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*Political correctness in online settings: a public-centric exploration of the
representation of minorities in advertising*

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RESUME

Globaliseringen og den teknologiske udvikling har fremmet det online miljø, og brugen af Web 2.0 teknologier har taget fart. De sociale medier har især fået stor indvirken på den nutidige befolknings levemåde, hvor den konstante indbyrdes forbindelse er blevet standard. Derved er forbrugere og virksomheder også blevet tættere forbundet, hvor det forventes, at virksomheder er lydhøre over for og reagere på forbrugernes henvendelser i en hel andet pace end tidligere. Ikke alle virksomheder formår dog at imødekomme forbrugernes forhøjede forventninger, hvilket med hjælp fra de sociale mediers viralitet ofte giver anledning til, at forbrugere samles om at anklage virksomheder for forsømmelighed og uetisk opførsel, og derved bliver shitstorme en realitet og trussel. Når virksomheder derfor fejler i at imødekomme deres forbrugeres mange behov og adressere sensitive emner på (for nogle) acceptabel vis, kan de fremstå som værende uetiske, hvilket bringer diskussionen om politisk korrekthed (PK) i spil. Traditionelt set er politisk korrekthed anset som værende en praksis, hvorigennem man forsøger at undgå at forårsage fornærmelser i alle henseender, men med italesættelsen af hvilke handlinger der er politisk korrekte og ukorrekte, er der opstået to forskellige og modsatrettede holdninger: dem der ønsker at indføre politisk korrekte praksisser, og dem der mener, at sådanne praksisser er restriktive for menneskers daglige færden. Når man tager i betragtning, at diskursen omkring PK er præget af stor uenighed og med de sociale mediers voksende betydning, er det interessant at klarlægge hvorvidt PK influerer sociale medier brugeres holdninger til reklamer, der inkluderer minoriteter. Derfor undersøger denne afhandling om en bestemt holdning til PK dominerer i blandt sociale medier brugere eller om disse holdninger varierer alt efter reklamernes kontekst.

For at undersøge denne problemstilling tages der afsæt i tre forskellige reklamer fra tre forskellige virksomheder (svenske H&M, britiske Dove og kinesiske Qiaobi), hvis reklamer har mødt betydelig modvind og resulterede i høj viralitet online. Hensigten med at vælge tre reklamer er, at den ene umiddelbart er mere kontroversiel end den anden i udførelsen, hvorved det muliggøres at undersøge om konteksten har betydning for folks holdninger til PK. For at undersøge disse holdninger tages der udgangspunkt i Instagram- og YouTube-kommentarer givet til de tre virksomheders reklamer.

For at kunne kategorisere sociale medier brugeres forskellige typer af svar, udarbejdedes et foreløbigt teoretisk PK-koncept gennem en deduktive såvel som induktiv orientering til dataen, som muliggør

en karakterisering af de forskellige holdninger til PK. En dybdegående kvalitativ analyse af udvalgte kommentarer tillader en nærmere specificering og definering samt test af det initiale PK-koncept, som er inddelt efter de to dominerende PK-lejre, PK-tilhængere og PK-modstandere, med hver tre tilhørende subkategorier underinddelt efter deres kommunikerede opfattede relevans af emnet (fra høj til lav). Gennem den kvalitative analyse gøres det klart, at i tilfældet med den kinesiske case var et antal af kommentarer ikke mulige at kategorisere i forhold til PK-konceptet, hvorfor en yderligere kategori udformes og navngives racisme-mod-racisme (r-a-r). Den kvalitative analyse munder ud i et endeligt teoretisk PK-koncept, som i den kvantitative analyse bruges som en kodnings-guide til at kortlægge PK holdningerne i den "rensede" stikprøve.

De kvantitative resultater viser, at PK-diskursen domineres af PK-modstandere, og på trods af, at udgangspunkt tages i reklamer med varierende grader af opfattet kontroversielt indhold, er der ikke mange forskelle at finde blandt de tre reklamers fordeling af holdninger. De facto, reklamen der umiddelbart fremstår åbenlyst kontroversiel, er den de eksaminerende sociale medier brugere dømmer som værende mindst stødende. Som følge af førnævnte indikerer resultaterne, at sociale medier brugere ønsker en mindre politisk korrekt levevis, men samtidig lader PK-diskursen til at være selvrefererende, hvor udgangspunktet reelt set ikke har en betydning for folks reaktioner og adfærdsmønstre, hvorfor reklamernes karakter ikke virker til at spille en rolle på bedømmelsen af indholdet. Forbrugeres forhold til virksomheder kan dog have indflydelse på deres bedømmelse.

