave of a loved one and think about whether I may be infected him! Thanks to everyone who campaigns for this! Thanks Arnold!
Praise for the campaign	The people making fun of you for being safe are more likely going to get sick and die themselves with that attitude, you aren't weak, you are strong. Being informed is strength. You can't macho a virus away, you know your family is important. Be safe out there!
Critique campaign	Big time fan and admirer of Arnold. Somewhat disappointed for endorsing this mask nonsense. There is quite a bit of information that constantly wearing a mask does more harm to the body's immune system than good and really doesn't prevent you from contracting a virus.
The COVDI-19 pandemic is a hoax	Politicians say wear mask COVID is dangerous, doctors who don't have anything with politics say corona is not dangerous masks are dangerous and sheeps still don't understand anything

Finding support in religion	Arnold diseases aren't self-existential they can be in your inner space if you don't allow them to be. Jesus walked among the leper's and he was fine, I don't get sick because I don't have time for that I haven't for years.
Stigmatising COVID-19 and its patients	It's sick people's responsibility to quarantine themselves, everyone else shouldn't be punished over this disease.

Table 8. Overview main themes in the comments of institutional campaigns.

The first main theme that emerged from the code tree is obeying health measurements. This theme addressed the support for the health measurements set up by the health departments. It consists of the categories 'protecting community', 'agreement health measurements', and 'protecting yourself'. The comments that fit in these categories and main theme not only spoke out in agreement with the health measurements, but also emphasised the importance of the health measurements for others. The example in table 6 clearly states that they obey health measurements "for my fellow human beings, because I probably reduce the risk of infecting him". There is an emphasis on togetherness and community feeling. Furthermore, the category 'protecting community' intensifies the responsibility of the individual. If individuals obey the health measurements, others will not get sick and are protected. Thus, the health of the public sphere is affected by an individual's choice in their private sphere.

The outspoken agreement with health measurements stigmatises people who do not obey them. Consequently, a divide arises between people who obey and disobey the health measurements. Moreover, certain behavioural acts are attributed either negative or positive traits by the public. This indicates that the discursive strategy of predication may be successfully implemented in the public. Another noticeable discursive strategy found within this main theme is the implementation of taboo by emphasising the public health measurements. A demanding tone is often used in the comments. This can also be seen in the example in table four. Action verbs as 'do' and 'wear' are combined with the adverb 'just' to intensify the demand.

Praise for the campaign was the second main theme found in the dataset. It comprises the categories praise for the people in the campaign and praise for the institution. The first category mainly revolved around praise for the former Californian governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in the video which features five California governors. Schwarzenegger is not only a politician but also well-known in pop culture for his movie roles in the *Terminator* series. Thus, it is of no surprise that many positive comments regard his acting career. Moreover, Schwarzenegger is seen as a role model and is thanked for his commitment to inspire people to obey health measurements. Other compliments for the people in the campaign are more general. In the video of the Hawaii health department, the comments focus on the only actor in the video. The second category revolves around comments that

praise the institution for making the video. The public voiced either agreement or thanks in the comments.

Where there is praise, there is also critique. The institutional campaigns received critique regarding the campaign, the people in the campaign, and disappointment in the campaign. The critique towards the people in the campaign were mainly about former governor Schwarzenegger. The public voiced their dissatisfaction and disappointment that he participated in this campaign. Other critics regarded the other politicians in the campaign.

The fourth main theme is 'pandemic and COVID-19 are a hoax'. The theme comprises four categories. First category is 'making a mountain out of a molehill'. This category contains comments that compare the COVID-19 disease with war or other illnesses and diseases. Consequently, the current situation is downplayed. In the eyes of these specific comments, COVID-19 is being exaggerated and thus, the category 'making a mountain out of a molehill' is established. The category 'don't believe everything' consist of open codes that are convinced that the pandemic and COVID-19 are non-existent and that it is a conspiracy theory. The third category is 'no maskers'. The comments within this category mainly believe that wearing a mask has negative effects on an individual's health, is an infringement of their freedom, and question the effectiveness of masks. The last category is 'political critique'. This category consists of comments that believe different kind of political parties or orientations are behind the COVID-19 pandemic. Worthy of noting is that there is critique of every political orientation with the exception of the republican party. The political critique is often combined with positive notions for the Republican party. In general, the comments underneath this main theme often use profanity and harsh words to express themselves.

The fifth theme revolves around religion. There were a number of comments that involved the mention of religion, in particular Christianity. The comments made an appeal to Jesus and God to help them get through the pandemic. The last main theme includes comments that stigmatise COVID-19 and its patients. The comments under this main theme put the blame on the sick people. According to the comments, the sick need to take responsibility and are the burden of the entire pandemic. The blame is put on the sick which stigmatises COVID-19 and its patients. This way of thought makes it more difficult for patients of COVID-19.

