

Tanishq's Brand Activism Failure: Exploring Consumer Brand Sabotage through the Lens of Morality

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ABSTRACT

Brand activism is a tricky concept which can act as a double-edged sword. If brands are not careful with their campaigns, brand activism can also result in negative consumer sentiments. These negative sentiments can spread quickly on social media due to the nature of virality of content on social media. These negative sentiments can quickly take the form of more aggressive consumer brand sabotage activities if appropriate crisis management measures are not implemented in time. These vindictive brand sabotage activities can also significantly affect brand reputation. This study explores the negative consumer discourse caused by brand activism failure on a social media platform, Twitter, in the context of a sensitive socio-political landscape: India. This study focuses on the brand activism failure of a popular Indian jewellery brand called Tanishq, and its advertising campaign called 'Ekatvam', meaning oneness. The advertisement, which carried the message of religious harmony, stirred controversy for its depiction of an interfaith couple. A section of consumers belonging to the Hindu community did not like the idea of a Hindu daughter-in-law in a Muslim household and accused Tanishq of promoting anti-Hindu messages on social media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube. The overwhelming negative response to a seemingly positive advertisement in a religiously volatile sociopolitical context is the crux of this study.

This thesis seeks to understand the negative consumer behaviour from the lens of morality; how and why do consumers arrive at certain moral judgements that prompt action on social media against a brand. To answer the research question '*How and why did consumers engage in consumer brand sabotage on Twitter in response to Tanishq brand activism failure?*', a qualitative mixed methods approach is taken. This thesis makes use of digital research methods: topic modelling, sentiment analysis and social network analysis, along with qualitative thematic analysis to understand the moral dimensions that reflected in the tweets of consumers who participated in the #boycotttansihq trend from the year 2020 to 2022 on Twitter. The findings show that the network of the Twitter users is well-connected and with a few influential users driving the CBS conversations. The results emphasise on the association between consumer brand sabotage and morality and add to the literature on situational crisis communication theory by providing evidence for a crisis arising out of value misalignment based on religion.

KEYWORDS: brand activism, consumer brand sabotage, social media, consumer-brand relationships, morality

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1. Introduction

1.1 Consumer Behaviour and Expectations

Consumer behaviour is a phenomenon studied extensively at the intersections of psychology and marketing (Cummins et al., 2014, p. 70). Social media platforms act as an apt medium for promoting the interactive consumer culture that generates value for various stakeholders (Bhatia et al., 2023, para.1). While considerable attention has been given to exploring the benefits of a positive consumer-brand relationship displayed on social media platforms, studies on the negative aspects of consumer-brand relationships have only recently started gaining traction (Bhatia et al., 2023, para.2). Negative brand relationship comprises activities such as negative word of mouth, consumer retaliation, consumer boycott and consumer brand sabotage, all of which display brand antagonism as a result of brands failing to meet consumer expectations (Roy et al., 2022, para.2). Such instances of negative interactions targeting a brand tend to significantly affect consumer brand perceptions both in the short and long term, ultimately affecting the brand negatively (Verhagen et al. 2013, p.1430; Hansen et al. 2018, p.2).

The failure to meet consumer expectations can arise from many causes, such as inadequate product/service or poor customer service, but negative sentiments stemming from a conflict of values can result in a stronger reaction from consumers (Ahmad et al., 2024, p.2). One of the ways consumers can face this conflict of interest or values with brands resulting in a negative sentiment is when certain brand activism-related activities do not align with their morality (Ahmad et al., 2024, p.3). Brand activism in this context is the act of brands taking a public stand via advertising in a divisive socio-political issue such as immigration or sustainability, expressing the core values they stand for (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020, p.773). Consumers whose values do not align with the moral stance taken by the brand may find themselves in conflict with the brand's values, giving rise to dissatisfaction and those consumers whose values align with the brand's stance may perceive the brand to be in line with their own morality (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020, p.773).

In this way, consumers are able to analyse their own level of self-brand similarity, especially when a brand engages in activism and consequently, the consumer will either support the brand's efforts or oppose and reject the message and the brand. This self-brand congruence occurs when a consumer's values align with the brand's values, as the consumption of these brands builds towards the consumer's identity (Wallace et al., 2016, p. 368). Another reason for the negative perception by consumers is the misalignment of the brand's core values with the values espoused by the brand for the activism-based campaign

(Shetty et al., 2019, p. 164). If the messaging of the activism-based campaign does not correspond to the brand's core values, the campaign can come across as superficial or insincere, making the consumer question the brand's true intentions behind the campaign and negatively affecting the brand's image and perception (Ahmad et al., 2024, p.2).

1.2 Background of Tanishq Advertisement and India's Socio-Political Context

An instance of brand activism gone awry is the case of the Indian jewellery brand Tanishq's 'Ekavvam' (meaning 'oneness') advertising campaign. Tanishq is a brand known for its progressive advertising campaigns breaking social stereotypes (Kumari, 2022, p.122). The brand has previously released advertisements touching upon subjects that are sensitive for the Indian audience such as remarriage for women who are mothers, ageism and colourism (Kumari, 2022, p.123). The Ekavvam campaign was produced under the same ideal of dismantling stereotypes, in this case religious stereotypes (Mumbai Mirror, 2020, para.7).

The campaign featured an interfaith couple, specifically a Hindu daughter-in-law being prepared for her baby shower by her Muslim mother-in-law (Mumbai Mirror, 2020, para.4). The Hindu daughter-in-law is seen asking her Muslim mother-in-law that the ritual of a baby shower is not usual for Muslim households. The mother-in-law replies that the happiness of the daughter is the paramount thing in the household, implying that belonging to different religion does not mean people of one household cannot celebrate rituals of different religions in harmony (Mumbai Mirror, 2020, para.4).

While the advertisement was created in good faith to showcase oneness and religious harmony, the notion of a Hindu woman marrying into a Muslim household sparked debates about 'Love-Jihad', a conspiracy theory that Muslim men are preying on Hindu women to convert them to Islam through the ruse of romance as part of a larger political takeover strategy, and ostensibly angered a large number of social media users resulting in the #BoycottTanishq Twitter storm (Rekhi, 2022, para.9).

1.2.1 Hindu-Muslim Relationship in India

The Hindu-Muslim relationship has been a contentious issue with origins in India's colonial history, pitting the majority Hindu community against the minority Muslim community resulting in strained relations and frequent violence (Shani, 2021, p.267). The colonial 'divide and rule' tactic spelled decades-long communal unrest in the independent India (Chatterjee, 2013, Chapter 6, p.149). As the years went by, it was the political elites who spurred the two communities against each other as religion increasingly became a key

issue in electoral politics. The instrumentalist approach states that political actors strategically use religious ideologies and identities to create conflict, which in turn benefits them politically (Huang, 2019, p.151). This instrumentalist approach to religious conflict is key to understanding the socio-political fabric of Indian society where the Hindutva ideology proposes the superiority of the Hindus in India and also used an electoral agenda (Chatterjee, 2013, Chapter 6, p.148). In India, Muslim community members are subject to mob violence, seen as indulging in criminal activities and as the ‘others’ (Shaban, 2018, p.7). These discriminatory and violent practices against the minority are legitimised through the Hindutva ideology, which sees other religious communities as “enemies to be either excluded or assimilated into the Hindu national culture” (Shani, 2021, p.265).

1.2.2 Effect of Religious Conflict on Brand Activities

The fraught relations between the two religious communities have become exacerbated in the online sphere as well with user-generated content on Twitter (now X) targeting and demonising the Muslim community (Bhatia & Arora, 2022, p.2). The socio-political tensions between the two groups have translated into negative consequences for brands that employ brand activism tools to take a stand on any social issue involving religion, particularly in India. These negative consequences extend beyond criticism and frequently result in *consumer brand sabotage* (CBS) activities that comprise vocal criticisms, boycotts and extreme displays of hostility, both online and offline (Bhatia et al., 2023, para.3). These purposeful aggressive actions can include even threats of violence, as is the case here with some employees at Tanishq receiving death threats over the discontent caused by the Ekatvam campaign (Kähr et al. 2016, p.2; Abraham, 2020, para.2).

The impact of the brand activism failure was severe for Tanishq with a fall in share prices and its employees trolled and threatened (Abraham, 2020, para. 3). Following the extraordinarily negative consequences of the brand activism failure and the consumer brand sabotage, and in order to limit further damage to their corporate image and reputation, Tanishq retracted the advertisement and issued a public apology, raising the question of the relevance of creative freedom and progressive values in brand activism (BBC News, 2020, para.7). The situation also revisits the question of virtual ‘otherisation’ of a minority religious community in a country whose constitution upholds secular values and guarantees religious freedom as a fundamental right.

1.3 Research Questions

Therefore, it is in this socio-political context that this thesis proposes to examine the online backlash that the Tanishq advertising campaign received in 2020. The research question is postulated as follows:

How and why did consumers engage in consumer brand sabotage on Twitter in response to Tanishq brand activism failure?

Sub-question 1: *What are the themes of conversations and interactions that emerged on Twitter following Tanishq brand activism failure?*

Sub-question 2: *What are the primary motivations that led to consumer brand sabotage following Tanishq brand activism failure?*

Sub-question 3: *How did negative consumer behaviour manifest and spread on Twitter following Tanishq brand activism failure?*

To answer these questions, a qualitative mixed methods approach is applied. Digital research methods including topic modelling, sentiment analysis and social network analysis with thematic analysis is used for this thesis.

1.4 Relevance

1.4.1 Societal Relevance

This thesis explores the concept of CBS in a unique socio-political context – one that is fraught with a history of communal violence instigated by religion. It also highlights the complicated location of the minority Muslim community in the Indian political setting and explores why the Ekatvam advertisement backfired even with an explicit positive messaging of communal harmony at its core. The idea of a Hindu woman marrying into a Muslim household, assimilating with the ‘others’ is an absurd concept for the Indian imagination, which manifested online with the barrage of CBS activities against the brand. The Muslim identity is seen as a threat in an increasingly polarizing political environment, the effects of which should be diminished and not be participated in, like the Hindu daughter law does in the advertisement, resulting in a largely negative consumer reaction (Ellwood-Lowe et al., 2019, p.1378).

This also points to the issue of recognizing the limits of creative freedom while espousing progressive ideals in brand activism activities in delicate socio-political situations. The negative consumer response outweighs the positive in many brand activism campaigns; this unwanted effect stems from the ‘opponents’ reacting more and more vocally compared to the ‘supporters’ in such situations (Haupt et al., 2023, p.1). The partisan nature of brand

activism makes it tricky to navigate the situation in volatile socio-political contexts. It is in this sense that this research aims to contribute to the discourse of exploring restraints on creative freedom in brand activism in the context of religious conflicts along with the asymmetric effect of consumer response with the opponents outweighing the supporters.

1.4.2 Scientific Relevance

The Situational Crisis Communication theory (SCCT) proposes three responses to manage crisis according to the crisis situation- deny, diminish and deal (Coombs, 2006, p.247). The comprehensive crisis clusters discussed in SCCT include victim cluster: where the organization is also a victim of the crisis; accidental cluster: where the actions of the organization were unintentional; and preventable cluster: where the organization knowingly put people at risk or broke laws (Coombs, 2006, p. 244). While the theory forms the foundation of crisis communication research, it has been criticised for its lack of flexibility, oversimplification of crises and limited utility in an increasingly complex social media landscape where information spreads rapidly (Ma & Zhan, 2016, p.102). Zhao (2016, p.44) explored the contextual limitations of the SCCT in their study and argued that SCCT does not consider the multidimensional complexity of a crisis because of its 'prescriptive' nature of offering strategy for crisis communication. All the three clusters outlined in SCCT elaborate situations such as technical mishaps, malevolent rumours about the organization and/or its products and human errors, but do not factor in crisis arising out of socio-political value misalignment between the organization and stakeholders.

The crisis management team in the case of Tanishq resorted to the 'regret' option, followed by the 'apology' option, part of the 'deal' response of the crisis management strategy, after the online backlash turned aggressive (Times of India, 2020, para.1). But it is important to address the underlying cause of the crisis appropriately before a response option is employed, in this case the crisis arose out of a preexisting religious conflict that turned into brand activism failure. There is no mention of such crises in the crisis's clusters of SCCT. This thesis' exploration of a socio-political crisis - CBS in a volatile socio-political context pertaining to religion - could characterize that misalignment and add to the literature on SCCT, in the context of CBS. The studies on virtual CBS and SCCT have been scarce. Cummings et al. (2024) in their study of countering virtual brand sabotage, focus on the impact of informative responses by the affected brand. However, while this thesis is less focused on the brand's responses to the public, these may be present in the CBS conversations, which could also include consumer perceptions of the brand's SCC.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for this thesis. The relevant theories, definitions, concepts and their interconnectedness are explained in detail. The theories included in the framework are stakeholder theory, moral foundations theory, consumer brand sabotage and situational crisis communication theory.

2.1 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory was first written about in Freeman's (1984) seminal text. Since then, the theory has established itself as an important part of organisational management and business ethics (Miles, 2015, p.438) The theory expanded on the shareholder theory to include groups other than just shareholders in the consideration of business decisions. Scholars have asserted that different social groups and associated factors have a significant influence on the functioning and profitability of a business organisation (Du & Xie, 2021, p.962; Russo and Perrini, 2009, p.207). This acknowledgment then led to the rise of stakeholder management, where stakeholders are defined as the groups who influence or are influenced by the actions of the business (Mahajan et al., 2023, p.1). The management of stakeholders refers to the process of considering stakeholder needs and satisfying them to increase functional efficiency, subsequently leading to improved financial performance (Maso et al., 2018). Stakeholder groups have been categorised into two groups: primary and secondary; with the first group comprising of employees, consumers and shareholders and the second group consisting of government, local community and other institutional-level organisations (Du & Xie, 2021, p.969).