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

The technological development in combination with the globalisation have resulted in a digital world where communication has reached new heights, with accessibility being a significant feature influencing our daily existence. With communication occurring completely effortless online on a worldwide scale, people are constantly exposed to and express opinions on every imaginable matter, from A to Z, and this continuous online presence from the public is also something affecting organisations. Therefore, they need to relate to the openness of the world as well (Ott and Petra 2015, 97), as they encounter numerous and oftentimes diverse opinions that to them and the public alike are necessary to respond to, why frequently the actions of organisation become subject for scrutiny, and with the globalisation now more than ever. Due to this ever-going evaluation, there is always a prospect that organisations will receive unexpected attention because of the potential of causing (to the organisation) unconscious offence. (Pfeffer, Zorbach and Carley 2013, 118) The interconnectivity of consumers resulting from Web 2.0 technologies has come to entail that organisations today are faced with the issue of being subject to “*sudden discharge of large quantities of negative WOM [word of mouth]*” (Pfeffer, Zorbach and Carley 2013, 117). With social media, these communicative actions are reaching new levels and can be a great challenge for marketing communication departments (ibid.), social media offers a platform, where negatively laden opinions about an organisation or its products/services are shaped and disseminated within hours through an incredible amount of people. This phenomenon is what many terms “online firestorms” or “shitstorms”. Such criticism shares the dynamics of rumours in the way they spread, as online firestorms and rumours alike are beliefs that, often using WOM, are passed from one person to another, typically without much evidence being presented to the recipient. However, compared to rumours, in online firestorms usually feelings of resentment and aggression are expressed, and although taking place in the early stages of communication exchange, they involve the characteristics found in the later stages, where offensiveness is the intent and not much reasoning and argumentation are present. More, these comments are characterised as having basis in opinions rather than facts and can be based both on opinions that are confirmed (based on the event) and unconfirmed (based on rumour), whereas rumours are solely unconfirmed. All of these features mean that online firestorms have become an even more inflicting competitor in the process of information exchange than rumours, especially since

they often emerge without warnings and thus might have a great influence on an organisation and/or its brand. (Pfeffer, Zorbach and Carley 2013, 118)

Yet, organisations might not solely be judged based on their current actions. Adding to the complexity for organisations doing business in an online world is that the Internet never forgets, and people and the media therefore have the possibility of investigating an organisation's every single move, recent as well as prior, at every possible time. (Evans and Bratton 2012, xxi) Hence, it is not only the most recent actions of organisations that need to be paid attention to, making it even more difficult to prevent or predict possible crises. Whereas the Internet never forgets, neither does it sleep. It seems as if there is an indirect expectation that organisations must be present around the clock, meeting everybody's demands. While organisations are capable of directly influencing the outcome of how people interpret their actions, the Internet, the media and other consumers also play part in affecting the spin of a given situation, eventually contributing to the judgement of an action (Bart and Abhijit 1994, 61).

Another outcome of globalisation and its effect on the online world is that organisations are faced with greater diversity among the population base that they are capable of reaching. Thus, organisations are now confronted by the challenge of tackling the diverse differences within this population base, and it might call upon them taking into account that more people potentially can be offended by their actions. Hence, it is not only vital to consider the typical socio demographic characteristics of people, but the culture aspect is now just as significant. It is repeatedly seen that organisations according to the public do not succeed in meeting these demands, why many often end up falling foul with the public. In situations where the actions of organisations are thoroughly inspected and sudden and sometimes heated discharges of negative attention emerges, the focal point for this attention is typically whether people find these actions offensive. A marketing initiative often susceptible to this negative attention is advertising, provoking debate among people for its expressive and at times perceived controversial character. People involved in these debates frequently find themselves discussing whether an advertisement is causing offence, which can be regarded as an expression of people having some sort of idea about what is acceptable to present in advertisements. This revolves around the core idea of political correctness (henceforth *PC*), which typically is viewed as resting on norms prescribing the avoidance of offensive behaviour. Yet, *PC* is not simply restricted to this notion, covering a wide range of areas, all from technical terms such as job titles to the naming of basic everyday life objects (e.g. pet vs. animal companion or black coffee vs. coffee without milk) and in more serious connections like sensitive groups (e.g. mentally retarded vs. differently abled),

to more legislative matters such as the content of school curricula and lectures and even to management related matters, prescribing rules for the division of labour between ethnicities and gender. Also, diverse understandings exist about the nature of PC which typically is viewed from two opposing positional perspectives. One side sees PC as a means through which multicultural perspectives are encouraged, attempting to prohibit speech that marginalises historically disadvantaged groups (Ford 2017, 1). Being the side usually being offended by politically incorrect (PiC) behaviour, people are more likely to interpret equivocal instances as offensive when the person making it does not share the same view on PC or ethnic group membership (Robinson 2014, 37-38). The other side connects PC with liberal extremism and are against taking these in their view oppressing considerations, believing that these actions restrict the development of critical thinking skills (Ford 2017, 1). Ergo, within the PC discourse, there is no consensus about whether PC norms is beneficial or detrimental to society, with some people enforcing these PC norms and others showing resistance to them (Ford 2017, 2). This dual relationship taking place within the PC discourse has become even more prevalent with the rise of social media. With these platforms, cases of organisations appearing politically incorrect are made public to myriads of social media users, taking the debate to the mainstream audience. More, the debate not only concerns the mainstream audience, but across the US, Britain and Europe, some politicians as well have had great success by taking non-politically correct stances. (Ford 2017, 2-3)

With social media providing a platform for sudden discharges of negative attention towards politically incorrect actions, we are interested in exploring the following problem statement.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Living in a world where aspects like freedom of speech, creativity and critical thinking are encouraged, people are also met with a need for approaching sensitive issues with delicacy. Especially, the ways in which minorities are represented in advertisements do for some seem controversial, causing distress and dissatisfaction, and for others it is trivial to even consider such issues - and in both instances, social media provide an easily accessible platform for venting.

Considering people's mixed beliefs about what is appropriate and allowed, has there been developed a PC attitude dominating the PC discourse among social media users or do these attitudes differ from context to context?