Comments commercial campaigns

The thematic analysis of the comments on commercial campaigns resulted in the finding of four main themes. The main themes can be found in table 9. The themes are illustrated with an example of the dataset. The entire code tree for the comments of institutional campaigns can be found in Appendix A.

Main theme	Example dataset
Critique campaign	IN THY DREAMS yeah, they make adverts to sell cars. This advert is in bad taste. It uses music and imagery designed to make you sentimental, so that you associate those feelings with their brand! Don't for a minute think that this is sincere, it's a gigantic company that wants to make money. Whichever way you look at it, they're trying to use an international crisis to sell more cars. So beautiful 🤮
Agreement health measurements	Stop the spread of viruses that make you and others sick! Stay home if you feel unwell. No exceptions.
Pandemic is a hoax	Right on! I am out doing all I usually do. I don't buy I to the fear. The government lies and people swallow it Hook line and sinker.
Downplaying the pandemic	It is a shame...that the 'pandemic' is not statistically more virulent than the common flu, thus, it is being used as a tool for subversion. Perhaps the next virus will be more apts...at wiping most of humanity from the face of the Earth, and thus, provide politicians (and their followers), with the emergency they crave.

Table 9. Overview main themes in the comments of commercial campaigns

The first main theme is 'critique campaign'. The example above shows critique on the campaign and the brand that decided to engage and respond to the pandemic. The critique towards the campaign is also heavily centred on critique against the brand. A majority of the comments express negative feelings for the brand for using the pandemic as a means to sell their brand or product. The example in table 6 above showcases the feeling of negativity for the brand for exploiting the pandemic to sell their cars. Furthermore, feelings of confusion are often expressed regarding the visual language. The public does not understand why the campaigns would depict social life (regulating the health measurements) in a bizarre way. There are also comments that criticise the brand's treatment of their customers and employees. According to the analysis, the public experienced the campaigns as dishonest, inauthentic, and insincere. The campaigns seemed insincere as the organisations try to use the pandemic to their advantage.

The theme 'obeying health measurements' consists of three categories. The first category is 'protecting yourself and others'. The public put emphasis on staying safe, regulating the health measurements, and staying safe. The second category regards praise for the campaign and brand. Commenters applauded the brand for getting involved in the situation and thanked them for the support they offered through their campaign. Lastly, there were a number of comments that criticised people who disobey the health measurements. Comments regarding this theme urged this group to obey the measurements as it is seen as unsafe to disobey the health measurements and they urged them to do it for the sake of the whole community. Feelings of disbelief were also voiced.

The third theme 'COVID-19 pandemic is a hoax'. A number of comments express their disbelief over the COVID-19 pandemic. The comments show that some users think the pandemic is non-existent and a scam. Consequently, there are also comments about disobeying health measurements. This comes from a place where commenters are convinced that the health measurements are an infringement of freedom. Moreover, they are convinced that the health measurements are not effective. These arguments are often supported by media articles and a suggestion to do research. It is noticeable that the commenters have a confirmation bias. The commenters might know they are negatively affecting the public sphere and feel the need to defend their choices with pseudo-science. The feeling of taboo comes from within them and prevents them from feeling good about their choices, thus, they seek out information that fits their bias. Lastly, a concern regarding corruption is expressed. Several comments point out that the campaigns only induce fear and is a means to control the public sphere. The example in table 6 depicts the opinion of a commenter who thinks the pandemic is a hoax and is due to the corrupt government.

The last main theme is 'downplaying the pandemic'. Various comments are convinced that these campaigns exaggerate the current social context. The campaigns are regarded as panic inducing and compared to other illnesses and diseases. The example in table 6 depicts the comparison of COVID-19 to the flu. Additionally, there is a town of lessening the fear and seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Comparison and summary thematic analysis

The thematic analysis of the comments has led to similar themes. Some themes were only found in one particular dataset. An overview of the main themes that were found during the analysis can be found in table #. For instance, 'finding support in religion' and 'stigmatising COVID-19 and its patients' were only found in the dataset of institutional campaigns. Moreover, there are differences within the similar/same main themes per dataset. The main theme 'COVID-19 pandemic is a hoax' is found in both datasets. However, the comments regarding the main theme differ. The comments in the institutional campaign's dataset were more focused on political critique. A large amount of comments revolved around criticising politicians and political parties, whereas the comments of commercial campaigns did not include as much political criticism. The comments of commercial campaigns mainly revolved around disobeying the health measurements. A reason for this contrast is most likely attributed to the type of organisation that published the campaign. Furthermore, the institutional campaign featured only politicians while the commercial campaigns used unknown people in their campaigns. Another difference is found in the theme 'critique campaign'. The critique

of commercial campaigns was mostly focused on the organisation itself whereas the critique of institutional campaigns was focused at the politicians in the campaign.