Primary stakeholders exert influence through the means of control of resources crucial to the functioning of the organisation (Barnett et al., 2020, p.8). The resource dependency theory (Bhatt & Bhattacharya, 2015, p.275) is helpful in understanding the dynamics of this type of influence: the organisations' dependency on resources under the stakeholders' control gives the stakeholders power over the organisation (Barnett et al., 2020, p.8) These resources could be access to information, services, supplies or network position (Barnett et al., 2020, p.9). The secondary stakeholders lack such direct control, so they rely on the power of collective bargain to achieve their goals (Barnett et al., 2020, p.9). For instance, the sense of collective identity amongst the secondary stakeholder group of pressure groups and the effectiveness with which these groups are able to mobilise and wield resources such as money and labour define the success of such type of collective bargains (Barnett et al., 2020, p.9).

2.1.1 Stakeholder Management and Reputational Crisis

The stakeholder theory further proposes that the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and other such activities including brand activism - that are stakeholder-oriented in nature - are important for forming favourable stakeholder attitudes and avoiding their negative perceptions and attitudes (Du & Xie, 2021, p.969). Since it is not feasible to satisfy the needs of all groups due to limitations on resources, the notion of stakeholder salience offers managers a practical solution in the form of prioritisation of relevant stakeholder groups over others (Maso et al., 2018). Even after being armed with the notion of stakeholder salience, it becomes difficult to manage reputational crises when the crises unfold on a social media channel (Barnett et al., 2020, p.9). Studies have provided evidence for the increased risk to corporate reputation on social media platforms (Rokka et al., 2013, p.806). The continuous interactions between the organisation and stakeholders on social media creates a 'web of meaning' or narratives, upon which the organisational reputation depends on (Aula, 2010, p.45). These narratives can be out of the control of the organisation, affecting the organisational reputation. Social media also has an inherent nature of virality, which works towards creating a collective truth based on subjective interpretations of information about an organisation (Aula, 2010, p.46).

This is important to consider since the underlying assumption of the stakeholder theory is the stakeholders' access to accurate information and their cognitive ability to process the information accurately and rationally (Barnett et al., 2020, p.9). However, a crisis unfolding on a social media channel such as Twitter or YouTube, like in the case of Tanishq, does not guarantee accuracy of information or rationality in the processing of said information and opinions making rounds. In such cases then, the organisation is coerced to respond in a manner that meets the undue expectations of the stakeholders to control the crisis immediately (Aula, 2010, p.45).

2.2 Morality and Brand Activism

2.2.1 Moral Foundations Theory

The development of the field of moral psychology can be traced back to Kohlberg's (1969) work on cognitive developmental approach to moral socialization (Arnold, 2000, p. 366). Building on the work of Piaget (1932), Kohlberg asserted that an individual makes meaning of their social world as they grow, and there is a universal structure to the reasoning that the individual has and that these structures grow increasingly complex with the growth of the individual. He identified three levels of moral development that happen simultaneously

with cognitive development and socialisation: pre-conventional level (motivated by self-interest), conventional level (motivated by social order) and post-conventional level (motivated by social contract), consisting of six stages in total (Fang et al., 2017, p.1). The primary assumption of this theory is that maturation in cognitive abilities facilitates more complex moral reasoning, underpinning the importance of reasoning in moral judgments. There are several criticisms for this approach as well: overemphasis on the notion of justice, not considering the influence of difference in genders in perceiving morality and the gap in moral reasoning and moral behaviour (Graham et al., 2013, Chapter 2, p.6).

In contrast, Shweder (1990) argued for a more culturally inclusive approach to moral reasoning. He criticised Kohlberg's monist approach to moral reasoning and proposed pluralism based on myriads of cultural differences. His insights were based on a study he conducted in India within the Hindu community and noted how moral reasoning differs in a non-Western context, where community ethics are valued more than the ethics of autonomy (Graham et al., 2013, Chapter 2, p.6). Combining the works of Kohlberg (1932), Shweder (1990) and Fiske (1992), Haidt proposed the social intuitionist model (SIM), (2001). SIM proposes that moral judgements are the result of quick, automatic intuitions which is followed by post facto reasoning (p. 817). This model is supported by evidence from neurological, behavioural, developmental, and evolutionary studies (Huebner, Dwyer, & Hauser, 2009). The underlying assumption of this moral judgement is the behavioural fact that people gauge the actions of others against a set of obligatory virtues, and these evaluations, which mostly occur in a specific cultural context, have consequences attached to them (Haidt, 2001, p.817). Moral judgement is followed by moral reasoning, which is defined as the conscious mental activity that internally justifies the initial intuitive moral judgements (Haidt, 2001, p.817).

Further building on this, Haidt and Graham et al. (2009) proposed the moral foundations theory (MFT) which details the dimensions that underlie moral intuitions-care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation. Care/harm includes the values of empathy and compassion and the perception of preventing harm and caring for others. Fairness/cheating is based on the values of equality and justice. Loyalty/betrayal focuses on ideas of allegiance and group harmony based on trust. Authority/subversion involves values of respect for authority figures and challenging the authority. Sanctity/degradation includes values of purity and sacredness associated with cultural, spiritual or religious beliefs (Graham et al., 2013, Chapter 2, p.105). This framework brings together Kohlberg's evolutionary approach to innate moral intuitions and Shweder's cultural aspect to shaping moral judgements.

Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020, p.773) posit that contentious socio-political issues can be seen as open moral questions and a brand's stance on such issues can be analysed through MFT. Brand activism is a risky marketing strategy that has been on the rise in recent years in an attempt to appeal to a broader consumer base (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p.2). When a brand engages in socio-political activism through advertising campaigns, the stance the brand takes identifies it with one side of the partisan issue (Moorman, 2020, p.389). The partisan nature of such issues forces brands to pick a side, emphasising on certain values which may not be necessarily in alignment with the values espoused by different stakeholder groups.

2.2.2 Moral judgements and their Effect on Consumer-Brand Relationships

According to the self-congruence theory, brands fulfil different needs of a consumer, an important stakeholder group, based on how well they match a consumer's perception of themselves: either their actual or their ideal self (Huber et al., 2010, p. 1114). Brands that match either of these, actual or ideal self-concept of the consumer, satisfies the consumer needs and builds the consumer's relationship with the brand (Huber et al., 2010, p. 1114). In contrast, consumer brand disagreement emerging out of conflict of values may lead to low self-brand similarity or congruency, consequently resulting in low levels of consumer-brand identification and negative consumer-brand relationship, which further has an effect on consumer attitudes and behaviours (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020, p.773).

At the same time, when the brand's moral stance on a divisive issue matches the values of stakeholders, it indicates a high level of self-brand similarity and positive consumer attitudes towards the brand (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020, p.774). Consumers arrive at differing moral judgements because of the difference in emphasis placed on the different moral foundations (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020, p.774). For example, a brand that supports the LGBTQI community emphasises on the moral foundation of care and fairness. Consumers who place more value on the moral foundations of loyalty/in-group may not find the particular brand in alignment with their own morals. And since consumers value their own moral judgements more than a brand's moral stand, they will not likely change their own

moral judgements to match a brand's moral judgements, even during instances of progressive brand activism (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020, p.774).

2.2.3 Ethnoconsumerism

Ethnoconsumerism demands the understanding of the local cultural contexts when trying to understand consumer behaviour (Venkatesh, 1995, p.6). It is important to understand the Indian consumer within their socio-political setting to understand brand activism failures in the country. In 2019, a prominent food delivery app, Zomato, faced the ire of consumers online when a disgruntled consumer tweeted that he cancelled his food order because he was assigned a 'non-Hindu' driver (Kuchay, 2019, para.4). The driver in question was a Muslim man, and the company's refusal to cater to the Hindu consumer's complaint resulted in a #BoycottZomato trend on Twitter. Other companies such as UberEats, that showed support to Zomato's decision to stand by their delivery partner were not spared either as #BoycottUberEats also trended, citing unfair discrimination against Hindus (Kuchay, 2019, para.17). There are two types of motivations for consumer boycotts- instrumental and expressive motivations, in the context of socio-political issues (Pandey et al., 2021, p.53). The latter category encompasses motivations that are based on values or beliefs. The Zomato boycott and Tanishq boycott fall into the category of expressive boycotts, where the consumer disagrees with the religious values and goes through the process of moral reasoning to express disapproval. This again underscores the importance of moral/value alignment between the brand and the consumer to maintain the consumer-brand relationship.

2.3 Negative Consumer Behaviour- Consumer Brand Sabotage on Social Media

2.3.1 Negative Consumer Behaviour

Consumer brand disagreement can stem from performance or quality issues and conflict of values (Bhatia et al., 2023, para.7). This can lead to negative consumer behaviour- which can take various forms including negative word of mouth, consumer retaliation, consumer boycott and consumer brand sabotage. Negative word of mouth (N-WOM) is defined as interpersonal communications that criticize a brand/product/service, formed during and after the process of consumption by a consumer (Verhagen et al., 2013, p.1431). Consumer retaliation is an aggressive response to dissatisfaction with the brand, and consumer boycott refers to the consumer stance against the consumption of the

product/service associated with the dissatisfaction (Huefner & Hunt, 2000, p.63; Makarem & Jae, 2015, p.196).

2.3.2 Consumer brand sabotage

Another form of negative consumer behaviour that has emerged with the developments in social media is consumer brand sabotage (CBS) (Kähr et al., 2016, p.4). CBS is the result of the complete breakdown of the consumer brand relationship and involves deliberate hostile and aggressive actions targeting a brand. CBS actions are performed intentionally to harm the brand unlike instrumental aggression related negative behaviour such as negative word of mouth (Kähr et al., 2016, p.4). It can be offline or online actions and occur at a local or global level. It can be carried out by both consumers and non-consumers as the impact of conflicting values is not just limited to consumers of the brand (Bhatia et al., 2023, para.10). Brand saboteurs can also attempt to damage consumer brand relationships of other consumers in an effort to maximise the amount of harm done to the brand (Kähr et al., 2016, p.5).

2.3.3 Virality of CBS

Additionally in the online space such actions have more persuasive effect due to the vast reach and speed of message diffusion (Bhatia et al., 2023, para.15). The virality of online backlash or CBS actions can be assessed with the help of the content and context characteristics (Suh et al., 2010, p.2). Bhatia et al. (2023, para.16) developed the conceptual model for CBS in the context of Twitter/X with three aspects: informational elements include hashtags, URL links and emotions; interactional aspects include replies, likes and quotes; and creator-related factors such as the follower count and verified accounts. Hashtags provide contextualise a tweet and signify community participation (Bhatia et al., 2023, para.19). They also contribute towards the virality of a tweet, as in the case of controversies repeated exposure to hashtags is important for the diffusion of the tweet (Bhatia et al., 2023, para.19). While some studies have demonstrated that positive emotions have the tendency to spread more than negative emotions (Berger and Milkman 2012, p.193), other have shown that tweets with negative emotion are more likely to be retweeted (Naveed et al. 2011, p.6). However, in the context of news and controversies, it is negative tweets that are retweeted more than positive ones (Hansen et al. 2011, p.34). Twitter especially is one such social media platform where users with similar views tend to assimilate, follow each other and corroborate each other's views, giving rise to the phenomenon of 'echo-chambers' (Criss et

al., 2020, p. 1326). The interactional factors: replies, likes, quotes and retweets form the mentions network in Twitter. All of these factors showcase different levels of engagement (Bhatia et al., 2023, para. 25).

2.4 Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) has its roots in studies that focused on crisis response strategies and their effect on organisational reputation (Coombs, 2006, p. 242). SCCT offers a variety of response strategies that an organisation can employ for different reputational crises and the crisis response strategy should be selected based on the attributes of the crisis (Coombs, 2006, p.242). This linkage was made with the help of attribution theory which states that people make judgements about the cause of an unexpected event, be it internal causality or external causality (Coombs, 2004 p.267). Causal attributions point to responsibility- it helps the stakeholders perceive the crisis and attribute responsibility for the negative situation (Coombs, 2004 p.267). Since stakeholder attribution of the cause of the crisis has the potential to shape attitudes and behaviour towards an organisation, crisis managers can carefully choose the appropriate response strategy based on the causal attribution which involves deciding where to point the blame (Coombs, 2004 p.269).

In the SCCT, Coombs (2006, p.168) mentions three types of crises without varying levels of responsibility for the brand. The first crisis, victim crisis, is where the organisation is seen as the victim of the crisis event, with no responsibility attributed to the organisation. The second category is accidental crises, where an unintentional event occurs such as a product defect, thus attributing minimal responsibility to the organisation. The last category of preventable crises such as regulatory violations, labour exploitation, corruption within the organisation means high responsibility. The crises response strategies include denial, diminish, rebuilding and bolstering. The appropriate response is chosen on the basis of the level of crisis responsibility and stakeholder analysis (Coombs, 2006, p.169). Different strategies can be combined and applied according to the crisis situation to limit the reputational damage done to the organization (Coombs, 2006, p.169).

SCCT proposes three responses to manage crisis according to the crisis situation- deny, diminish and deal, after figuring out the level of responsibility the company/brand should take (Coombs, 2006, p.247). However, the SCCT scholarship does not always cover all the aspects of a reputational crisis. In the case of the Cadbury crisis in Indonesia involving pig DNA in the company's chocolate, the company stuck to a passive post crisis response strategy as opposed to the active crisis management strategies proposed by the SCCT

(Morehouse & Lemon, 2023, p.1). The crisis here arose out of misalignment of religious values, as pig is considered unholy in Islam, and Indonesia is an Islam majority nation. Cadbury did not apologise, maintained a neutral stance, and kept on releasing useful information to addresses consumer concerns while respecting the religious aspect of the larger conversation, and within two weeks the crisis was under control (Morehouse & Lemon, 2023, p.2). The religious/moral crisis scholarship is quite limited and the existing literature on SCCT for crisis management is not adequate to address crisis arising out of moral/religious values misalignment (Morehouse & Lemon, 2023, p.3).

3. Methods

This chapter explains the research design process. The choice of methods – topic modelling, sentiment analysis, thematic analysis and social network analysis are justified and explained in the first section. The next section details the sample and the sampling process. This is followed by the operationalisation section, where the important concepts are operationalised with the help of the theoretical framework laid out in the previous chapter. Then the data preparation process (data cleaning) and data analysis process are elaborated. The last section discusses the validity and reliability of this thesis.