Whether the context matters for this norm development will be operationalised through an exploration of three different advertisements from H&M, Dove and Qiaobi that each has caused public uproar (cf. section 4.3.2 Case presentations for an elaborate description of the three cases), where we search for the varying perspectives on PC among social media commentators, getting deeply into the data and making an analytical mapping of the response types evident organised along PC. These response types will also be referred as attitudes.

Given that we will be dealing with sensitive issues like stereotyping and marginalisation of minorities, we are aware that we potentially can be using words that might come across as discriminatory. Since we will be examining contexts where minority groups play a significant part, it is necessary for us to be able to refer to these minorities with it being abundantly clear who we are making a reference to. We acknowledge that the optimum and most considerate solution would be to refer to people according to their nationality, yet we have no chance of identifying the nationality of all commentators, and in reality, people's nationalities are not relevant for our study as what is important to this examination is in fact the distinction that is made between people based on their skin colours. Thus, we will refer to the minorities appearing in our data using the repeatedly used categorisation 'black', 'white' and 'Asian' (Census UK 1992, The White House 1995). The term 'Caucasian' is also a recognised categorisation term for whites, however this term would not serve the purpose of this dissertation, since we need to make a further distinction between the people forming part of this category (distinguishing between whites and Asians). In similar vein, the word 'African American' would be misleading as the blacks we are to refer to in our study not inevitably live in America.

The following section proceeds with a focused review of the PC literature, aiming at situating the problem statement within its field of interest.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a review of preceding literature within the field of PC along with an elaboration on our positioning within the literature. The review is extensively focused around the two main camps evident in the PC discourse, simply because the aim of this thesis is to explore the different PC response types evident in the comments from selected social media platforms.

2.1 Development of PC

Political correctness (PC) as a term and concept is much protean and disputed and has been viewed from differing perspectives and scrutinised for different contextual purposes. As Geoffrey Hughes (2010, 1) writes when attempting to account for and analyse the semantic environment created as a result of the emergence of the PC concept: “...*political correctness is not one thing and does not have a simple history.*” (Hughes 2010, 11) Just as Hughes highlights, PC is a variable term that since it became generally known has changed its meaning and essence, being subject to usages by different ideological positions (Mills 2008, 100). Thus, because the concept may mean different things to different people, it is rather problematic to define PC using one clear-cut definition (Hughes 2010, 11).

However, to begin with, for clarification purposes, we will use the following definition from which the PC concept will later unfold as we move along in this section. Therefore, the below definition of PC will only be adequate up to a certain point and used preliminary to this section. Because of this and because PC is characteristically scrutinised from different and oftentimes opposing point of views, an as objective definition as possible, one that does not use assessable words to explicate the concept, is chosen as a starting point. In offering descriptions of what they consider the key ideas in linguistics and the philosophy of language, Chapman and Routledge (2009) clarify PC in a manner, where no evident positioning emerges on the concept:

“In its most general sense the term ‘political correctness’ refers to an individual’s or group’s conscious avoidance of linguistic terms associated principally with race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religious belief system and sexual orientation that are perceived to be pejorative or at any rate to have the potential to cause offence to others.” (Chapman and Routledge 2009, 161)

Although this definition in its nature is demonstrative in the way it explains the most general usage of the PC term at a basic level, it does merely take into account the linguistic usage of the word and may additionally restrict one's impression about the aspects to which PC might be relevant. It can also come across as being rather instructing in its wording, which is typically considered one of the complicating facets of PC, one that has met resistance and criticism. The problem to define political correctness does in fact amongst others rest on the premise that PC is typically elucidated through different positional perspectives and thus is not always self-evident. It is often considered a term of contention between the political left and the political right; with liberals arguing that political correctness entails to respect other individuals' and groups' human dignity and personhood, and contrary, with conservatives believing that the term is excessively attentive to prescribing trivial linguistic reforms, using the term despairingly about these, what they believe are, suppressing actions. (Purdy 2005, 344) Those on the left side of the debate contend that language has the ability to influence social perceptions about issues such as gender, race and culture, and in order to alter these attitudes held among people, they maintain that linguistic changes are essential antecedents (Chapman and Routledge 2009, 161). Those on the right side of the debate see linguistic changes as an attempt to prohibit language and behaviours that are anti-liberal, i.e. behaviours and language usages that respect and accept characteristics different from one's own (Purdy 2005, 344).

A second premise proving problematic in defining PC rests on how the meaning of the term has developed during the years. Scholars such as Frank Ellis (2002), who has devoted his publication to describing and analysing PC and the ideological struggle of the term, traces the first use of PC back to the period between 1895-1921, when Vladimir Lenin was attempting to ensure that he was in a position to acquire the dominant power of his revolutionary peers and capable of strengthening the position of the Russian Communist Party in the new Soviet. PC was used to describe those, who abided the authority although perhaps not agreeing with it, with people believing that Lenin would clean those out who did not follow the lines of his party. (Ellis 2002, 409-12) While Ellis believes that the first use of the term predates back to the Leninist time and accounts for a continued use of PC in China in the 1930s during the Maoist time, other scholars trace the first use of PC back to the 1930s. Back then, in the Maoist China, the meaning of PC followed the lines of when it was used in the Leninist time, and it meant to behave in accordance with the politics of the Communist Party (Ford 2017, 1). In the Maoist variant, Ellis (2002) interprets PC as an 'extreme form of intellectual violence', one that intended to conform the individual's beliefs with those of the collective society (Ellis 2002, 433). Then, in the 1960's when the term was first used by those on the political left, some