Institutional campaigns	Commercial campaigns
Obeying health measurements	Critique campaign
Praise for the campaign	Obeying health measurements
Critique campaign	COVID-19 pandemic is a hoax
Finding support in religion	Downplaying the pandemic
Stigmatising COVID-19 and its patients	

Table 10. Overview of the main themes found in the YouTube comments.

Chapter summary

The semantic network analysis helped visualise the relationships between the words used in the transcripts and point out the main topical groups. The multimodal critical discourse analysis pointed out two overarching strategies that were used in both institutional and commercial campaigns: appeal to community and visibility of the taboo. These strategies show how the concept of taboo is implemented in the campaigns through a number of discursive strategies. The campaigns aim to adjust the public's perception of risks, the taboo of health, and the health measurements. The thematic analysis led to the illustration of main themes found in the response of the public. The campaigns were both positively and negatively perceived by the public. The findings of the analysis will be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework in the following chapter.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Overview chapter

The present and final chapter will discuss the results in relation to the theoretical framework. Firstly, the theoretical implications and the type of discursive strategies will be discussed. The research question posed in the first chapter is reiterated and discussed in relation with the results in an attempt to answer the research questions. Lastly, limitations of the present research and suggestions for future research will be discussed.

5.1 Discussion

This research aims to uncover how organisations respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in their campaigns. Furthermore, this research is interested in the verbal and visual language that is used. Semantic network analysis and a multimodal critical discourse were used in an aim to answer the research questions. The institutional and commercial campaigns are used as a tool for spreading awareness about the health measurements in the public sphere. The concept of taboo is used discretely and does not necessarily polarise the disease itself. However, it polarises certain behavioural practices and actions. The campaigns do so in the interest of the public sphere and in an attempt to allow the public to make informed behavioural decisions (Reynolds & Seegers, 2015).

The two overarching strategies in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic are found. The first one is the appeal to the community. The extensive use of first-person plural pronouns reiterates the feeling of community and that organisations stand together with the public. The campaigns disguise their message of doing the right thing by placing the responsibility at the individual level. It is the public's responsibility to obey health measurements and to safe-keep the health of others.

The other overarching strategy is the emphasis on the visibility of taboo. It is shown through action verbs and nouns that depict a demanding tone. Furthermore, the new way of life is consistently shown in the campaigns. The visibility discursive strategies enable the redefinition of cultural attitudes towards the health measurements and taboo of illness and disease. Furthermore, the inclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic as a topic shows the organisation's values through the discursive strategy of perspectivation. Commercial organisations connect the COVID-19 pandemic to their own ethos. For instance, Hyundai compares the situation to themselves by saying this is us. We stand together. This is a common theme in the campaigns for both types of organisations as there is a strong emphasis on community. The hardships of the public are depicted as hardships from organisations. It shows that the organisation stands in solidarity with the public and tries to engage the public with the health message.

Main themes of the public response

The second sub-question this thesis aimed to answer is: what the main themes were amongst the responses towards the campaigns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative thematic content analysis was conducted to analyse the responses. The analysis led to the discovery of a total of nine main themes. Among these nine themes, there are similar themes, but these themes have some differences concerning the content of the comments. The positive main themes are 'praise for the campaign' and 'obeying health measurements'. Generally, the comments are aimed at either the organisation, people in the campaign, or the campaign. The theme 'praise for the campaign' does not appear as its own main theme in the responses of commercial campaigns. This is because praise for the campaign was much more mentioned in institutional campaigns than in commercial campaigns. The praise for institutional campaigns was mostly directed at the people in the campaign as the popular actor and former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger was featured in the campaign.

Commercial campaigns were mostly criticised for their portrayal of the health measurements. The campaigns portrayed the health measurements as the new normal. Several users expressed their dissatisfaction for this depiction. Furthermore, feelings of confusion were present to why commercial organisations engaged with these topics. Various users perceived the campaigns as insincere, inauthentic, and dishonest. Consequently, the campaigns were received negatively by these users.

There is a majority of comments that are convinced the COVID-19 pandemic is a hoax and plotted by politicians or other organisations. The institutional campaigns received far more comments about corrupt government and politicians. This is understandable considering politicians were featured in the campaign, and the campaigns were posted on official channels. Furthermore, the seriousness of the pandemic is downplayed. Users are convinced the campaigns are panic and fear-inducing. COVID-19 is often compared to other diseases like the flu to downplay the seriousness of the situation.