3.1 Choice of Methods

To answer the proposed research questions, a qualitative mixed methods approach is used. A qualitative approach is useful for developing in depth insights about the complex phenomenon of negative consumer behaviour and associated moral motivations (Rahman, 2020). To answer the first and second sub question, topic modelling and sentiment analysis, two digital research methods (DRM) are applied, along with inductive thematic analysis. Topic modelling and sentiment analysis are conducted on the software ConText. Topic modelling technique of latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) is used to uncover the main themes and topics of textual data within a set of documents and the associations of each document to the emergent topics (Nikolenko et al., 2016, p.2). Topic modelling yields a list of topics comprising several words (a bag of words) after scanning the entire corpus of the text. Each topic, with several words, point to a theme and have weights assigned to them (Murakami et al., 2017, p. 244). The underlying logic to finding the words for each topic is the high probability of co-occurrence within the span of the whole corpus or the entire text (Murakami et al., 2017, p. 244).

The second digital research method- sentiment analysis, is an emergent method of analysis, complacent with the needs of the digital data era, with businesses increasingly using it to comprehend consumer emotions and sentiments on social media platforms (Wankhade et al., 2022, p. 5743). This method is useful for assessing subjective content such as polarising sentiments (negative and positive) from large amounts of digital textual data using natural language processing and text mining (Wankhade et al., 2022, p. 5731). Sentiment analysis gives the frequency of the words and marks the words in the corpus with either negative or positive sentiments (sometimes also both). These two digital research methods are useful to understand the major themes underlying the Twitter data. The topics from topic modelling

and the sentiment analysis of the texts of the tweets are further used to create the major themes of the textual data.

Thematic analysis is used for identifying, analysing and recognising patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.6). It is a flexible method of analysing qualitative data as it is not tied to a particular theoretical framework and the researcher can adapt the method according to the needs of their study (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.9). This thesis uses inductive thematic analysis, where codes are data-driven and emerge from the data (Chandra & Shang, 2019, Chapter 8, p.91). The themes are analysed at a latent/interpretative level for uncovering underlying assumptions and discourse, with the help of the MFT (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.13). For answering the third sub question, thematic analysis and social network analysis (SNA) are used. The third digital research method used in this thesis is social network analysis, specifically complete network analysis, and it presents data in as a set of nodes and edges that connect nodes, creating a network out of the connections between the nodes (Akhtar, 2014, p.388). Quantitative measures from networks include different centrality measures, which indicate a node's importance, and modularity, which detects the groups/communities present in the dataset (Akhtar, 2014, p.388). These measures are discussed qualitatively in the results section. SNA techniques were developed to comprehend the patterns of interaction among social actors or nodes, in social networks and the implications of these associations (Tabassum et al., 2018). This method is instrumental to explore and visualise the patterns of relationship between the social actors, and to understand the spread of negative consumer behaviour on Twitter. The tool used to conduct the social network analysis for this thesis is Gephi, version 0.10.1.

3.2 Sample

This study uses Twitter/X data, specifically, tweets and retweets. The original Ekatvam advertisement was released on YouTube and later taken down. However, a copy of the advertisement was later uploaded to YouTube. The CBS activities primarily occurred on Twitter/X and YouTube. For this thesis, the social networking platform chosen to be studied is Twitter/X since the online backlash of the Ekatvam advertisement was predominantly concentrated on this platform. The data for the social networking platform was collected by the thesis' supervisor for an on-going project. The initial dataset contained 791,987 tweets. This is the whole population of the tweets containing the #boycottanishq and #Ekatvam hashtags. The sample used for this thesis is 30,000 tweets. For curating an aptly representative yet feasible sample, systematic sampling method is used (Mostafa & Ahmad,

2017, p.1). Three subsets of data in chronological order are extracted for the sample. The subsets being the first 10,000 tweets, the middle 10,000 and the last 10,000 tweets. Python script is used for making the final dataset from the population of the tweets.

The Ekatvam advertisement by the brand Tanishq was released on October 9, 2020, and the data is from the time frame of 2 years, from the year 2020 to 2022. The first subset of 10,000 tweets is from dates 11/10/2020 - 12/10/2020, the second subset, tweets 345,001-355,000, is from one single day-14/10/2020. The last subset of tweets 690,001-700,000, occurs much later, from 13/08/2022 to 14/08/2022. The majority of the tweets occurred in October 2020, right after the advertisement was released. The first set of tweets captures the immediate consumer response to the advertisement. The second set from a few days later, when the controversy was in full swing: threats to the company and staff, active calls for boycott and CBS activities. The last set of data from two year later, picks up on the hashtags, which have since become a movement from #boycotttanishq to #boycottantihindu; from boycott campaign against one brand to an umbrella movement boycotting any brand that displayed anti-Hindu sentiments.

The Twitter data was collected with the use of Twitter Academic API when it was available to academic researchers (Xdevplatform, n.d.). As the data was collected when X was solely Twitter, the company will hereafter be referred to as just Twitter. Twitter application programming interface (API) allows developers and researchers to collect and analyse data including tweets, user profiles, hashtags, likes and retweets. For this thesis, the textual data of the tweets and retweets, along with the other metadata such as username are the primary focus of the analysis. While the textual data of the tweets is important for the qualitative analysis, the metadata - usernames and @mentions - help in establishing the mentions network of the Twitter data, which is further used to conduct social network analysis on the application Gephi. While most of the tweets were in English, some were also in Hindi, a language the researcher is familiar with and has native fluency. But only the English tweets were analysed in topic modelling and sentiment analysis due to technical limitations. For the qualitative thematic analysis, Hindi tweets were also considered to get better contextual understanding. For the mention network all the tweets were used, since the network was the focus in this particular analysis, as opposed to the content in other analysis.

To ensure compliance with the ethical guidelines, usernames will not be directly shown in the results section of the thesis so that it cannot be easily traced back to any user. The example tweets shown in the discussion have been slightly rephrased by adding a few words, without losing the essence of the tweets, by the researcher to ensure user privacy. Any

information that a Twitter user provides to Twitter, with the exception of email, passwords, unprotected tweets and direct messages to other users is considered to be public (Small et al., 2012, p.177). Scholars contend that social media platforms are a site of cultural production, and the social media data can be simultaneously seen as ‘text’ and virtual representation of the author (Small et al., 2012, p.181). Twitter also acknowledges the hybrid: public and private, nature of the platform (Small et al., 2012, p.182). Although explicit consent of by the users is not given for this study as Twitter data can be considered public source material (Presner, 2011, as cited in Small et al., 2012, p.182), privacy of the users is protected with no mention of the usernames.

3.3 Operationalization

The mixed methods approach includes digital research and qualitative methods. The textual data of the tweets, hashtags such as #BoycottTanishq, #BoycottAntiHindu #LoveJihad help in studying the concept of consumer brand sabotage in the context of brand activism failure. The first digital method- topic modelling, gave lists of topics that pointed towards various themes related to the online backlash. These topics and themes are related to negative consumer behaviour towards the brand Tanishq. A few expected topics are ‘boycott Tanishq’ ‘anti-hindu’ and ‘love jihad’. The topic ‘boycott Tanishq’ falls in the negative consumer behaviour, specifically CBS activities (Kähr et al., 2016, p.4). The ‘anti-hindu’ and ‘love jihad’ topics are from the religious value misalignment of the consumer and the brand. These value misalignment stem from the difference in moral judgements (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020, p.774; Kähr et al., 2016, p.9). The sentiment analysis further helped in contextualising the negative consumer emotions and the resultant consumer brand sabotage. The five dimensions of the moral foundations theory given by Graham et al., (2013) - care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation guided the interpretation of the topics and the thematic categorisation of consumer brand sabotage based on conflict of morality.

SNA focused on tweets that are interactional (@mentions) and that can – in the context of the hashtags – display criticism, discontent and conflict of morality. The interactional tweets form the mentions network (Lutu, 2019, p. 155). And in the mentions network, the nodes are represented by Twitter users and the @mention interaction between the nodes, are the edges of the network. The resultant graph of the network is directed, which means that the edges have a direction associated with them. The primary measures of SNA are modularity class, degree, in degree, out degree, average degree, betweenness centrality,

average clustering coefficient, and network diameter. Average degree is a measure of the average number of connections a node has in the network and degree is the total number of edges a node has, based on degree centrality (Freeman, 1978, p.218). In-degree of a node is the number of edges coming into a node, and out-degree is the number of edges going out of a node (Lee, 2024). The average clustering coefficient indicates how the nodes are embedded in their neighbourhood (Watts and Strogatz, 1998, p.440). It provides insight into the overall indication of clustering in the network. Betweenness centrality measures to which extent the node is a gatekeeper (Freeman, 1977, p.37). The network diameter is the maximum shortest distance between any pair of nodes in the network (Tabassum et al., 2018, p.7). Modularity helps in community detection in the network and shows how many distinct communities are present in the network (Newman, 2006, p.8577). Topology of a network is a macro/graph level measure and helps in understanding the structure and layout of the network – arrangement of nodes and edges in a network (Milgram, 1967, p.63).

The modularity and centrality measures help in identifying discussion areas of high activity and interaction and tracing the spread of CBS activities in the network. The identification of the central nodes and the gatekeeping nodes is key to analysing the spread of CBS on Twitter. The conceptual model for CBS developed by Bhatia et al., (2023) will inform the operationalisation of the concept of CBS - informational, interactional and creator-related elements. The informational and creator related elements are the metadata of the tweets, and the interactional element is the @mention itself. Further qualitative interpretation of the spread of CBS is guided by moral foundations theory. Since these methods are used in a qualitative approach, the researcher interprets the topics and associations to gain in depth meaning regarding consumers' moral foundations and the resultant consumer attitudes towards the Ekatvam advertisement and the brand Tanishq.

3.4 Data Preparation

The application ConText, version 1.2.0, is the tool used to conduct the topic modelling and sentiment analysis. For conducting the analysis on ConText, three subsets of the data, each containing 10,000 tweets and metadata, were extracted from the original data file of the complete Twitter data. The three files were saved in CSV format and then parsed to obtain distinct text files for each of the tweets, as topic modelling requires distinct documents. Then the text data were cleaned through lemmatization to reduce the words to their root form, which is a processing technique in natural language processing (NLP). The steps were repeated for all the three datasets in separate CSV files within ConText.

For conducting SNA on Gephi, python was used to extract a graph file from the data of 30,000 tweets, containing just node and edge data: the usernames and @mentions. The original Excel datafile did not have a separate column for @mentions, but the text section included the @mentioned username along with the tweet text. To extract just the @mentioned username from the text, text processing with the pandas library was used. Further preprocessing was done to represent the usernames as nodes and @mentions as edges in Python using the networkx package. This created a directional graph where the @mentioned user was the target and the user writing the tweet was the source. A single graph file was created to combine the data of 30,000 tweets to be analysed in Gephi.

3.5 Data Analysis

The first two methods – topic modelling and sentiment analysis, are conducted on the software ConText, version 1.2.0. This software was developed by the University of Illinois and stands for ‘connections’ and ‘texts’ (ConText : Home, n.d.). This tool supports the construction of network data from natural language text data and the analysis of text data and network data (ConText : Home, n.d.). The first method of analysis, topic modelling, is considered to be a flexible approach that can be applied to a wide array of texts. For conducting topic modelling, the latent Dirichlet allocation algorithm is used to identify key themes in the data (Brookes & McEnery, 2018). This was followed by the identification and labelling of the topics by looking at main terms that define the topic. To identify the specific tweets the document topic matrix output was used. Then the analysis of distribution of topics across documents was done, followed by the interpretation of identified topics according to the theoretical framework that is outlined.

The number of topics, words per topic, and number of iterations can be adjusted according to the size of the dataset to achieve a superior list of topics. Since the dataset used for this thesis is quite large (3 sets of 10,000) the number of topics were adjusted several times to see which number would be a better fit. After the tests, the default 7 number of topics, 1000 iterations and 10 words per topic, were chosen for the analysis as these numbers provided a coherent list of topics compared to the results of other settings. For the final topic labelling, the first and second sets of data has 5 topics, and the third dataset has 6 topics, with 6-10 words per topic. This was done to facilitate the comparison and progression of themes. Redundant topics and topic words were removed from the final topic list, which is labelled in the results section.

The second method, sentiment analysis is also done on the software ConText. Sentiment analysis further helped in contextualising the consumer sentiments. The sentiments are labelled 'positive', 'negative' and 'both' for words/terms. A list of 10 terms/words is generated with their specific sentiments, along with the frequency of the term in the entire corpus. The terms with either positive or negative sentiments are shown in the final results, as the number of terms exhibiting both the sentiments was just two, and these terms were not significant to the analysis. The topics generated from topic modelling and the sentiment analysis of the specific terms with word frequency helped in creating broad categories of themes related to CBS.

For conducting the thematic analysis, an inductive approach was taken, and the data analysis was done at a latent/interpretive level. The thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) informed the process of the thematic analysis. In accordance with the framework by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher familiarised herself with the data thoroughly; firstly, by reading the text of the tweets, secondly during the various preprocessing steps done for ConText and finally by analysing the data processed by ConText. The processed data from ConText served as the basis for the initial codes. Then the final themes were identified and labelled, by merging initial codes. Each theme was reviewed and finalised to produce a final list of coherent themes. Each theme was analysed in detail, with MFT, to uncover the underlying patterns/discourse in the data.