believe that PC was used as a critique to describe people whose political dispositions were too imposing and demanded a too high degree of conformity with specific rules and standards. As Mills notes, it became an expression mocking the Maoist thinking and therefore an expression with an ironic meaning. (Mills 2008, 106) Although having an ironic connotation, others believe that the use of the term by the political movement New Left in the 1960s also marked a period where lines were established between what was considered offensive and what was not (Purdy 2005, 344-45). PC then entered the public debate in the 1980's along with the start of the liberal PC movement that began on American colleges and university campuses among academics on the left, where it was concerned with the effect that abusive speech¹ could have on certain groups' ability to receive an education and just treatment. As a response, campuses outlined the definition of abusive speech and introduced speech reforms that outlawed abusive speech based on race, colour, sex, religion, sexual orientation and ethnic or national origin. However, this provoked a backlash from people on the right, who saw these language reforms as violating their First Amendment rights, prohibiting them from showcasing behaviour and speech that are considered to disparage groups that historically have been marginalised. People on the right then began labelling these restricting actions as PC, using the term anti-liberally. (Purdy 2005, 344-45) In presenting the PC debate and its origins, Ford (2017) notes, although proposing a common ground for the term, that it generally is used in a political left and right manner: either people use the term in support of PC contending that it provides a background for using more inclusive language or else they use it pejoratively, describing PC as liberal extremism with the aim of restricting speech and behaviour and prohibiting the ability to develop critical thinking (Ford 2017, 1). Some academics on the left writing about PC does however seem to emphasise the shift in the usage of the term, believing that PC has become a term used by the political right for labelling the actions of the political left (Feldstein and Brennan 1997, 1-2; Mills 2008, 100). Chapman and Routledge (2009, p. 161), coming from a more neutral point of view, also contend that this is the usage most evident nowadays.

Thus, it appears that the origination of PC is believed to date back to different time periods. Though, all these events within which scholars find the origins of PC are what have made the PC discourse a concept of ramification. The above may not be an exhaustive historical account for the development and uses of the term, but all things equal, they contribute to illustrating how PC has continuously

¹ I.e. speech that represents a specific group of people as being inferior and, in that way, may ostracise this group from its society

experienced a shift in its meaning. The term itself has developed from being a mind-set of “correct thinking” to being used ironically and now being used by the critics of the proposed linguistic and social reforms and is, as already touched upon, almost only considered derogatory by the political right, who see the actions of the political lefts as repressive (Chapman and Routledge 2009, 161).

A third premise adding to the complexity is the different national-geographical usages of the PC term. Much have only been written about the usages in the UK, the US, France and Germany, but differences are apparent these countries among. As noted previously, the development of PC in the US revolves around what today is called *the culture wars*, where universities adopted language reforms as a result of the affirmative action programmes initiated by liberal academics. These reforms were then criticised as political correctness, and the use of the term therefore became a way of implying criticism and withdrawing the new-won power of the liberals for their effort in acquiring speech reforms that banned abusive speech. The PC debate developed later in the UK than in the US, around the 1990s (Hughes 2010, 64). In the UK, rather than being preoccupied with language usage, PC is seen as an element of the political strategy of the right-wing party Conservatives, with the term particularly being used in the media to target the Labour Party’s Tony Blair for censure. In this connection, PC is a way to express the difference between what the politicians say they will do according to their political agenda and what they in reality do. It has also received yet another connotation outside the interest of the newspapers, where PC has become a term used to label those people that are thought of as over-politicising aspects that are normally seen as being outside the area of conventional politics. (Mills 2008, 101-02)

In France, as Mills presents through the findings of Toolan (2003) who conducted an analysis of PC in a French context, the term has had a derogatory connotation from the beginning. The difference in the way PC has been used in France and the US is found in the emotions attached to the term when used; in France PC appears to convey disapproval, and in the US, it conveys hostility or opposition. (Mills 2008, 102) In exploring the differences in the usage of PC in a British, French and German context, Suhr and Johnson (2003), using data from the German Newspaper ‘Die Welt’, focus attention on how the use of PC in Germany shares similarities with the recent US usage, where the pejorative attitude towards the term dominates. As they examine, PC is used in the German context to guard against political activists who delve into the history connected to the National Socialist Party and with the strategy to simplify and trivialise their issues of interest. PC is thus presumed to be a form of political intervention with the aim of putting political activist in difficult situations, bringing them and their actions into focus instead. (Suhr and Johnson 2003, 12-13)

This demonstrates that PC is applied and used in different contexts and to convey different meanings. Still, just as Hughes (2010, 71) argues in accounting for the development of the term in the US and UK, as the PC debate has progressed, it has become a debate much more centred on words. However, for some, both on the right and the left, PC is seen to be excessively focused on the effect of language and thus often termed trivial, because they are of the opinion that there are more important issues to address than those of linguistic character (Mills 2008, 101). The ways in which the left side of the debate has been trying to establish ways of proper speaking and writing is addressed in the following.