Additionally, the notion of taboo was noticeable in the agreement and disagreement with the health measurements. Either side criticised each other. However, the users that do not obey the measurements often got heated and involved corruption into the debate, whereas users that do obey the measurements appealed to moral good and community. The users that engage in debates use arguments that question the health measurements and the pandemic as a whole. They use articles that confirm their bias to support their argument. Furthermore, several comments place the blame of the pandemic and its effects on COVID-19 patients which stigmatises the disease and the sick.

5.2 Theoretical implications

The results of this research show that the campaigns use two overarching strategies: appeal to the feeling of community and visualising taboo. They do so to provide the public with information regarding the health measurements. There is made use of several discursive strategies to convey the messages. For example, the discursive strategy of predication and referential discursive strategy is widely used to depict the overarching strategies. This research contributes new insights into the response of organisations and the public regarding the COVID-19 campaigns.

The results of this research show that the campaigns use two overarching strategies: appeal to the feeling of community and visualising taboo. They do so to provide the public with information regarding the health measurements. There is made use of several discursive strategies to convey the messages. For example, the discursive strategy of predication and referential discursive strategy is widely used to depict the overarching strategies. This research contributes new insights into the response of organisations and the public regarding the COVID-19 campaigns.

In particular, this research provides insights into the use of taboo in COVID-19 campaigns. Prior research about communication strategies during crises make use of sociological theories to help frame the message. The results of this research confirm that the COVID-19 campaigns also make use of these theories. The campaigns use fear-inducing tactics in order to adjust the public's behaviour. This is in line with risk communication theory (Reynolds & Seeger). The campaigns do not explicitly visualise the health risks to the public; instead, the campaigns depict the preventions that can be taken in order not to be exposed to health risks.

Several users still perceive the campaigns as panic- and fear-inducing. An explanation for the depiction of preventative measures instead of information about the disease can be found in the situation theory of problem-solving (Yoo, Kim, & Lee, 2018). The public is more inclined to look for solutions concerning the health crisis, according to this theory. Hence, it is of no surprise that the campaigns are more education-focused regarding information about the health measurements.

Furthermore, this research confirms that the campaigns successfully implement strategies derived from the social cognitive theory. The campaigns are representational and, thus, have the ability to appeal to the public (Bandura, 2001). Some users point out that they felt touched or were moved by the campaigns. They also expressed gratitude for the organisations regarding spreading awareness about the health measurements. On the other hand, several users were more resistant. The explanation can be found in the reactance theory (Kim & Choi, 2014; Kim, 2013). The health measurements are seen as an infringement of their freedom. Additionally, the continuous news exposure about the health crisis has led to users believing the pandemic is a hoax and organised by

corrupt governments and organisations. They support their claims with research that matches their confirmation bias.

Finally, this research shows that the campaigns attribute different meanings to objects. Prior research showed that the focus on ethical and moral campaigns can lead to objects being transformed into symbols of morals and values (Hopkins, 2015; Hodkinson, 2017; Murphy, Laczniak, & Harris, 2017). The campaigns used close-up shots of objects or behaviour to attribute meaning and emphasise the object or action. For example, the act of going out is a moral performance of showing health and masks have become associated with health and consideration of the public sphere. The recontextualization poses certain acts and objects in the discourse of taboo. Not regulating the new social norm evokes negative reactions.

5.3 Limitations

This research aimed to uncover the responses of institutional and commercial organisations. This study is a preliminary explanation as there are little to no prior studies on the response of organisations to the COVID-19 with a focus on the discourse of taboo. Therefore, the present research also has its limitations.

The subject of this research is campaigns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As this situation was still developing whilst writing and conducting this research, I, the researcher, could be subconsciously biased towards the campaigns. The campaigns in the sample were not published in the Netherlands; however, there still may be bias as there is a continuous news stream and media exposure about COVID-19. Furthermore, the sample size of this study only consisted of ten campaigns. Only five campaigns for each type of organisation were analysed and interpreted. Consequently, the results cannot be generalised but still provide a starting point for future research and offer valuable insights.

Regarding the YouTube comments that accompanied the campaigns, a limitation was that three out of the five institutional campaigns had the comments turned off. Thus, there were only two videos with comments, and one of the videos only had ten comments. The total number of comments for institutional and commercial campaigns were similar (594, a total of 1100 comments approximately) due to the video campaign posted by Arnold Schwarzenegger.

5.4 Future research

The gap between taboo and health campaigns during a health crisis addressed in this study which is the study asset. Although this study analysed a small sample of ten video campaigns, the study presents valuable insights into the way organisations conceal the notion of taboo in their

health messages. The multimodal analysis of the campaigns ensured a critical perspective, and the thematic analysis uncovered main themes in the response of the public. Unfortunately, the results of this research cannot be generalised. Future research could use quantitative methods like a survey or experiment to uncover the relationship between COVID-19 related campaigns and audience responses. An experiment allows for an empirical exploration of the relationship between content and response (Babbie, 2011). The manipulation of various variables can give a more in-depth explanation as to why these responses are formed.