For analysing and visualising the network, the SNA tool Gephi, version 0.10.1, was used (GEPHI - the Open Graph ViZ Platform, n.d.). This facilitated in illustrating and obtaining network measurements from the associations amongst various interconnected groups in the network. For SNA, the key measures- modularity class, in degree, out degree, degree centrality, betweenness centrality, clustering coefficient, path length and diameter and graph density were run. The statistical measures in Gephi are categorized according to different levels- micro level for nodes (degree, average degree and centrality measures), meso level for groups (modularity), and macro level for the entire graph (node count, edge count, component count, network diameter, graph density, topology) (Lee, 2024). These metrics helped in understanding the structure and the dynamics of the Twitter network. The data from the table of the measures from Gephi was also exported as an Excel file to do further calculations. The thematic codes or labels from the topic modelling are also associated with specific nodes that are interactive within the network.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the credibility of the findings, Silverman's (2011) pointers on reliability and validity are followed. For reliability of the findings, all the steps taken by the researcher are detailed in a transparent manner in the methods and results section. Documentation of the data preprocessing, steps for conducting topic modelling, sentiment analysis, thematic analysis and SNA are also explained in detail. For content validity, a wide range of temporal Twitter data is included in the study. The researcher maintains reflexivity in all steps to check for confirmation or selection bias. Additionally, triangulation of methods- topic modelling, sentiment analysis, thematic analysis and SNA, provides a comprehensive and robust understanding of negative consumer behaviour in the context of brand activism failure.

4. Results

This chapter addresses the results of the topic modelling, sentiment analysis, thematic analysis and social network analysis. The first section of this chapter answers the first sub question ‘*What are the themes of conversations and interactions that emerged on Twitter following Tanishq brand activism failure?*’ ConText was used to conduct topic modelling and perform sentiment analysis to answer this research question. The emergent themes from the two analyses are further explained with the help of the theoretical framework of MFT in the second section, to answer the second sub question: *What are the primary motivations that led to consumer brand sabotage following Tanishq brand activism failure?* The last section of this chapter elaborates on the results of the social network analysis done on Gephi and answers sub-question 3: *How did negative consumer behaviour manifest and spread on Twitter following Tanishq brand activism failure?*

4.1 Topic modelling and Sentiment Analysis

4.1.1 First Batch of Tweets

The first batch of 10,000 tweets were from the dates 11/10/2020- 12/10/2020 (2 days after the Ekatvam advertisement was released) and were analysed in ConText with topic modelling. The tabular results from the topic modelling were qualitatively analysed by the researcher to finalise the topic list in table 1. The topic lists are displayed in the descending order of their representativeness of the topic and the weight. The weight displays the relative prominence of the topic compared to other topics. The percentage of the tweets of a topic is also mentioned in the explanation.

Table 1.

Top topics of 1st batch of tweets

Topic	Weight	Topic Members
Tanishq’s promotion of love jihad	0.020	boycotttanishq, tansihqjewellery, love, jihad, promote, marriage
Tanishq and secularism	0.016	boycotttanishq, boy, girl, promote, sickularism
Interfaith relationships	0.014	daughter, hindu, muslim , law, family, show, tanishq, jewellery, interfaith, fictional
Dangers to Hindu girl	0.011	girl, hindu, tanishqjewellery, fall, kill,

		audacity, amaze
Tanishq's promotion of false narrative	0.010	boycotttanishq, tansihjewellery, false, narrative, promote, religion, life, risk

The most prominent topic here is 'Tanishq's promotion of love jihad' through the Ekatvam advertisement. It is twice as prominent as the last topic, as its weight is 0.020 compared to the weight of 'Tanishq's promotion of false narrative', 0.010. To estimate the percentage of tweets talking about this topic, the weight of this topic is divided by the sum of the weights of all the topics. According to this calculation, about 28% of tweets talk about the topic 'Tanishq's promotion of love jihad'. Upon examining the tweets of this topic, it is clear that the narrative that the tweets express is overwhelmingly negative, as the Ekatvam advertisement is being accused of espousing the Islamophobic conspiracy theory of 'love jihad', where a Muslim man performs jihad through romance and gets a Hindu girl to convert to Islam, in an attempt to establish religious supremacy over Hindus (Rao, 2011, p. 425).

The dominant theme in the topic list is 'boycotttanishq' wherein users actively call for the boycott of the brand Tanishq. The term 'sickularism' in the second topic list is an interesting word play on the concept of secularism. The tweets mentioning the word sickularism is a commentary on the ideal of secularism that 'promotes' relations between Hindu and Muslim community, specifically romantic relationships between the men and women of the two communities. The third topic, occurring in about 19% of the tweets, builds on the themes of boycott and delves more into the reasons for the extreme reaction from the users. 'Interfaith relationships' emerge as the main point of conflict in the tweets. The advertisement showing a Hindu daughter in law in a Muslim household is deemed to be 'fictional', which has a negative connotation in this context. Users accuse the brand of peddling sensational and absurd ideas, with the underlying assumption being that Hindu women should not associate with Muslim households through marriage as it is 'risky' and a danger to the safety and 'life' of the Hindu woman.

The next topic 'dangers to hindu girl', occurring in about 15% of tweets, continues this narrative of entrapment of a Hindu woman in a Muslim household through marriage. Several tweets mention misogynistic violence committed against Hindu women by Muslim partners who were romantically involved with them. Cases of Hindu women being killed and converted to Islam by their Muslim partners are recounted as tales of caution for women

(Rao, 2011, p. 425). Therefore, this advertisement is portrayed as encouraging the ‘dangerous’ pattern of Hindu women marrying into Muslim families .

The top ten words of sentiment analysis are displayed in table 2. The highlighted terms appear in the topic list of topic modelling as well. The proportion of positive words is 58.66% and negative words is 41.34%. But when adjusted for the contextual meaning all the positively labelled terms are identified as negative, indicating the actual proportion of terms with negative sentiments to be 100%.

Table 2.

Top words of sentiment analysis of 1st batch of tweets

Term	Sentiment	Frequency
love	positive	3308
false	negative	2444
favour	positive	2343
fictional	negative	1380
audacity	negative	992
amaze	positive	664
glorify	positive	577
boycott	negative	577
stupidity	negative	477
gold	positive	441

The top word ‘love’ with a frequency of 3308 is misidentified with positive sentiment, as in the tweets it occurs together with the word ‘jihad’, making the term ‘love jihad’ a negative sentiment. It is the same with other top words identified with positive sentiments such as ‘favour’, which refers to the advertisement favouring the ‘negative’ interfaith relationship, ‘amaze’ and ‘glorify’, which point to the negative aspect of glorifying the negative sentiments and users being ‘amazed’ at the ‘audacity’ of the brand to showcase a Hindu woman married into a Muslim household. The top word ‘gold’ refers to the Hindu community being the primary consumers of gold jewellery, and how Tanishq angered its largest customer segment- Hindus, by releasing the Ekatvam advertisement. Thus ‘gold’ here is actually of a negative sentiment and not positive as reported by the sentiment analysis.

The top words ‘false’ and ‘fictional’ again point to the narrative of a cordial Hindu-Muslim relationship through marriage being untrue. The tweets put emphasis on how a Hindu woman marrying or being romantically involved with a Muslim man always ends in a negative way for the Hindu woman. The sentiment analysis supplements the findings of the topic modelling as there is significant overlap of topic members and top words. The sentiments of the top words aid in the accurate interpretation of the topics, together with the texts of the tweets.

4.1.2 Second batch of tweets

The second batch of 10,000 tweets are from the date 14/10/2020, five days after the Ekatvam advertisement was released. Their topics expose the shifts in discussion soon after the initial wave of tweets. The topic list in table 3 shows this continuance of the themes from the first batch of tweets. ‘Boycott Tanishq’ is still the most important topic in this list as well, with a weight of 0.025 and with users calling for a boycott of ‘Tanishq jewelry’. This topic occurs in about 32% of the tweets. Users call for action from ‘opindia’, a right leaning, digital news publishing platform frequently criticised for spreading misinformation (Chadha & Bhat, 2022, p.1284; Tiwari, 2020, para. 5). The other themes- ‘Tanishq promoting love jihad’ (21%), ‘Tanishq showing interfaith relationship’ (18%), ‘danger to Hindu girl’ (14%), and ‘Tanishq’s promotion of false narrative’ (13%), carry on with the themes established in batch 1.

Table 3.

Top topics of 2nd batch of tweets

Topic	Weight	Topic Members
Boycott Tanishq	0.025	boycotttanishq, tanishq, tanishqjewellery, buy, people, boycott, trend, jewellery, opindia
Tanishq promoting love jihad	0.016	boycotttanishq, love, promote, tanishq, jihad, tanishqjewellery, hindu, stop, boy
Tanishq showing interfaith relationship	0.014	muslim, daughter, hindu, family, law, jewellery, tanishq, ekatvam, show, interfaith
Danger to Hindu girl	0.011	tanishqjewellery, hindu, girl, add, fall, audacity, kill, amaze
Tanishq’s promotion of	0.010	boycotttanishq, tanishqjewellery, narrative, false,

false narrative		life, promote, religion, risk
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The sentiment analysis done on the 2nd batch of tweets is shown in table 4. As expected, the top words and associated sentiments match the results of the sentiment analysis of batch 1. Terms with negative sentiments dominate the list- ‘false’, ‘risk’, ‘fictional’, ‘boycott’, ‘attack’ and ‘audacity’. The term ‘attack’ refers to the attack on the Hindu values by Tanishq by showing a Hindu woman married into a Muslim family.

Table 4.

Top words of sentiment analysis of 2nd batch of tweets

Term	Sentiment	Frequency
love	positive	3980
false	negative	2517
risk	negative	2391
favour	positive	2388
fictional	negative	1657
boycott	negative	1203
attack	negative	1160
audacity	negative	1008
amaze	positive	934
convincing	positive	934

The proportion of positive words is 45.32% and negative words is 54.68% in the list generated in ConText. The terms attributed to positive sentiments are again misidentified, as the contextual information from the associated tweets carry negative connotations. The term ‘favour’ is seen in tweets that accuse Tanishq of favouring ‘harmful liberal ideas’ such as interfaith relationships. The term ‘convincing’ also possess the same meaning here, with Tanishq being accused of convincing Hindu women to commit ‘unsafe’ activities such as being involved with Muslim men. Therefore, again in this batch, after accounting for the contextual meaning of the words, the sentiments point to negative 100% of the time.

4.1.3 Third batch of tweets

The third batch of 10,000 tweets are from the dates 13/08/2022 to 14/08/2022, two years after the Ekatvam advertisement was released. The results are displayed in table 5. It is interesting to note that the #boycotttanishq still retained traction after the original incident of brand activism failure related to the Ekatvam advertising campaign. Inspection of the tweets of this batch shows that Tanishq ran into controversies again after the Ekatvam advertisement debacle. Tanishq’s next campaign following Ekatvam, a Diwali (Indian festival) advertisement, carried the message of not bursting firecrackers for the festival out of concern for the environment (India Today, 2020, para.1).

Diwali is a pan India festival with roots in Hindu mythology, and in recent times the celebrations tend to involve bursting of firecrackers to commemorate the festivities. The adverse effect of bursting firecrackers on a large scale is severe air pollution in a country that is already adversely affected by climate change, therefore environmental groups have been calling for a ban on bursting firecrackers for Diwali, resulting in a court order banning fireworks on Diwali in all states (Rajagopal, 2023, para.1). The Tanishq advertisement echoed this sentiment of a firecracker free Diwali for the benefit of the environment. This advertisement was also met with backlash as users interpreted this with Tanishq dictating the Hindu community to do away with Hindu traditions for Hindu festivals (India Today, 2020, para.1). These incidents triggered a bigger trend of ‘boycottantihindu’, calling for the boycott of all brands that do not stick to the ideal of Hindu customs in their advertising.

Table 5.

Top topics of 3rd batch of tweets

Topic	Weight	Topic Members
Boycott Tanishq	0.020	Boycotttanishq, tanishq, tanishqjewellery, buy, people, marriage, hindu, trend, boycott
Boycott anti-Hindu	0.020	boycottantihindu, jai, hind, boycottpathan, boycott, support, write, zubair
Interfaith marriage	0.013	boycotttanishq, tanishqjewellery, india, marriage, love, interfaith, brand, call, lead
Tanishq store attack in Gujarat	0.012	tanishq, store, NDTV, attack, gujarat, boycotttanishq, claim, tanishqjewellery, gandhidham

Tanishq and promotion of false narrative	0.011	boycotttanishq, tanishqjewellery, narrative, religion, life, promote, false, risk
Hindu-Muslim marriage	0.009	Muslim, law, show, hindu, daughter, tanishqjewellery, dont, family, boycotttanishq

The topic ‘Boycott Tanishq’ occurs in about 23% of the tweets and is twice as prominent as the last topic ‘Hindu-Muslim marriage’. The ‘Boycott anti-Hindu’ topic (23%) is equally prominent as the first topic with the weight of 0.020. The ‘boycottantihindu’ trend on Twitter included the call for boycott of Tanishq jewellery, the movie ‘Pathaan’ starring Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan, which is about the story of a Muslim protagonist. The word ‘zubair’ in the list refers to the Indian journalist Mohammed Zubair, who runs a fact checking news agency called Alt News, which mainly debunks right wing propaganda claims. The hashtag #arrestzubair trended on Twitter and Zubair was arrested for a tweet that allegedly insulted Hindu beliefs, and incarcerated for over a month (Kuchay, 2022, para.1). It is observed that the topic members of the topic ‘boycottantihindu’ mostly include Muslim individuals/entities. The words ‘jai hind’ stand for ‘long live Hindustan’, (Hindustan exchangeable for India) a rallying call used by right wing elements to ascertain the Hindu identity of India.

The topic ‘Tanishq store attack in Gujarat’ (14%) refers to the aftermath of the Ekatvam controversy as right-wing groups targeted a Tanishq store in the town of ‘Gandhidham’ in Gujrat and demanded an apology from the store employees for the Ekatvam advertisement. The news channel ‘NDTV’ had reported that an attack took place at the Gandhidham Tanishq store, but later clarified that only threats were received, and no attack had actually taken place (NDTV, 2020, para.1). This caused a barrage of tweets to blame and criticise NDTV, a usually left-leaning news organisation, of being a propaganda spreader. Later it was clarified by Alt News and NewsLaundry that even though no attack took place police had to be involved in the matter due to the threats from right wing mobs and the store was patrolled by the police to ensure the safety of the staff and the store (Vaishnav, 2020, para 10). The topics ‘Tanishq and promotion of false narrative’ (12%), and ‘Hindu-Muslim marriage’ (10%), again continue the narrative of contentious interfaith relationships.