2.2 PC and language use

One way of viewing PC is through semantics - through choice of words and the use of the language itself. This approach has resulted in multiple publications of dictionaries, books and articles providing people with guidelines on politically correct language, with for example *The Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook* proposing *animal companion* instead of *pet*. (Katsanis 1994, 7) Deborah Cameron, author of *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* (1985) and co-author of *Researching Language* (1992) and Geoffrey Hughes, author of *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture* (2010) both address the issue of PC from a semantic perspective. In her book *Verbal Hygiene* (1995), Cameron illustrates her point of departure to PC using the term *verbal hygiene*, alluding to an improvement of, or a cleansing of, the language itself. Cameron argues that the choice of words is of vital importance, and a factor that should be taken seriously; one that even has to be as basic to the use of language as for example phonetics is. (Cameron 1995, 1) Going through the history and development of certain words, Hughes tries to explain why they might invoke certain connotations in people, resulting in a discussion of content and style of politically correct language (Hughes 2010, viii). However, in stressing the importance of politically correct language, Cameron claims that not only is verbal hygiene about choosing the right formulation to address particular issues, it is just as much a means to affect other orders than that of language. She is of the opinion that by practicing verbal hygiene, one can exploit a powerful symbolism by means of using language, which in turn can affect the order of language usage, but also moral, social and political orders, in that it is possible to influence social perceptions on issues like gender, race and culture. (Cameron 1995, 25)

While pointing to flexibility as being the greatest strength of language, Cameron explains that its flexibility also gives rise to its greatest weakness, which is indeterminacy - the impossibility of clarifying exactly what an utterance means. However, Cameron does not mean that this obstructs

communication in general, instead she holds that we should redefine communication as a phenomenon that acknowledges that exact transfers of meaning cannot take place from mind to mind, but it will always depend on how the recipient interprets the meaning expressed. (Cameron 1995, 24)

2.3 The camps of the PC debate

Following this initial historical and defining paragraph, the perspectives held by the two poles of the PC debate are deepened, delving into the different lines of arguments characteristic for each.

2.3.1 The left side of the PC debate

The following delves into the work of scholars from the left side of the PC debate, seeking to illuminate the different attitudes and lines of argument. In the following, the term *left* or *left-side* will be applied when referring to what is often seen as advocates of PC.

In the past years, opponents of PC have appeared and let their opinions known to the public, why the literature from the left can be characterised to be mostly a retaliation to the right-wing literature, critiquing the critique of PC. Still, it appears that there are those who allow their affirmative actions to be labelled PC in order to defend these actions against the critique from people on the right side. Then there are those who take distance to this labelling action, calling out those on the right side for attaching connotations to the PC term that are not consistent with their values and ideas (Fairclough 2003, 20-21). Thus, a large part of the people on the left have come to see PC as a term used negatively by the right side, as a means to construct a critical attitude towards the affirmative actions advocated by the left. As Talbot (2007) argues in exploring the origins and use of the term and coming from the left side of the debate, political correctness today is associated with three principal themes: negativity, restriction and exaggeration. By this, she asserts that firstly, PC is often linked to negative evaluations and found in situations characterised by problems and difficult themes, secondly, PC is linked with a wish to restrict certain behaviours and usages of language, and thirdly, PC is linked with connotations perceiving PC actions as excessive. (Talbot 2007, 759-60)

As the title of Richard Feldstein's (1997) book suggests, *Political Correctness: A Response from the Cultural Left*, he illuminates the PC debate from the side of the left through what resembles a political essay, with the aim of reframing the discourse, making clear and accounting for what he believes people on the right side of the PC debate have done to the term, i.e. how they have

appropriated it. He maintains that people on the right have adopted the PC term and misinterpreted it, using PC to label the affirmative action policies of the left, leaving the people on the left bewildered and forcing them to defend the PC term in trying to defend their affirmative action policies. Feldstein considers the actions of the right side a matter of projection, believing that the right denies its own 'anti-democratic and authoritarian tendencies' and projects these characteristics onto people on the left. (Feldstein 1997, x) He does not agree that the left is the one trying to deny the rights of individuals, and as he finds the right side's definition of PC illiberal and authoritarian, he questions how he as a person on the left can defend such a term opposing the things he stands for (ibid.), arguing that the left has been robbed of its identifiable language consisting of words as '*revolution, radical, liberation and freedom*' (Feldstein 1997, xii-xiii).

Feldstein comes from a position, where he sees the connotations applied to the PC term by the right as an act of self-criticism and thus as being ironic, and he concerns himself with how the right side of the PC issues have used the term to foster racism and sexism (Feldstein 1997, xi). He understands PC as a matter in which the right has launched rhetorical attacks aimed at being pervasive in shaping and fostering a specific view on PC (Feldstein 1997, p. 10-11), and in arguing this, maintaining that the left side has been referred to as 'anti-individual radicals', he presumes that issues of cultural diversity have been prevented and racism encouraged (Feldstein 1997, 2-3). In projecting the PC term onto the left side, Feldstein believes that the point of affirmative action is forgotten; those who these policies were meant to advantage are those who become disadvantaged in advance. Instead, he identifies the problem as being the issue of individual rights, a concept held by the right, where it is assumed that people are born 'free and equal' without inheriting advantages or disadvantages from their ancestors. He purports that because people are not seen to be affected by their history, the individual has not been capable of handling the discourses that might cause challenges to the individual as a result of his/her inherited disadvantage(s). (Feldstein 1997, xii) In fact, Feldstein advocates the importance of understanding and acknowledging the postmodern world as multicultural and complex, stating that one of the key elements making the basis of the thought of people on the left is their focus on race, ethnicity, class, age and gender (Feldstein 1997, 8).