Another proposition for further research is to include campaigns from other media resources such as print advertising, radio messages, and television campaigns. Each media type creates different expectations from the public (Shi, Poorisat, & Salmon, 2018). Furthermore, each media resource requires a different format which means that the message is constructed differently. For example, print advertising can use both textual and visual language, but radio messages can only use verbal language. Thus, a comparison of different kinds of health messages can be interesting. Additionally, different social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook could be used to get a more precise overview of the response to the campaigns, considering three videos in this research did not have any comments.

Lastly, the long-term effects of the COVID-19 campaigns are an exciting subject for future research. Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic is still developing, the effects of the campaigns have not been studied yet. For instance, future research could explore whether the attitudes of respondents have changed regarding the health measurements. Future research could also explore how the campaigns affect the mortality salience of the public using a quantitative survey. This type of research can also do an in-depth exploration of the ethical implications posed by the campaigns.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study provides insight into the response of institutional and commercial organisations to the COVID-19 pandemic. The results illustrate that both types of organisations mainly focus on exemplifying the health measurements as the new social norm. It can be concluded that the campaigns in the data sample use the concept of taboo to frame their message. The public's response to these campaigns is mixed. Several comments are optimistic concerning the campaigns and express support for the campaign, the people in the campaign, or the health measurements. A significant number of comments have a negative sentiment towards the campaign or the pandemic in general. This thesis concludes that organisations use their campaigns to adjust the behaviour of the public by reiterating the health measurements set by government institutions.

References

Adams, P. (2020). Why sustainability could be more crucial – and difficult – for brands in the COVID-19 era. *Marketing Dive*. Retrieved from https://www.marketingdive.com/news/why-sustainability-could-be-more-crucial-and-difficult-for-brands-in-th/577503/

Alexa, M. (1997). Computer-assisted text analysis methodology in the social sciences. *Social Science Open Access Repository*-. Retrieved from https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-200849

Aiello, G. (2006). Theoretical advances in critical visual analysis: Perception, ideology, mythologies, and social semiotics. *Journal of Visual Literacy*, *26*(2), 89-102. https://doi.org/10.1080/23796529.2006.11674635

Arndt, J., Greenberg, J.L., Schimel, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Solomon, S. (2002). To belong or not to belong, that is the question: Terror management and identification with gender and ethnicity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *83*(1), 26-43. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.83.1.26

Arnold, C. (2009). *Ethical Marketing and the New Consumer.* John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119206514

Bandura, A. (2002). Social cognitive theory in cultural context. *Applied psychology*, *51*(2), 269-290. https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00092

Beaudoin, C.E. (2002). Exploring anti-smoking ads: Appeals, themes, and consequences. *Journal of Health Communication*, *7*(2), 123-137. https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730290088003

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(2), 219-234. doi:10.1177/1468794112468475

Boeije, H. (2010). *Analysis in Qualitative Research*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Bloom, P.N., Hoeffler, S., Keller, K.L., & Basurto Meza, C.E. (2006). How social-cause marketing affects consumer perceptions. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *47*(2), 49-55

Bush, A.J., & Davies, V. (1989). State governments' response to the AIDS crisis: An advertising perspective. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *8*(1), 53-63. doi:10.1177/074391568900800105

Charmaz, K., & Belgrave, L.L. (2014). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*, 347-366. doi:10.4135/9781452218403

Chouliaraki, L. (2006). Towards an analytics of mediation. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *3*(2), 153-178. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17405900600908095

Cohen, E.L., Shumate, M.D., & Gold, A. (2007). Anti-smoking media campaign messages: Theory and practice. *Health communication*, *22*(2), 91-102. doi:10.1080/10410230701453884

Coombs, W.T., & Holladay, S.J. (2014). How publics react to crisis communication efforts: Comparing crisis response reactions across sub-arenas. *Journal of Communication Management*, *18*(1), 40-57. doi:10.1108/JCOM-03-2013-0015

Cornelissen, J. (2017). *Corporate Communication. A Guide to Theory & Practice.* London, UK: SAGE Publications. Print.

Crawford, R. (2006). Health as a meaningful social practice. *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness, and Medicine*, *10*(4), 401-420. doi:10.1177/1363459306067310

Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd. 5th ed.

Dawson, C. (2009). In *Introduction to Research Methods: A Practical Guide for Anyone Undertaking a Research Project*, 14-26. Oxford, UK: How to Content.