The sentiment analysis of the top words of the third batch, shown in table 6, continues the trend observed in the previous batches- majority of the top words display negative sentiment and the top words identified with positive sentiment have a negative context. The proportion of words with negative sentiment is 57.27% and positive sentiments is 42.73%. The terms, ‘love’, ‘favour’, and ‘amaze’ are again misidentified as positive sentiments.

Table 6.

Top words of sentiment analysis of 3rd batch of tweets

Term	Sentiment	Frequency
love	positive	3981
boycott	negative	3093
false	negative	2518
risk	negative	2391
favour	positive	2388
fictional	negative	1657
support	positive	1518
attack	negative	1160
audacity	negative	1008
amaze	positive	936

4.2 Thematic analysis

This section aims to answer the second sub question- ‘What are the primary motivations that led to consumer brand sabotage following Tanishq brand activism failure?’ The topic lists are developed into major themes and juxtaposed with the dimensions of the moral foundations theory- care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, to explore the motivations of the CBS by consumers on Twitter. The reasons for the moral judgements of the users involved in the Twitter network is explored in detail with the help of the “pluralist moralities” or the different moral foundations (Doğrüyol et al., 2019, p.1).

4.2.1 Boycott Tanishq

The dominant topic prevalent across all three batches of tweets is ‘boycott tanishq’. This topic with negative sentiment falls under the sanctity/degradation dimension. The call

for boycott of the brand Tanishq and its products such as gold jewellery stem from the larger fear of brands demeaning Hindu culture and beliefs. Users demand that the sanctity of the Hindu culture be preserved by actively boycotting the brand which peddled the anti-Hindu ideal of Hindu woman being married into Muslim family. The sanctity/degradation dimension works on the emotion of ‘disgust’ towards social contaminants (Koleva et al., 2012, p.185). In this case, the ideologies of communal harmony perpetrated by Tanishq’s Ekatvam advertisement function as the social contaminant of the right-wing Hindu ideology, triggering a large-scale negative response. The demand by the users to maintain the ‘purity’ of the Hindu community and its traditions manifest in the #boycotttanishq trend and the subsequent negative effects on the brand such as fall in the share prices and threats to employees.

4.2.2 Tanishq’s promotion of interfaith relationships

The topics ‘Tanishq’s promotion of love jihad’, ‘interfaith relationships’, and ‘Tanishq’s promotion of false narrative’ generated from topic modelling, can be categorised into one theme- ‘Tanishq’s promotion of interfaith relationships. Building on the sanctity/degradation-based theme of ‘Boycott Tanishq’, which called for maintaining the sanctity of Hindu beliefs, this theme delves into the primary reasoning for the call for boycott and other CBS activities. The advertisement was interpreted as a promotion of ‘love jihad’, the Islamophobic conspiracy theory, as the story featured on the advertisement was of a Hindu woman in a Muslim household. This depiction of an interfaith relationship, specifically Hindu-Muslim, was construed in a negative way by consumers on Twitter. Thus, this theme can be explained with the help of the loyalty/betrayal dimension.

The loyalty/betrayal dimension is characterised by solidarity within a group and the competition with other groups (Chowdhury, 2017, p. 586). Interfaith relationships challenge this notion of intragroup solidarity and add to the intergroup conflict. Therefore, love jihad can be understood as a tool to oppose the ‘other’ religious community- Muslims, in order to maintain purity and solidarity within the community. As a result, Tanishq’s advertisement, promoting gold jewellery, considered to be a popular product amongst the Hindu community, featuring an interfaith couple was seen as a form of betrayal of Hindu values by consumers on Twitter. This again, builds into the sanctity/degradation dimension as well, as interfaith relationships also contaminate the sanctity of the group.

4.2.3 Dangers to Hindu women

This theme is related to the allegations of ‘love jihad’ in interfaith relationships and can be analysed with the care/harm moral dimension. The care/harm dimension concerns with the welfare and protection of group members and is driven by the emotion of compassion (Chowdhury, 2017, p. 586). It also causes the disapproval of elements that harm the group members and appreciation of those who care for/protect the group members (Koleva et al., 2012, p. 185). In this context the act of caring transcends to aggressive and unsolicited advice to protect Hindu women from dangers of being exposed to other religious community. As a majority of the tweets question the safety of Hindu women in interfaith relationships by recounting isolated incidents of violence. This points to the prevalent gender dynamics in a religious group, as through this discourse the Hindu woman is infantilised, and her romantic choices stripped of agency. A Hindu woman being maritally associated with a Muslim family is the main point of conflict, as users spell out incidents where a Hindu woman was subject to mental/physical torture to convert to Islam by her Muslim spouse and in-laws. The concern for the physical safety of the Hindu woman is at times overshadowed by the concerns of religious conversion.

4.2.4 Tanishq and secularism

The theme of ‘Tanishq and secularism’ can be understood with the help of the authority/subversion dimension, which is based on the emotions of respect and fear (Chowdhury, 2017, p. 586). This dimension is characterised by people’s tendency to create hierarchically structured societies where some groups exert dominance and the other are subject to subordination (Koleva et al., 2012, p. 185). The Ekatvam advertisement with its message of secularity angered consumers who value traditional Hindu ideals. For the consumers, the traditional right leaning Hindu ideals hold superiority over liberal ideals of secularism, as observed in the tweets. The example tweets:

Tanishq is shamelessly deliberately promoting #LoveJihad. This is the level of desperation of Sickularism! Take down this ad.

#Tanishq earns money from Hindu festivals but the Hindu word and Hindus doesn't exist for them. #SICKularism in India is one-way street.

By releasing the Ekatvam advertisement, Tanishq tried to subvert this dominant religious notion and disrespected the perceived hierarchy of religions, which resulted in the CBS activities of boycott, threats and severe reputational damage of the brand. Secularism was referred to as ‘sickularism’ in the tweets, conveying the contempt the users held for the ideal of secularism. This action can also be seen as a betrayal of the conservative religious values of the Hindu community by Tanishq. This theme points to the complex interplay between religious authority, group loyalty and gender dynamics within the group which eventually became the motivation for the CBS activities against Tanishq.

4.2.5 Boycott anti-Hindu

The call for boycott for Tanishq products expanded over the course of two years to include any brand that did not adhere to traditional Hindu values and resulted in the #boycottantihindu trend on Twitter. The moral dimensions of sanctity/degradation, authority/subversion and loyalty/betrayal can contextualise the overarching theme- ‘Boycott anti-Hindu’. Advertisements such as Ekatvam emphasising secularism, the Diwali advertisement with the anti-firecracker message (India Today, 2020, para.1) advertisements where actors do not wear a ‘bindi’ (coloured dot/markings on forehead worn by Hindu women), movies featuring a Muslim protagonist (Quint, n.d., para.1) and Muslim journalists who question the religious dominance of Hinduism (Dhillon, 2022, para.5) all fall in the category of anti-Hindu. Some example tweets:

No Bindi No Business!! Let do not buy anything from those brands who are either mocking our Islamization our Festivals. #NoBindiNoBusiness

#boycotttanishq for this Diwali Tanishq disrespects Hindu women. Tatas company hate Hindus. Don't forget their anti-Hindu ad, where they blamed us for protesting anti-Hindu activities.

The promotion of any product/brand that undermines traditional Hindu values are deemed as anti-Hindu and highlights the deep emotional attachment users have towards their religion. The moral dimensions underscore the aspect of betrayal by brands that are not loyal to Hindu religious traditions and disrespect the religious hierarchy of Hinduism, which in turn causes the degradation of Hindu values for the Hindu community.

4.3 Social Network Analysis

This section analyses the features of the Twitter network on Gephi to answer the third sub-question- ‘How did negative consumer behaviour manifest and spread on Twitter following Tanishq brand activism failure?’

The graph file with data of 30,000 tweets with usernames, @mentions, and direction, was analysed in Gephi. For the Twitter mentions network, the nodes are the list of unique usernames, and the number of nodes is 4231. The edges, which signify the @mention interaction between the unique users. The number of edges is 7443. The layout used to visualise the network is Force Atlas 2 layout, which is suitable for large networks. The approximate repulsion parameter for the layout was 1.2. Out of 30,000 tweets, 25,482 tweets had the retweet tag.

4.3.1 Modularity

The first analysis that was run was modularity class, a meso-level analysis, which helps in detecting distinct communities within the network (Lee, 2024). The colour coded modularity visualisation in Figure 1 shows the distinct groups in the network. With a resolution of 1.0, the number of communities detected in the network is 72. The modularity statistic Q is 0.575, which indicates the prevalence of a strong community structure within the group. The network has distinct groups where some nodes are densely connected to the nodes in the same community compared to the nodes in other communities. This also suggests that the themes of conversations are concentrated within these communities, indicating intragroup cohesion.

Figure 1.

Modularity visualisation (with nodes sized by in-degree centrality)

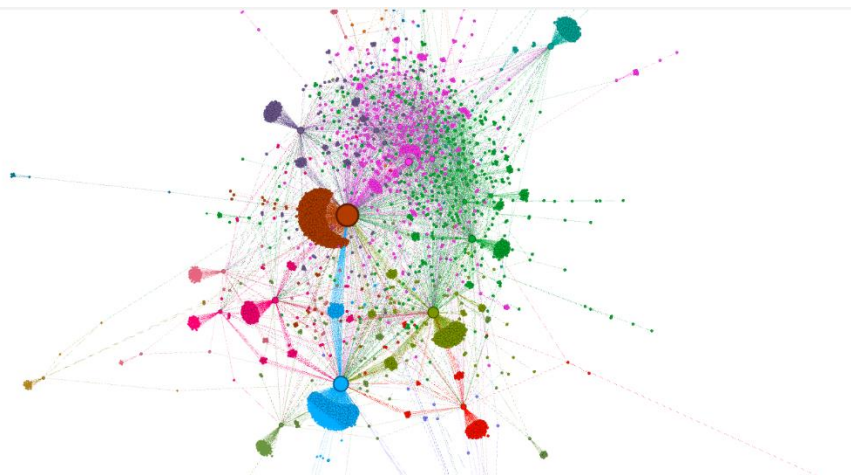
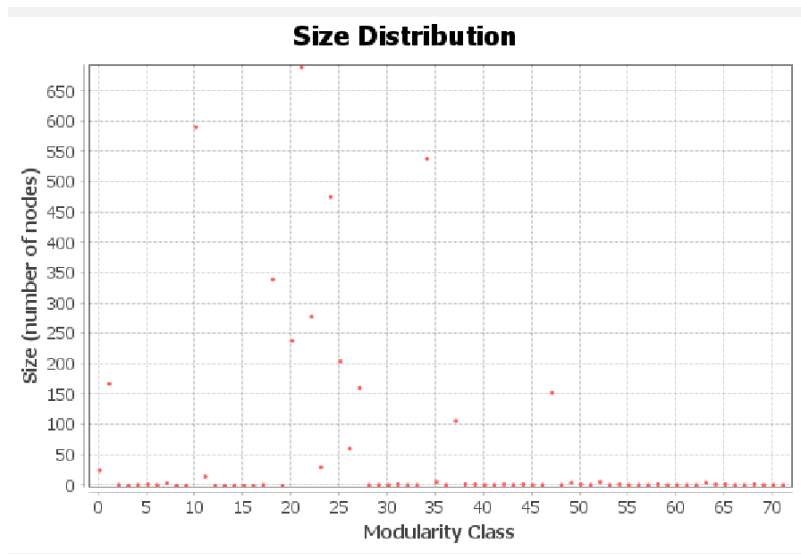


Figure 2.

Size distribution of communities



There are 13 communities with more than 50 nodes, as seen in Figure 2, which again indicates the strong intra group connectedness of the communities in the network. Some of the unique tweets and @mentions involving the nodes with the highest in-degree in the most prominent clusters are as follows:

*#BoycottTanishq as @TanishqJewelry is **promoting a false narrative** favouring a particular religion & at the same time risking life of thousands of Hindu girls*

*Here is a leading brand like @TanishqJewelry treading the one-way street that is called **'interfaith' marriage** in India. The Hindu person in the union the woman. But if the situation had reverse combination, that would have led to **mob attacks** #BoycottTanishq*

*Why are you showing a **Hindu daughter in law in a Muslim family and glorifying it?***

*Tanishq jewellery's 'Ekavvam' series' ad shows a **fictional 'interfaith' union**, Hindu woman in a Muslim family.*

*Hindus are largest **consumers of gold/jewelleries***

*Main reasons for **love-jihad** is brands like Tanishq showing sugar coated ads favouring particular privileged community*

*As @TanishqJewelry is promoting **love jihad, time to #BoycottTanishq***

*People are **trending #BoycottTanishq** as if they buy jewellery from them on daily basis.*

*Tanishq is showing them the future which is in fact **history reliving itself** if they don't learn then this is the fate for them.*

*Tanishq showed a Hindu woman married in a Muslim family in their new ad. Consumers registered their anger with **#boycotttanishq***

Out of the 10 main clusters, 6 of them talk about ‘boycott Tanishq’ and ‘interfaith marriages’ in a negative way. Users accuse the brand of promoting ‘fictional’ interfaith relationships and promoting ‘love-jihad’ through the Ekavvam advertisement, putting the lives of Hindu women at ‘risk’. This points to the presence of echo-chambers in the network. One user/node reiterates that the Hindu community is the primary consumer of gold jewellery. The prominent node/user of one of the smaller clusters is shown to be talking about how people are participating in the #boycotttanishq trend as if they are regular consumers of the brand who felt betrayed. This is one of the few tweets in the entire network that is showing support for brand. Another user/node cautions people of ‘history repeating itself’, implying that Muslim community will exert control over other communities, such as Hindus, if the latter is not careful.