Just as Feldstein, Norman Fairclough (2003) contends that PC is a term mostly used by the right side of the PC debate to label the left side for their success with shifting to cultural politics (i.e. politics that centre around the shaping of society and political opinions through changed representations, values and identities) through cultural interventions partly performed by changing language use through reforms (Fairclough 2003, 20). However, considering his view on discourses as socially

constructed, believing that social practices are reflexive², through theoretical reflections, he understands this labelling process evident in the critics' (the right side) critique of PC as being a 'performative contradiction'. Fairclough argues that the manner in which people on the right side of the controversy are using PC to characterise the actions of people on the left side, should in itself be considered part of cultural politics and a way of performing cultural interventions. (Fairclough 2003, 21) Still, in critiquing the critique of PC, he questions how the right side has been able to label their opponents "PC" so successfully and durably, postulating that perhaps it owes to the cultural politics at which the critique is aimed, being rather controversial in its way of prescribing behaviour and thoughts through reforms (Fairclough 2003, 24).

Based on the above, Fairclough ascribes the controversy over PC to be located within the shift to cultural politics, and as the wish for changing societal and political opinions through language lies within this shift and is shared among both sides of the controversy, he is thus focused upon the language aspect while still recognising that PC is only somewhat a controversy over language (Fairclough 2003, 18). Fairclough investigates and discusses the controversy around PC based on a discursive theoretical standpoint, contending that such theories, seeing social life as constructed socially through discourses, have contributed to the shift to the type of cultural politics that are referred to as PC. What he believes is that these PC-related cultural and discursive interventions could be perceived as endeavours to change elements of social practices by changing discourses. This rests on the belief that changed discourses will or may change social practices, and that the process of changing discourses is not only a question of re-labelling but might eventually will lead to a shift in values. (Fairclough 2003, 21-22) By this, Fairclough is concerned with discourses from a social constructivist view, yet emphasising 'a moderate form', maintaining that "*discourses may construct and reconstruct social practices, social structures and social life*" (Fairclough 2003, 22) while claiming that there is no certainty for this type of constructive impact. He asserts that whether such socially constructive impacts will happen depends on the resistance evident in structures and habitus (Fairclough 2003, 23-24).

In his article, Fairclough also underlines that feminists and anti-racists historically have been the primary target of the PC critique for their attempts to make organisations implement guidelines for

² I.e. when people interact they represent 'what they do' to themselves and others, sometimes drawing on other contextual practices, and then their representations of 'what they do' are conducive to shaping 'what they do'

anti-racist behaviour and speech (Fairclough 2003, 21). In doing so, he claims that some of these cultural and discursive interventions referred to as PC have caused even people committed to anti-racism to express dissatisfaction, noting that perhaps, through constant repetition, some of these discursive alternatives implemented (he mentions the example of using ‘coffee without milk’ instead of ‘black coffee’) have become tiresome and questionable (Fairclough 2003, 25). Sara Mills (2008) sees this claim by Fairclough as a way of undermining the seriousness of the feminists’ concerns by judging them as trivial and “*as getting in the way of more important political discussions*” (Mills 2008, 104). In questioning this statement by Fairclough, she asserts that feminists might oppose his view, contemplating their interventions as anything else but minor issues, and she compares the way in which he characterises the feminist interventions with the strategy of those who are censuring anti-discrimination reforms (ibid.).

Mills does research in cultural studies within the fields feminist post-colonial theory and feminist linguistic/text analysis, and she focuses on the connection between anti-sexism and PC (Mills 2008, 110). In her book from 2008, *Language and Sexism*, in which she reflects theoretically about the effect of language on sexism, Mills criticises the PC term for discrediting anti-sexist activists and their programmes and campaigns, focusing on how political correctness has been and is used in a British context (Mills 2008, 106). A general argument of hers is that terminology advocating ‘male-as-norm’ and ‘female-as-exception’ has an increased successive impact on men’s and women’s perceptions of their roles in the society, and at the same time, she explains how PC has been used in favour of the demands of those wanting to attack political activists and invalidate their campaigns (Mills 2008, 104). She believes that the way PC has developed, with the changes made to the term by the right side of the PC debate (what she thinks has been a process of connecting negative connotations to the term) has made it more complicated and complex to implement anti-discriminating language (Mills 2008, 108). She argues that paradoxically PC is often linked to feminist campaigns, although in her opinion, no feminist would never use the word to characterise their actions, stating that it is only those opposing their reforms that would use the term to represent anti-racist campaigns. This discursive usage of the term, she claims, has made it difficult for feminist campaigners to get their efforts across in a serious manner, as using PC to refer to the work of feminists have contributed to affecting views of society about these campaigns as ways of presupposing certain values and views of language. (Mills 2008, 116) Hence, Mills makes explicit that there seem to be no agreement about what the PC term means; many feminists consider PC a media invention intended to deprecate anti-sexist efforts, while for other people in the wider society,

PC is seen as the same as anti-sexism that includes views of specific language usages and reforms (Mills 2008, 118).

2.3.2 The right side of the PC debate

As the counterparts of the left side and hence opponents of PC, are the people belonging to the right. In the PC literature, this camp is referred to in many ways, some of them being *right*, *conservative*, *neoconservative*, *opponents of PC* and *critics of PC*. In the following, the term *right* or *right-wing* will be applied when referring to opponents of PC.