Douglas, M. (1994). *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge.

Drieger, P. (2013). Semantic network analysis as a method for visual text analytics. *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences*, *79*(6), ISSN 1877-0428. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.05.053

Eagle, L., & Dahl, S. (2015). *Marketing Ethics & Society.* London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473920415

Eddington, S.M. (2018). The communicative constitution of hate organisations online: A sematic network analysis of "Make America Great Again". *Social Media + Society*, 4(3), 1-12. doi:10.1177/2056305118790763

Eriksson, M. (2015). Crisis communication and improvisation in a digital age. In D. Holtzhausen & A. Zerfass, *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication* (pp. 508-519). doi:10.4324/9780203094440

Erregcha, N., & Romdhane, R. (2014). New faces of marketing in the era of the web: From Marketing 1.0 to Marketing 3.0. *Journal of Research in Marketing*, *2*(2), pp. 137-42. doi:10.17722/jorm.v2i2.46

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media discourse*. London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic.

Freeman, B., Potente, S., Rock, V., & McIver, J. (2015). Social media campaigns that make a difference: What can public health learn from the corporate sector and other social change marketers? *Public Health Research & Practice*, *25*(2), 1-8. http://dx.doi.org/10.17061/phrp2521517

Freitas, E.S.L. (2008). *Taboo in Advertising*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Glik, D. C. (2007). Risk communication for public health emergencies. *Annual Review of Public Health*, *28*, 33-54. doi:10.1146/annurev.publhealth.28.021406.144123

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, *8*(4), 597-607. http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf

Goldenberg, J.L., Pyszczynski, T., Johnson, K.D., Greenberg, J., & Solomon, S. (1999). The appeal of tragedy: A terror management perspective. *Media Psychology*, *1*(4), 313-329. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532785xmep0104_2

Green, E.C., & Witte, K. (2006). Can fear arousal in public health campaigns contribute to the decline of HIV prevalence? *Journal of Health Communication*, *11*(3), 245-259. https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730600613807

Gressier, C. (2018). *Illness, Identity, and Taboo among Australian Paleo Dieters.* Switzerland: Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67250-2

Guidry, J.P.D., Jin, Y., Orr, C.A., Messner, M., & Meganck, S. (2017). Ebola on Instagram and Twitter: How health organisations address the health crisis in their social media engagement. *Public Relations Review*, *43*, 477-486. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.04.009

Guo, L., & Vargo, C. (2015). The power of message networks: A big-data analysis of the network agenda setting model and issue ownership. *Mass Communication and Society*, *18*(5), 557-576. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1045300

Guttman, N., & Ressler, W.H. (2001). On being responsible: Ethical issues in appeals to personal responsibility in health campaigns. *Journal of Health Communication*, *6*(2), 117-136. https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730116864

Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Harrison, C. (2003). Visual social semiotics: Understanding how still images make meaning. *Technical Communication*, *50*(1), 46-60.

Heldman, A.B., Schindelar, J., & Weaver, J.B. (2013). Social media engagement and public health communication: Implications for public health organisations being truly "social". *Public Health Reviews*, *35*(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03391698

Hodkinson, P. (2017). *Media Culture and Society*. London: SAGE publications. Print.

Hopkins, P. (2015). *Mass Moralising: Marketing and Moral Storytelling*. London: Lexington Books.

Horn, R.E. (1999). Information design: Emergence of a new profession. In *Information Design*, ed. R. Jacobson, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 15-33.

Huang, J. (2017). The dining experience of Beijing Roast Duck: A comparative study of the Chinese and English online consumer reviews. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *66*, 117-129. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2017.07.003

Iedema, R. (2004). Analysing film and television: A social semiotic account of *Hospital: an Unhealthy Business*. In T. Van Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (Eds.), *Handbook of Visual Analysis* (pp. 183-206). London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020062

Jewitt, C., & Oyama, R. (2004). Visual meaning: A social semiotic approach. In T. Van Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (Eds.), *Handbook of Visual Analysis* (pp. 134-156). London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020062

Kim, S. (2013). Does corporate advertising work in a crisis? An examination of inoculation theory. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *19*(4), 293-305. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2011.634430

Kim, S., & Choi, M. (2014). Is corporate advertising effective in a crisis? The effects of crisis type and evaluative tone of news coverage. *Journal of Promotion Management*, *20*(2), 97-114. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2013.872216

Kraaijenbrink, J. (2020). The Dutch answer to COVID-19. The '1.5-metre economy'. *Forbes.* Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeroenkraaijenbrink/2020/04/14/the-dutch-answer-to-covid-19-the-15-meter-economy/#258fbb246274

Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. 2nd ed. Ebook. New York, NY: Routledge.