4.3.2 Network diameter and average path length

The network diameter for this network is 5, which implies that longest shortest path between any two nodes is 5 edges. This is a relatively short path, which means that the spread of negative information can be quite fast in this network. The average path length refers to the average number of steps required to go from one node to the other. In the network the average path length is 1.912. Together, these two statistics indicate that the network is well-connected, allowing for efficient and fast flow of information. The connected components report showed that the number of strongly connected components is 4227 and the number of weakly connected components is 56. Strongly connected components are subgraphs in which every node is reachable from every other node within the same subgraph. This means that these components form a tightly knit group, where information flows fast and freely. In contrast weakly connected groups signifies a subgraph where nodes are connected but not necessarily in a mutually reachable manner. The high number of strongly connected components here again points to densely connected subgroups in the network.

4.3.3 Degree centrality

The average degree of this network is 1.759. This means that on average a node has ~ 2 edges in the network (of either direction), which is not a high degree of connectivity within the network. 19 nodes have a degree of more than 100 and the highest degree of a node is 1281; therefore, it can be inferred that some nodes are highly connected in the network of 4231 nodes. In Figure 3, the network is coloured by the modularity and the nodes are sized by in-degree. The node sizes are set to a minimum of 10 and maximum of 40. It can be observed that nodes with high degree have high in-degree as well. It can be interpreted that while they may or may not be influential in the larger network, they still have lot of interaction via being recipients. These nodes are central to the structure of the network and can also act as key information repositories, signifying their influence in the network.

Figure 3.

Nodes sized by in-degree

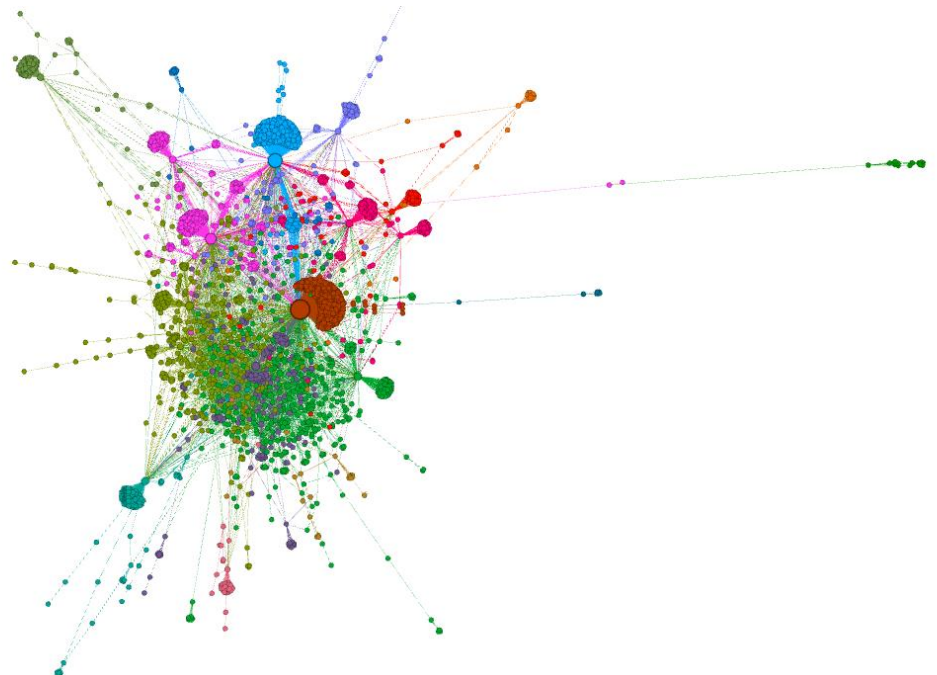
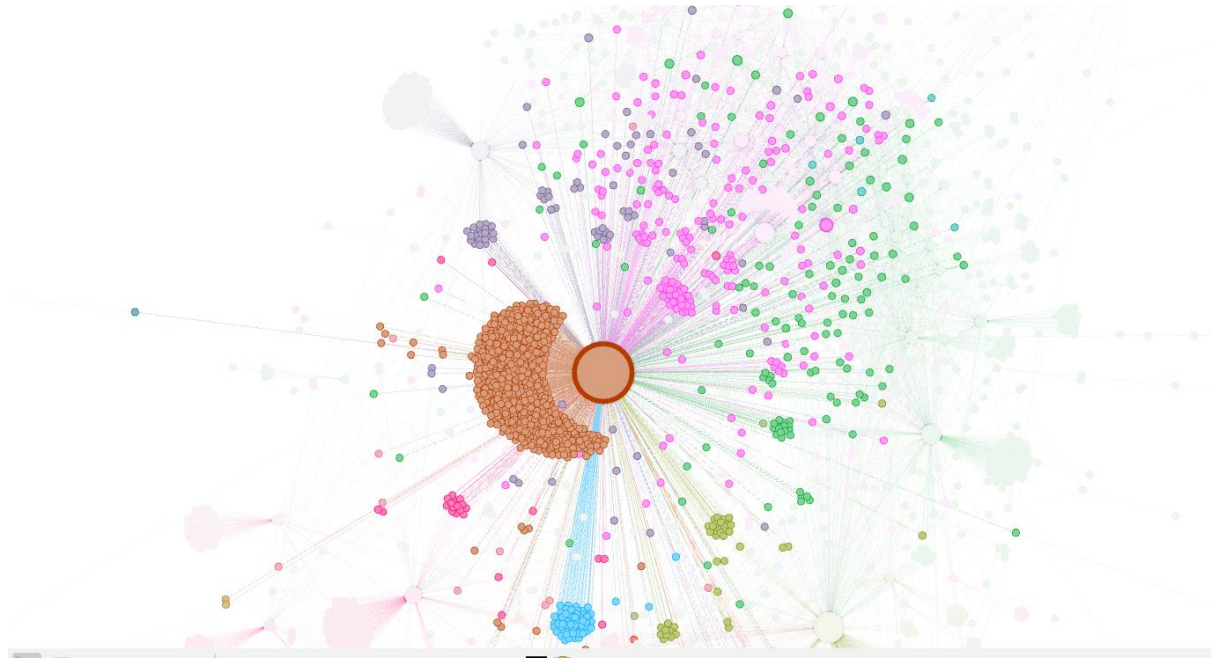


Figure 4.

Node with highest degree



The node with the highest degree, seen in Figure 4, has mentions of almost 1000. Some of the unique tweets of this user include:

@TanishqJewelry How Do you have the audacity to gift your latest collection to these families??...

#BoycottTanishq as @TanishqJewelry is promoting a false narrative favouring a particular religion & at the same time risking life of thousands of Hindu girls

@TanishqJewelry through your ads u r convincing Hindu girls to fall for false agenda and it will get killed. I am amazed by your audacity.

#tanishq has taken down the propaganda ad. But still we should #BoycottTanishqJewelry . They should feel the Hindu anger and pinch hard.

#tanishq is adding more insult to injury. This is not apology but more insult to Hindus.

These tweets fall under the topics of ‘love jihad’, ‘Tanishq promoting love-jihad’, ‘boycott Tanishq’, ‘Tanishq’s promotion of false narrative’. These tweets also display the terms with the misidentified sentiments – ‘convincing’, ‘audacity’, ‘favour’, ‘love’. These terms are clearly used in a negative context here, compared to the positive output by ConText. These tweets also show that consumers were furious at the lack of apology from Tanishq and expressed permanently switching to other brands, while also urging others to do so on Twitter.

In comparison, in Figure 5, the nodes in the network are sized by out-degree. The nodes with high out-degrees are clustered together, as seen in Figure 6. The reason for this clustering of nodes with high out degree could be due to the dense interconnectedness of in the sub-network, playing a crucial role in its structure.

Figure 5.

Nodes by out-degree

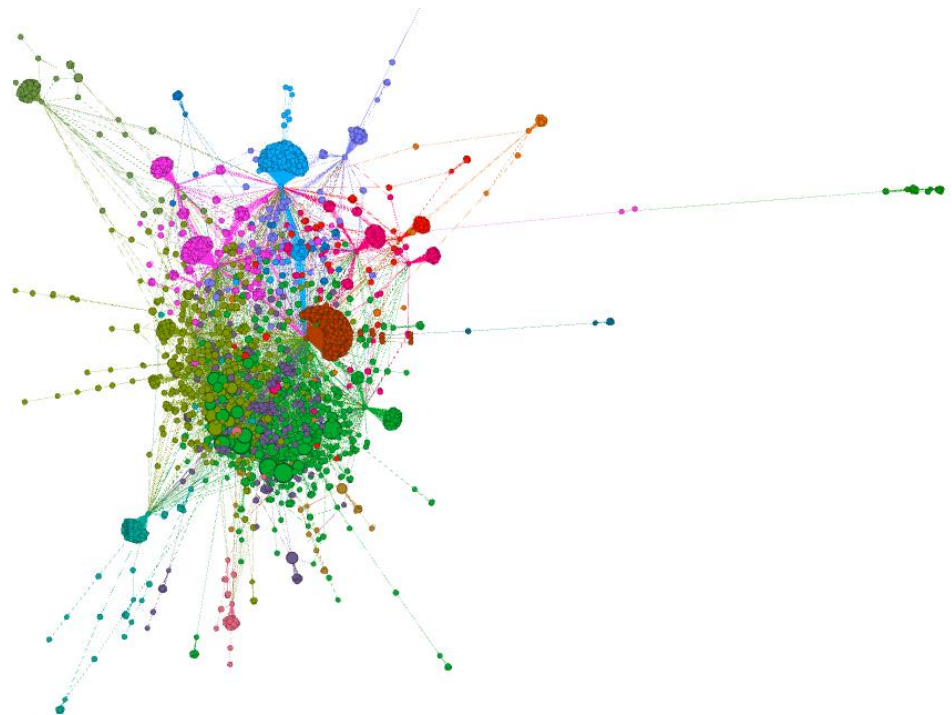


Figure 6.

Nodes with high out-degree



The sparsely connected network indicates that the information flow must depend on a few influencers (nodes with high degree centrality) who facilitate the spread of information to farther parts of the network. The average clustering coefficient is 0.013, which again points to the network being sparsely connected. Since the graph level measures indicate a well-connected network, the low degree of node connectivity and low average clustering coefficient within the network indicates the presence of several smaller subgroups within the network. The node with highest out-degree has interacted with several other nodes, almost 50. One of the tweets that was retweeted by this user is as follows:

@TanishqJewelry how do you have the guts to face Hindu family and gift them "Ekatvam collection" and promote your love jihad?

This tweet belongs to the topic ‘love jihad’, and ‘Tanishq’s promotion of love jihad’.

4.3.4 Betweenness centrality

There are 48 nodes with betweenness centrality above 2. The highest betweenness centrality is 3728.0, which is an incredibly high level of betweenness centrality. This means that this node connects several groups within the network and is key to disseminating the information. There are 10 nodes with a betweenness centrality above 100. This indicates that these 10 influencers or gatekeepers are mainly responsible for influencing the spread of the negative information about Tanishq on Twitter, resulting in a network of 30,000 tweets.

The tweet by the node with the highest betweenness centrality falls under the topic of ‘love jihad’, ‘Tanishq’s promoting love jihad’ and ‘boycott Tanishq’. The tweet text is as follows:

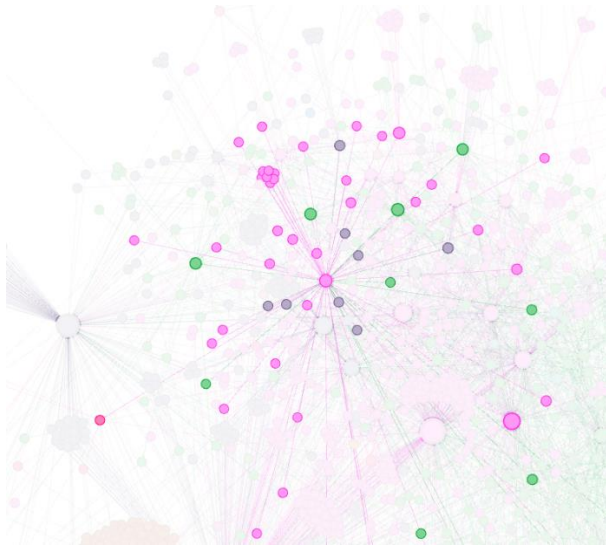
@TanishqJewelry this is in extremely bad taste. Stop promoting love jihad. Woman whose Muslim husband beheaded her bcos she refused to convert is still seeking justice and you are promoting 'secularism'. very disappointing from a big brand like Tanishq. ; #BoycottTanishq

The node with the second highest betweenness centrality, whose ego-network is seen in Figure 7, retweets tweets of other users more than a 100 times, all with the themes of ‘boycott Tanishq’ ‘love jihad’ and ‘boycott anti-Hindu’. The user also had one unique tweet, falling within the same themes:

@TanishqJewelry shame #BoycottTanishq

Figure 7.

Ego-Network of node with highest betweenness centrality



Closeness centrality measures how close a node is to other nodes in the network, indicating how quickly information can spread in the network, and who has rapid access to the information. In this network of 4231 nodes, 2973 nodes have a closeness centrality of 1.0, which means that this network can show highly homogenised interaction patterns. This can also indicate the rapid diffusion of negative sentiments on Twitter.

4.3.5 Topology

This network possesses the characteristics of various topologies. From the modularity figure, the network has characteristics of several topologies: core-periphery (Gallagher et al., 2021) because of the marginal chains and central area of activity/discussion; (semi-)clustered because of the medium level modularity statistic; small world because of the oval structure with clusters on the edge of the oval and edges within the oval (Watts & Strogatz, 1998). The small world network is also hinted at by over half the nodes having the maximal closeness centrality. A core-periphery network has a dense cluster of core nodes, surrounded by less interconnected nodes on the periphery (Borgatti & Everett, 2000, p.376). This would mean that some users are highly influential and connected to each other and to other less important nodes. Several network features seem to point to rapid diffusion: the core-periphery indicates centre of much activity and rapid diffusion to periphery, so even those not enmeshed in the conversations had access to the information. The semi-clustered network is characterised by some regions with highly interconnected nodes and other regions sparsely connected. This would again point to a few well-connected nodes in certain regions and regions with less densely connected nodes. The clustering is not high, indicated by the low clustering coefficient, but can still point to echo chambers in the communities.