Ph.D. and philosopher Howard S. Schwartz, criticises PC and the way it affects social life. In his book, *Political Correctness and the Destruction of Social Order* (2016), Schwartz' theoretical approach to PC is psychoanalytic, he tries to comprehend the psychological foundation of PC, what he himself refers to as madness (Schwartz 2016, 3).

"(...) The amount of energy in a single atomic nucleus is not much, but there are many atoms and when you release the energy holding together a zillion of them, you get quite a bang. That's where we are today, except what is being split is not atomic nuclei but human minds." (Schwartz 2016, 3).

According to Schwartz, many have lost the sanity we once possessed and are instead living in "ambient rage", with diffused and unbound fury ruling our lives, having lost control with social norms (Schwartz 2016, 3). This is what Schwartz regards as the politically correct, what he also appoints the anti-bullying movement (Schwartz 2016, 6). Being an avatar for PC, the anti-bullying movement have brought along what Schwartz calls the pristine self (Schwartz 2016, 7). He explains that the way to comprehend the anti-bullying movement, or PC, is by means of an anti-Oedipal psychology, drawing on Freud's "adaptation of the myth of Oedipus" (Schwartz 2016, 8). In the beginning of our psychological life, we are in a centre of love with our mothers caring for us, being almost fused with her, loving us completely. We therefore find the existence perfect and not conflicting in any way, which is also what Freud refers to as primary narcissism. As the legendary story tells us about what Oedipus did, we even want to marry our mothers and never want to be separated from her. Therefore, the problem arise when the father comes in the way, as he has a bond with her that is exclusive of and does not concern us. As a result, the only solution is to get rid of father. So, if we view ourselves as the pristine self, one will see other people's dislikes or indifference as an act of offence and thus as bullying, like the father came in the way for obtaining all of our mother's love. (Schwartz 2016, 8) Schwartz' point is that the pristine self cannot function in a world with other people, as they will experience the world as unloving, being omnipresent with bullying in the form of being surrounded

by people with different opinions and own rights (Schwartz 2016, 10). According to Schwartz, this has serious complications for society and organisations, as the structure that makes up society and organisation is based on reciprocity and the social conditions are what makes it possible to facilitate purposive social interactions (Schwartz 2016, 165).

Lecturer at the School of Physical, Environmental and Mathematical Science, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, Ben O'Neill (O'Neill 2011, 279) also belong to the right. In his article, *A Critique of Politically Correct Language* from 2011, O'Neill discusses the effect of politically correct language on discourse. One out of many examples that O'Neill puts forth is the word *mentally retarded*, later proposed by PC advocates to be replaced with *differently abled*, once more to be replaced with *having special needs*. (O'Neill 2011, 279) He is of the opinion that the offensiveness of words does not originate from the lexicology of the word itself (O'Neill 2011, 280), but instead emanate from tone of voice and a perceived insulting context. Thus, O'Neill believes that people need no particular language in order to be offensive. *Mentally retarded*, he argues, is a neutral word with accurate meaning, with no value judgement imposed (O'Neill 2011, 281), however acknowledging that the word might have negative connotations in that having a properly functioning brain must be preferable to being mentally retarded. Nevertheless, O'Neill believes that the delivery of a remark reveals its true intention. This is one of the reasons why O'Neill highly criticise politically correct language, as vagueness wins over specificity. (O'Neill 2011, 291) Drawing on Burkhardt (2010), O'Neill writes that he believes that the left engages in "*a cyclical process of word replacement*" (O'Neill 2011, 283). He criticises the left's word-replacement strategy, as new "politically correct" words will most likely also be subject for offensive behaviour and instead only provide actual 'bullies' with a larger vocabulary.

O'Neill somehow suspects advocates of politically correct language for making an intentional effort to misinterpret remarks, and he states "*At the heart of politically correct language lies dishonesty, not civility.*" (O'Neill 2011, 291) As explained previously and in relation to the quote, O'Neill believes the context and tone of a remark are factors that can help determine its true intention, along with the language chosen. He believes that the PC movement performed by the left thinks that if a word is used in an offensive way, then everybody else who might use that exact word is also doing so offensively. Hence, O'Neill believes that the left only takes into account the language chosen and not the context and tone, thus paying attention to the term only, seeing that as a huge mistake. This results in a breakdown in communication where PC language encourages people to take offence in

remarks in which no offence is actually intended. (O'Neill 2011, 284) This appears to be in sharp contrast to Cameron's beliefs, as she acknowledges indeterminacy as a great weakness of PC language, however claiming for it not to obstruct communication in general. While O'Neill claims that the left refuses to consider context (tone of voice and insulting context), Cameron equally alleges the politically incorrect for the same, namely omitting to consider context and instead simply looking at the language itself. (Cameron 1995, 24)

2.3.3 A positioning outside the debate: not left, not right

Although the PC debate for the most part has been illuminated through the contested positions of people from the left and people from the right, scholars such as Becky Ford (2017) situates herself outside the range of the PC debate. The intention for Ford is to provide a systematic evaluation of PC in order to comprehend the term without downplaying any of the arguments made by the left or right (Ford 2017, 13-14). She acknowledges the two general usages of the PC term, stating that much dispute exists regarding whether PC norms are advantageous or disadvantageous to the society and that some see PC as encouraging more multicultural perspectives and others see PC as liberal extremism. However, Ford contends that PC *"is a strategy in which political actors (on the left and right) use and promote ideologies that enable the control of discourse"* (Ford 2017, 2), conveying that she sees PC norms an attribute of both the right and left side of PC (Ford 2017, 1-2).