Kreuter, M. W., & McClure, S. M. (2004). The role of culture in health communication. *Annu. Rev. Public Health*, *25*, 439-455. doi:10.1146/annurev.publhealth.25.101802.123000

Lee, J. (2020). Week 5: Semantic network analysis and social networking sites [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from Canvas.

Lee, S., & Rodriguez, L. (2008). Four publics of anti-bioterrorism information campaigns: A test of the situational theory. *Public Relations Review*, *34*, 60–62. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2007.11.007

Lundgren, R. E., & McMakin, A. H. (2018). *Risk Communication: A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis*. London, UK: SAGE Publications ltd.

Moorhead, S. A., Hazlett, D. E., Harrison, L., Carroll, J. K., Irwin, A., & Hoving, C. (2013). A new dimension of health care: systematic review of the uses, benefits, and limitations of social media for health communication. *Journal of medical Internet research*, *15*(4), e85.

Murphy, P.E., Laczniak, G.R., & Harris, F. (2017). *Ethics in Marketing*. Routledge.

Myers, S.D., Deitz, G.D., Huhmann, B.A., Jha, S., & Tatara, J.H. (2020). An eye-tracking study of attention to brand-identifying content and recall of taboo advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, *111*, 176-186. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.08.009

Nelson, C., Lurie, N., Wasserman, J., & Zakowski, S. (2007). Conceptualizing and defining public health emergency preparedness. *American Journal of Public Health*, *97*(1), S9-S11. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2007.114496

Neuman, W.L. (2014). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Harlow: Pearson.

Noar, S.M. (2012). An audience-channel-message-evaluation (ACME) framework for health communication campaigns. *Health Promotion Practice*, *13*(4), 481-488. doi:10.1177/1524839910386901

Pyszczynski, T., Solomon, S., & Greenberg, J. (2003). Terror management theory: An evolutionary existential account of human behaviour. *In the wake of 9/11: The psychology of terror*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. 11-35. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/10478-002

Reynolds, B., & Seeger, M.W. (2005). Crisis and emergency risk communication as an integrative model. *Journal of Health Communication*, *10*(1), 43-55. doi:10.1080/10810730590904571

Rothschild, R. (2020). New research shows how consumers want brands to react to the pandemic. *AdWeek*. Accessed via https://www.adweek.com/sponsored/new-research-shows-how-consumers-want-brands-to-react-to-the-pandemic/?mvt=o&mvn=ba19f4e2568540e48c6fcde1361aadcc&mvp=NA-ADWEEKRESPSITE-11238673&mvl=homepage-grid-placement-large

Sabri, O., & Obermiller, C. (2012). Consumer perception of taboo in ads. *Journal of Business Research*, *65*(6), 869-873. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.01.009

Sabri, O., Manceau, D., & Pras, B. (2010). Taboo: An underexplored concept in marketing. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing (English Edition)*, *25*(1), 59-85. https://doi.org/10.1177/205157071002500103

Schreier, M. (2013). Qualitative content analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp.170-183). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Seevinck, J. (2016). DXB402_15se2: Theories of Visual Communication: Week Five [Lecture Notes]. Retrieved from https://blackboard.qut.edu.au/bbcswebdav/pid-6470547-dt-content-rid-6822957_1/courses/DXB402_16se2/Semiotics2VSS%202016BB.pdf

Shetty, A. S., Venkataramaiah, N. B., & Anand, K. (2019). Brand activism and millennials: An empirical investigation into the perception of millennials towards brand activism. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, *17*(4), 163–175. https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.17(4).2019.14

Shi, J., Poorisat, T., Salmon, C.T. (2018). The use of social networking sites (SNS) in health communication campaigns: Review and recommendations. *Health Communication*, *33*(1), 4956. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2016.1242035

Silverman, D. (2011). Interpreting qualitative data. A guide to the principles of qualitative research (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sontag, S. (2001) *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors.* Picador USA. Ebook.

Sturges, D.L. (1994). Communicating through crisis: A strategy for organizational survival. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *7*(3), 297-316. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318994007003004

Susen, S. (2011). Critical notes on Habermas's theory of the public sphere. *Sociological Analysis*, *5*(1), 37-62.