5. Discussion

This section addresses the discussion of the results. The aim of this study is to answer the main research question posited in the introduction, *'How and why did consumers engage in consumer brand sabotage on Twitter in response to Tanishq brand activism failure?'* This study used digital research methods such as topic modelling, sentiment analysis, social network analysis and also qualitative thematic analysis to provide a comprehensive and robust analysis of the Twitter discourse on Ekatvam advertisement. This section recapitulates the key findings, their implications, how they compare with existing literature and contribute to it.

5.1 Summary of findings

To answer the questions *'What are the themes of conversations and interactions that emerged on Twitter following Tanishq brand activism failure?'* and *'What are the primary motivations that led to consumer brand sabotage following Tanishq brand activism failure?'*, topic modelling, sentiment analysis and thematic analysis were conducted. The topic modelling and thematic analysis revealed five major themes – 'Boycott Tanishq', 'Tanishq and secularism', 'Tanishq's promotion of interfaith relationships, 'dangers to Hindu woman', and 'boycott anti- Hindu'. The sentiment analysis aided in contextualising the emotions of prominent sentiment-tagged terms found in the topic lists and the tweets. Each theme was further analysed with the help of the moral dimensions of the MFT by Graham et al., (2013). This helped uncover the consumer motivations behind the online CBS activities. The motivations can be characterized by intense religious motivations, as all of the themes had religious aspects to them. Tanishq being accused of being anti-Hindu, potential dangers to Hindu women caused by Muslim men, and Tanishq promoting interfaith relationships formed the crux of the conflict. And since the conflict arose out of a misalignment of religious values between Tanishq and its Hindu consumers, the CBS activities in the Twitter sphere extended beyond negative WOM and included calls for boycott of the brand and even other entities that were perceived as anti-Hindu. This intense negative reaction of consumers can be attributed to difference in moral judgements (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020).

Social network analysis was conducted to understand the features of the Twitter network and to answer the question, *'How did negative consumer behaviour manifest and spread on Twitter following Tanishq brand activism failure?'* The virality of the negative sentiments is characterised by the presence of a few influential Twitter users/nodes who facilitated the quick dissemination of negative information. Most of the tweets in the network

were retweets of a few unique tweets, which were spread by the influential users to other groups and in their own group. This resulted in the creation of several densely connected subgroups within the larger network, characterised by various negative sentiments. There is strong community structure observed within the groups. The network diameter and average path length point to a well-connected network and extend support to the small world topology features of the network, where information reaches every node. These characteristics of the network in turn facilitates the fast flow of information in the network. The network also has features of the core-periphery topology, supporting the presence of densely connected groups in the centre and other sparsely connected groups on the periphery. The rapid diffusion of information in the network caused the brand suffered extreme reputational damage as it was accused of promoting anti-Hindu values, endangering Hindu women and the promoting the Islamophobic conspiracy theory 'love jihad' by the most influential nodes/users in the network, either through their own tweets or through their mentions, signalling the existence of echo-chambers in the network (Criss et al., 2020, p. 1326).

5.2 Theoretical implications

The main theoretical implication of this study is that online CBS as the result of brand activism failure, in a socio-political context such as India, can be explained by the dimensions of morality given by Graham et al., (2013). There is an increased risk of reputational damage for brands in online spheres as it becomes difficult to control a crisis on social media (Barnett et al., 2020, p.9; Rokka et al., 2013, p.806). The most important group of primary stakeholders, consumers, can exert considerable influence on a brand's reputation and functioning (Barnett et al., 2020, p.8), and in the case of Tanishq, consumers inflicted a substantial amount of reputational damage motivated by religious values through their tweets. It has been already established that controversial socio-political issues can be seen as open moral questions, and a brand's stance on such issues and brand activism can be understood through MFT (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020, p.773).

In this case, the moral judgements of the outraged consumers differed significantly from what Tanishq expected from its brand activism, the Ekatvam advertisement with progressive ideals of religious harmony. The misalignment in values between the brand and the consumers further paved the way for CBS activities. The severity of the reputational damage was exacerbated by the virality of online backlash/CBS actions (Bhatia et al., 2023, p.8). Brands are forced to comply with the demands of the consumer in such situations (Aula, 2010, p.45), and this is what happened here as well, as Tanishq withdrew the

advertisement and issued an apology. The informational and interactional elements: hashtags, emotions, and mentions further helped understand the spread of CBS activities on Twitter.

Brands usually resort to SCCT to tackle a reputational crisis (Coombs, 2006, p.247). The inadequate crisis response strategy of Tanishq- expressing regret without an apology irked the consumers perpetrating the CBS activities. Afterwards the apology response angered the few supporters who accused the brand of not standing firm on its ideologies. The effects of the CBS were long term as consumers kept on using the hashtag #boycotttanishq and #boycottantihindu on Twitter even two years after the Ekatvam advertisement was released. Tanishq's next advertising campaign following Ekatvam, a Diwali advertisement, also received backlash on Twitter for being anti-Hindu. This resulted in a larger trend of boycotting any brands that violated the traditional Hindu values. Consumers rejected ideas that seemed to undermine Hindu religion and expressed that brands like Tanishq should stick to doing business and refrain from indulging in activism. The inadequacy of the crisis response strategy stems from SCCT not accounting for crisis situation arising out of misalignment of religious values. Morehouse & Lemon (2023) argue that SCCT often has a 'corporation first' approach to crisis communication, ignoring the nuance needed to tackle crisis such as religious value misalignment. Therefore, this study aims to add to the literature on SCCT to make it a more robust framework of crisis management by exploring the negative online CBS juxtaposed with moral dimensions.

5.3 Practical implications

This thesis provides a detailed analysis of CBS on Twitter in the Indian socio-political context. CBS activities that stem out of conflict of religious values can be dangerous to the reputation of a brand in India. Brand managers have to be careful while navigating the tricky area of brand activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020). The involvement of religious values in brand activism activities makes it more difficult to manage online backlash when the messaging of the activism does not connect with consumers and results in failure. Additionally, such events also tend to spread quickly online, maximising the negative sentiment exposure online (Bhatia et al., 2023, p.8). A few well-connected users have the potential to expand the negative sentiments exponentially in the network. Therefore, it is important to have an understanding of how negative sentiments spread online in such situations so that the appropriate measures to contain the reputational damage can be taken in a prompt and timely manner.

5.4 Limitations and future research

While this study elucidates the complex phenomenon of CBS in a sensitive socio-political scenario, it also faces certain limitations. The dataset analysed pertains to only one social networking platform: Twitter. The CBS activities in the Tanishq case also happened on YouTube, but this thesis only focused on CBS on Twitter. Another limitation is the analysis of only one brand's dataset. Moral outrage related CBS can target multiple brands as seen with the boycott anti-Hindu trend affecting brands such as Red Label Tea, Fab India, Dabur, Manyavar, AU Bank and Surf Excel (Bose, 2022, para.1; Singh, 2019, para.2). Therefore, expanding the scope of the analysis by including multiple brands can strengthen the findings. Digital research methods such as topic modelling and sentiment analysis have their own limitations and do not always provide accurate results (Shadrova, 2021, p.2). A few terms in the list generated by sentiment analysis in ConText were misidentified with wrong sentiments. Therefore, cultural references and sarcasm can be harder to interpret and misclassified if the researcher is not familiar with the context while using such digital research methods. Future work on this thesis' subject can incorporate finer tuned dictionaries for the sentiment analysis and topic modelling. For the data analysis on ConText, both English and Hindi language tweets were used, this might have affected the weight of the topics and terms.

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Appendix

ConText- Topic modelling

Table 1.

Topic modelling of 1st batch of tweets

Tabular Results		
Topic	Weight	TopicMembers
Topic1	0.02	boycotttanishq - tanishqjewelry - love - http - jihad - promote - marriage - tanishq - make - theanuragkt -
Topic2	0.0165	boycotttanishq - http - tanishq - tanishqjewelry - love - promote - boycott - girl - boy - sickularism -
Topic3	0.014	daughter - hindu - muslim - law - family - show - tanishq - jewellery - interfaith - fictional -
Topic4	0.0113	girl - hindu - tanishqjewelry - fall - radharamndas - add - kill - audacity - amp - amaze -
Topic5	0.0108	boycotttanishq - tanishqjewelry - false - narrative - promote - amp - religion - life - radharamndas - risk -
Topic6	0.0102	boycotttanishq - jewellery - tanishqjewelry - muslim - hindus - tanishq - secularism - gold - punarutthana - specific -
Topic7	0.0093	tanishqjewelry - india - gemsofbollywood - marriage - brand - interfaith - lead - street - call - tread -

Table 2.

Topic modelling of 2nd batch of tweets

Topic	Weight	TopicMembers
Topic1	0.0254	boycotttanishq - http - tanishq - tanishqjewelry - buy - people - boycott - trend - jewelry - opindia -
Topic2	0.0169	boycotttanishq - love - promote - tanishq - jihad - tanishqjewelry - http - hindu - stop - boy -
Topic3	0.0152	boycotttanishq - tanishq - http - love - tanishqjewelry - hindu - make - marriage - promote - jihad -
Topic4	0.0143	tanishq - tanishqjewelry - india - call - brand - gemsofbollywood - marriage - lead - street - tread -
Topic5	0.0143	muslim - daughter - hindu - family - law - jewellery - tanishq - show - ekatvam - interfaith -
Topic6	0.0112	tanishqjewelry - hindu - girl - add - radharamndas - amp - fall - audacity - kill - amaze -
Topic7	0.0107	boycotttanishq - tanishqjewelry - amp - narrative - false - life - promote - religion - radharamndas - risk -

Table 3.

Topic modelling of 3rd batch of tweets

Topic	Weight	TopicMembers
Topic1	0.0209	boycotttanishq - http - tanishq - tanishqjewelry - buy - people - marriage - hindu - trend - boycott -
Topic2	0.0207	boycottantihindu - hind - http - jai - boycottpathan - boycott - jay - support - write - zubair -
Topic3	0.0138	tanishqjewelry - india - boycotttanishq - marriage - love - interfaith - brand - call - gemsofbollywood - lead -
Topic4	0.0124	tanishq - store - ndtv - attack - http - gujarat - boycotttanishq - claim - tanishqjewelry - gandhidham -
Topic5	0.011	tanishqjewelry - radharamndas - amp - narrative - boycotttanishq - religion - life - promote - false - risk -
Topic6	0.0098	muslim - law - show - hindu - daughter - tanishqjewelry - boycotttanishq - dont - family - sharmakhemchand -
Topic7	0.0071	tanishq - hindu - jewellery - muslim - family - ekatvam - interfaith - union - daughter - sanjay -

ConText- Sentiment analysis

Table 1.

Sentiment analysis of 1st batch of tweets

Term	Part Of Speech	Sentiment	Frequency
love	NN	positive	3308
false	JJ	negative	2444
risk	NN	negative	2343
favor	NN	positive	2341
fictional	JJ	negative	1380
audacity	NN	negative	992
convincing	JJ	positive	924
amaze	VB	positive	924
glorify	VB	positive	664
boycott	NN	negative	577
stupidity	NN	negative	477
pure	JJ	positive	467
gold	NN	positive	441
specific	JJ	neutral	398
loss	NN	negative	289
festive	JJ	positive	285
loyal	JJ	positive	281
hypocrisy	NN	negative	279

Table 2.

Sentiment analysis of 2nd batch of tweets

Term	Part Of Speech	Sentiment	Frequency
love	NN	positive	3980
false	JJ	negative	2517
risk	NN	negative	2391
favor	NN	positive	2388
fictional	JJ	negative	1657
boycott	NN	negative	1203
attack	NN	negative	1160
audacity	NN	negative	1008
amaze	VB	positive	934
convincing	JJ	positive	934
gold	NN	positive	863
glorify	VB	positive	747
fake	JJ	negative	576
terrorism	NN	negative	528
stupidity	NN	negative	487
pure	JJ	positive	479
specific	JJ	neutral	402
festive	JJ	positive	361

Codebook - Inductive thematic analysis

Theme	Codes	Description
Boycott Tanishq	boycott tanishq, boycott tanishq jewellery, trend, attack, store, gujarat, brand, gold	The call for boycott of the brand Tanishq and its products such as gold jewellery.
Tanishq's promotion of interfaith relationships	love-jihad, hindu, muslim, boy, girl, false narrative, promotion, marriage, support, interfaith relationships	The primary reason for the boycott Tanishq trend- the brand's promotion of interfaith (Hindu-Muslim) relationships.
Dangers to Hindu women	girl, hindu, kill, audacity, risk, daughter, family	The interfaith relationships portrayed as risky and dangerous for Hindu women.
Tanishq and secularism	sickularism, muslim, narrative, false, law, religion, promote,	Tanishq's promotion of interfaith relationships- a secular act, being framed as 'sickularism'.
Boycott anti-Hindu	jai hind, boycott pathaan, zubair, no bindi- no business	Call for boycott of all entities (brands, movies, journalists) that do not adhere to traditional Hindu values and beliefs.

Gephi - SNA

Modularity Report

Parameters:

Randomize: On

Use edge weights: On

Resolution: 1.0

Results:

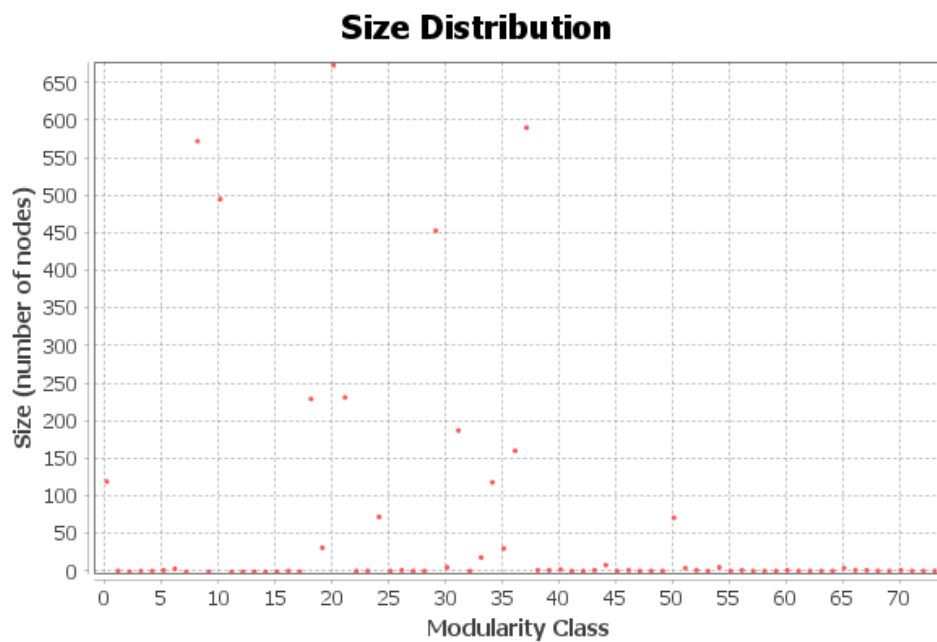
Modularity: 0.570

Modularity with resolution: 0.570

Number of Communities: 74

Figure 1.