Teece, D., Peteraf, M., & Leih, S. (2016). Dynamic capabilities and organisational agility: Risk, uncertainty, and strategy in the innovation economy. *California Management Review*, *58*(4), 13-35. https://doi.org/10.1525/cmr.2016.58.4.13

Tellis, G. J., MacInnis, D. J., Tirunillai, S., & Zhang, Y. (2019). What drives virality (sharing) of online digital content? The critical role of information, emotion, and brand prominence. *Journal of Marketing*, *83*(4), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919841034

Thomas, E., & Magily, J.K. (2011). Qualitative rigor or research validity in qualitative research. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, *16*, 151-155. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6155.2011.00283.x

Tracy, S.J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *16*(10), 837-851. doi: 10.1177/1077800410383121

Van Leeuwen, T. (2004). Semiotics and iconography. In T. Van Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (Eds.), *The handbook of visual analysis* (pp. 92–118). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020062

Van Leeuwen, T. (2012). Critical analysis of multimodal discourse. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Wakefield, M.A., Loken, B., & Hornik, R.C. (2010). Use of mass media campaigns to change health behaviour. *The Lancet*, *376*(9748), 1261-1271. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(10)60809-4

Watt, D. (2007). On becoming a qualitative researcher: The value of reflexivity. *The Qualitative Report*, *12*(1), 82-101. http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR12-1/watt.pdf

Williams, S.J. (1998). Health as moral performance: Ritual, transgression, and taboo. *Health*, *2*(4), 435-457. https://doi.org/10.1177/136345939800200401

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London, UK: SAGE Publications ltd. 1st ed. https://dx-doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.4135/9780857028020

Yoo, S., Kim, J., & Lee, Y. (2018). The effect of health beliefs, media perceptions, and communicative behaviours on health behavioural intention: An integrated health campaign model on social media. *Health communication*, *33*(1), 32-40. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2016.1242033

Zakia, R.D., & Nadin, M. (1987). Semiotics, advertising and marketing. *The Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *4*(2), 5-12. doi: 10.1108/eb008192a

Zaremba, A.J. (2015). *Crisis Communication. Theory and Practice.* New York, NY: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315705361

Appendix A – Code trees

Code tree of institutional campaigns

Codes (open coding)	Categories (axial coding)	Themes (selective coding)
- Protecting family - Relieving workload of essential workers - Protecting others/community	Protecting community	Obeying health measurements
- Wear mask - Social distancing - Agreement measurements	Agreement health measurements	
- Protect yourself - Strong - Informed - Personal responsibility - Concern	Protecting yourself	
- Love - Humour - Praise - Inspiration - Gratitude - Legend - Hero	Praise for the people in campaign	Praise for the campaign
- Praise - Agreement - Thanks	Praise for the institution	
- Critique campaign - Critique people in the campaign - Disappointment	Critique campaign	Critique campaign
- War comparison - Downplaying the situation - Comparison to other diseases and illnesses	Making a mountain out of a molehill	COVID-19 pandemic is a hoax
- Sheep people - Ruined world - Wake up - Fake science - Conspiracy theory - Diseases aren't transferable - Big pharma - Fake data	Don't believe everything	

- No science - Prove of success - Bad for your health - Hypercapnia - Profanity (swear words) - Negative personal experiences - Infringement of freedom	No maskers	
- Corrupt politicians - Corrupt government - Communists - Conformist agenda - Leftist agenda - Globalist agenda - Critique democrats - Pro-republicans - Disagreement amongst politicians	Political critique	
- Jesus - God - Faith	Religion will win/religion will keep you safe	Finding support in religion
- Sick people - Burden - Responsibility of the sick	Sick people are responsible	Stigmatising COVID-19 and its patients

Code tree of commercial campaigns

Codes (open coding)	Categories (axial coding)	Themes (selective coding)
- Too Hollywood - Shame - Fear inducing - Brainwashing - Disgusting - Not real-life portrayal - Scam - Bizarre - Hate - Contradictory message - Unacceptable - Disgust - Propaganda - Confusion	Critique campaign	Critique campaign
- Capitalism - Dishonest and inauthentic - Confusion - Taking advantage - Capitalism - Insincere - Not taking care of own employees - Criticism product(s) of the brand - Exploiting the situation - Careless	Critique brand	
- Community - Yourself - Family - Considerate - Responsibility - Wear a mask - Social distancing - Essential workers - Thanking essential workers - Stay safe	Protecting yourself and others	Obeying health measurements
- Praise campaign - Emotional - Love - Thanks - Excellent - Support	Praise campaign and brand	

- Sincere - Proud		
- Disbelieve - Selfish - Idiocy - Do it for the community - Unsafe	Critique people who disobey measurements	
- Dystopian purgatory - Not life - Abnormal - Fake virus - Fake pandemic - Scam	Not believing in the pandemic/COVID-19	COVID-19 pandemic is a hoax
- Infringement of freedom - Masks don't help - Health concerns - Social distancing doesn't help - Nobody cleans everything	Disobeying health measurements	
- Corrupt government - Corrupt media - Exaggerating - Fear inducing	Corruption	
- Comparison to other diseases and illnesses - Panic inducing - Exaggerating the situation	Downplaying the pandemic	Downplaying the pandemic