Modularity



Algorithm: Vincent D Blondel, Jean-Loup Guillaume, Renaud Lambiotte, Etienne Lefebvre, *Fast unfolding of communities in large networks*, in *Journal of Statistical Mechanics: Theory and Experiment* 2008 (10), P1000

Resolution: R. Lambiotte, J.-C. Delvenne, M. Barahona *Laplacian Dynamics and Multiscale Modular Structure in Networks* 2009

Degree Report

Average Degree: 1.759

Figure 2.

Degree Distribution

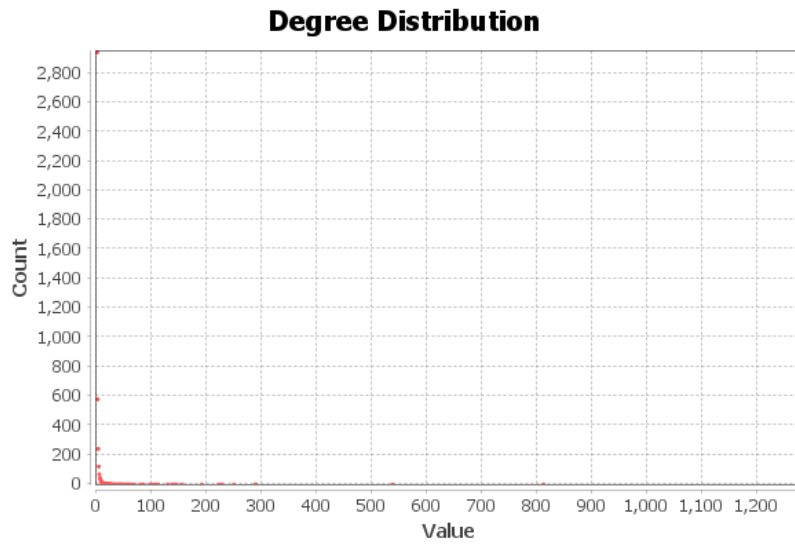


Figure 3.

In-degree distribution

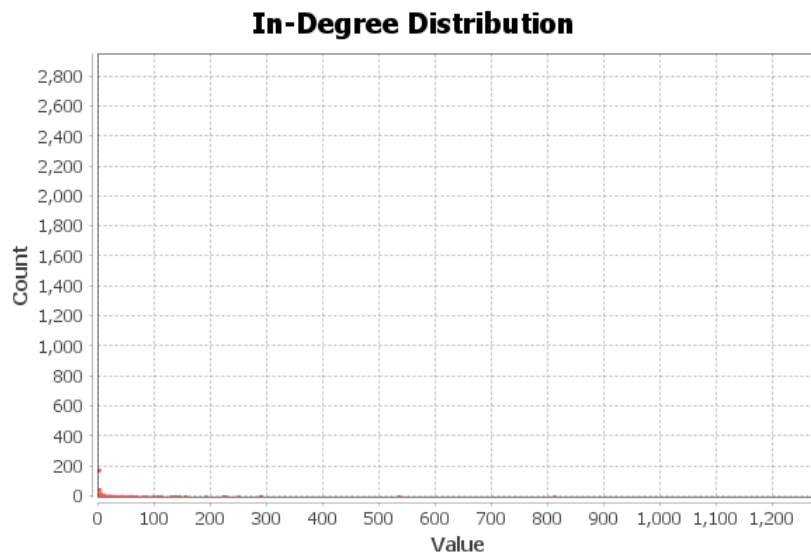
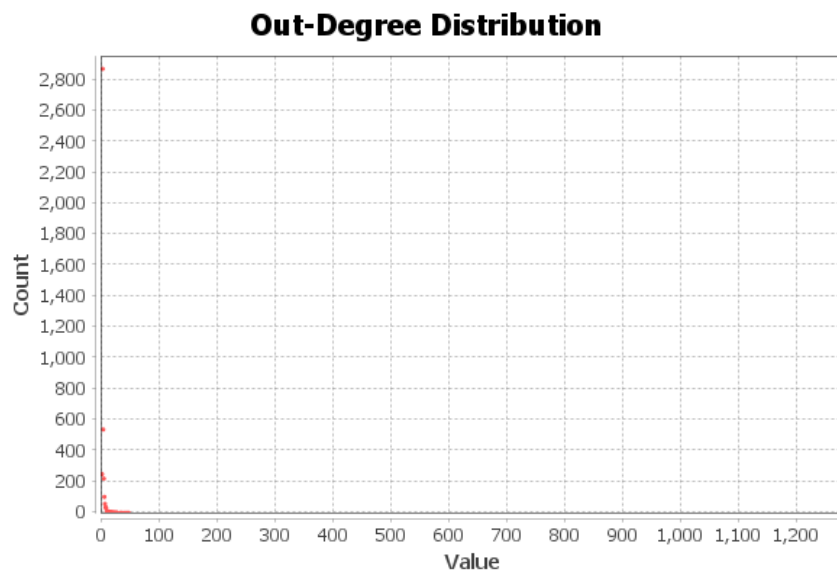


Figure 4.

Out-degree distribution



Graph Distance Report

Parameters:

Network Interpretation: directed

Results:

Diameter: 5

Average Path length: 1.9121885608147058

Figure 5.

Betweenness centrality distribution

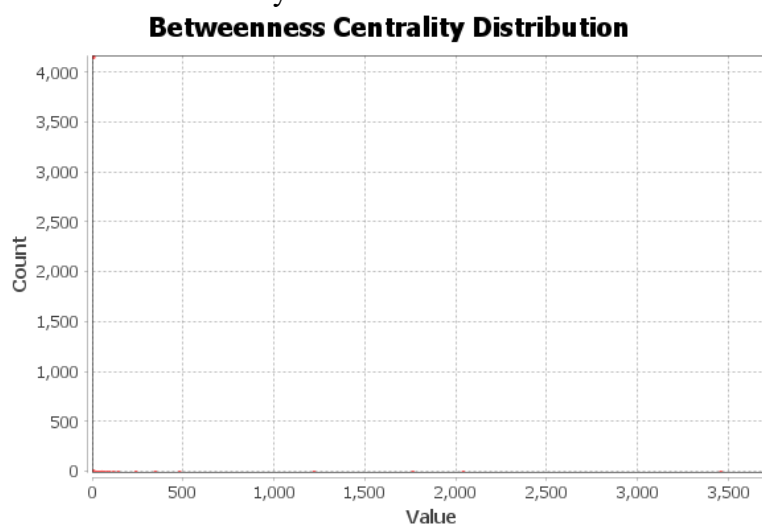


Figure 6.

Closeness centrality distribution

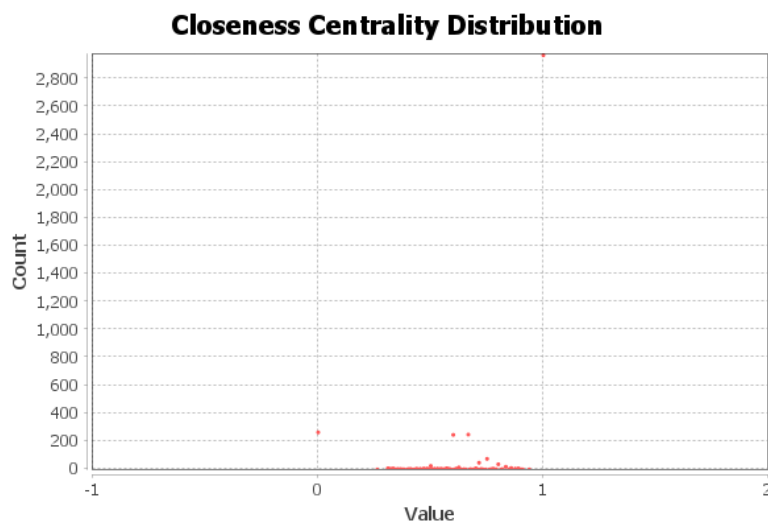


Figure 7.

Harmonic closeness centrality distribution

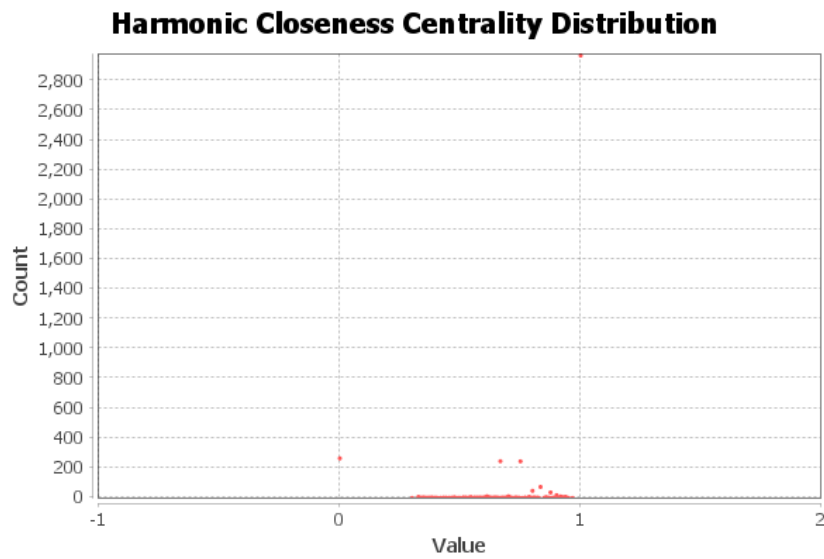
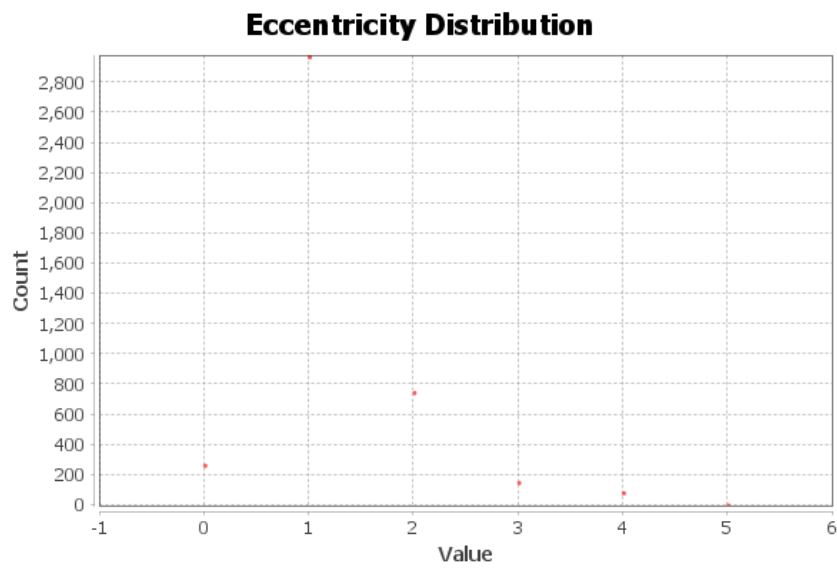


Figure 8.

Eccentricity distribution



Algorithm: Ulrik Brandes, *A Faster Algorithm for Betweenness Centrality*, in *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 25(2):163-177, (2001)

Connected Components Report

Parameters:

Network Interpretation: directed

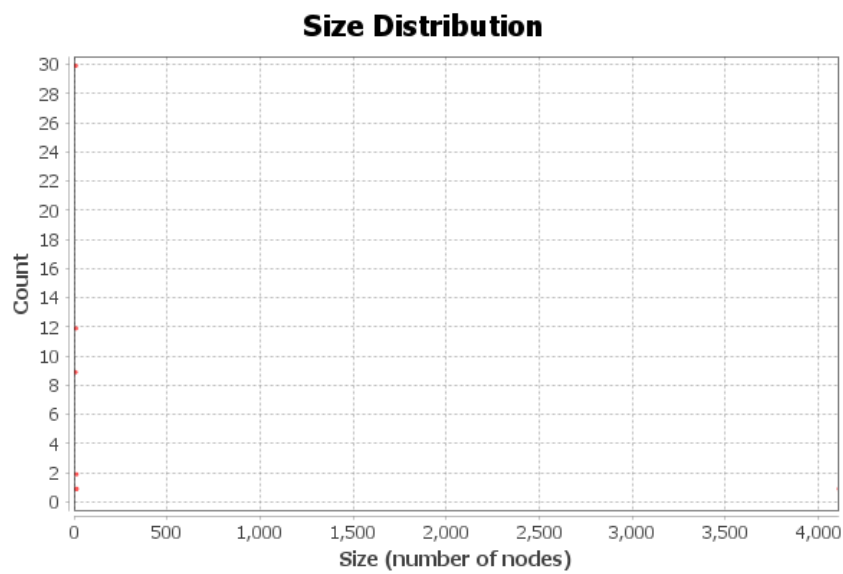
Results:

Number of Weakly Connected Components: 56

Number of Strongly Connected Components: 4227

Figure 9.

Size Distribution



Algorithm: Robert Tarjan, *Depth-First Search and Linear Graph Algorithms*, in SIAM Journal on Computing 1 (2): 146–160 (1972)