To be specific, Ford proposes seeing PC as an intergroup phenomenon that is used as a strategy to provide for an environment, where groups can change the discourse in a way that represents the rival group in a negative light. This strategy is what she terms intergroup competition, believing that it is applied by both sides of the debate to label opposing views derogatorily. (Ford 2017, 2-3) In her article on PC, Ford delves into the features of the term and describes these in relation to social norms, ideology and social influence, holding that ideas behind normative influence and ideological thinking can contribute to explaining the reason why PC is an influential mechanism when people take part in intergroup competition. In establishing this, she explains through theory about norms and group norms the process by which PC goes from being a gathering of norms into an ideological conviction, seeing that PC norms often come to be enforced on to both ingroup and outgroup members.

Building from elaborations of the different positions taken within the PC discourse, an illumination of PC and advertising is given, contributing to the comprehension of the research area of this dissertation, which revolves around PC in relation to advertising.

2.4 PC and advertising

With many organisational aspects being affected by social trends, so has advertising been influenced by the concept of PC (Katsanis 1994, 5), sometimes referred to in this context as ‘marketing correctness’ (Bart and Abhijit 1994, 55). One of the reasons is, according to Bart and Abhijit (1994), the changing demographics in America, which in turn has demanded changes in advertising practices (Bart and Abhijit 1994, 56). If a brand is perceived as politically correct, it will appear as socially responsible and as paying attention to societal issues (Katsanis 1994, 8), something that has gained much importance to consumers and organisations alike (Bart and Abhijit 1994, 55). Contrary, if a brand is perceived as politically incorrect, it will typically be viewed as being ignorant of issues such as climate change, race or gender. The perceived politically incorrect brand will also typically be regarded as purposefully choosing controversial subjects for advertisements. (Katsanis 1994, 8)

Marketing correctness has given rise to the concept of ‘sensitive groups’, meaning groups that are reactive to social issues and typically viewed as being discriminated against, disadvantaged or vulnerable (Bart and Abhijit 1994, 58). Marketers need to take into account these sensitive groups or else risk having to cope with negative reactions and being ‘damned’ by certain groups. If fearing to be damned or attacked, it is Bart and Abhijit’s opinion that PC is inescapable in advertising, thus recommending abandoning humour and creativity in advertising in turn for the ordinary. (Bart and Abhijit 1994, 60). They also acknowledge the power of the media and how it works strategically as spokesperson for the displeased, stressing that the critiquing groups would never be able to afford the promotion and publicity they are able to generate by means of media. More, they add that if the majority thinks that the accusation is preposterous, the accused benefits from the situation (Bart and Abhijit 1994, 61).

Bart and Abhijit (1994) believe that marketing correct by incorporating social responsibility and considerations of PC issues into the marketing mix can prove to be fruitful and enhance profitability, expecting and preparing for issues systematically is essential for competition (Bart and Abhijit 1994, 62-63). Agreeing with Bart and Abhijit, Katsanis believes that even if a company disagree with the concept of PC, it is something marketers need to take into account, also pointing to the reason being the changing demo- and sociographic (Katsanis 1994, 12). Agreeing or disagreeing with the concept of PC, advertising and thus the choices that marketers make do have social consequences. Therefore, according to Katsanis, it might not be so burdensome to show sensitivity to PC, provided that it will prove to be beneficial to the company and its brand equity (Katsanis 1994, 13).

While the preceding sections thoroughly outline the concept of PC through a focused review, the following section offers our positioning in relation to the PC concept and discourse, laying bare the terms to be applied for the two opposing PC positions.

2.5 Our positioning

In this dissertation, the intention is not to position ourselves within either the left or right camp, but the objective is instead to maintain a neutral perspective throughout our research in order to elucidate the attitudes towards PC among the social media users coming from the three selected advertisements. Thus, as Ford (2017) our aim will not be to downplay any of the attitudes held by the social media users, but to illuminate the different lines of argument. Nevertheless, due to the multiple ways in which the two camps have been labelled and in order to address the differing attitudes among them, we find ourselves necessitated to decide on how to label the two camps. Hitherto, we have applied one of the dominant ways of labelling the camps, yet, identifying difficulties in many of the frequent distinctions. The complication with the terms *left/right* and *liberals/conservatives* is that these terms are very much used in connection with party politics, making it difficult to apply the terms to other discourses without confusion. Adding to the complexity, the conservative/right camp has been argued by the liberal/left to be appropriating the term incorrectly, using liberal arguments that are not consistent with what are typically seen as the characteristics of a conservative/right ideology (cf. section 2.3.1 The left side of the PC debate). Also, as the words in their lexicographic forms have different connotations to the two camps, the distinction becomes impractical when people do not agree upon the meaning of the terms, sometimes talking at cross purposes. Since PC today has become a phenomenon covering much more than politics, we find that other terms are necessary, considering that we are dealing with a cultural-societal discourse. In the search for terms to be used to label the two camps, we considered using the phrase ‘critical camp’ (cf. Fairclough 2003, Mills 2008) for the conservative/right side, however finding that the term could have a dual meaning in that it could be viewed either as the conservative/right side critiquing PC or as the liberal/left side critiquing the advertisements. Therefore, we have chosen to label the conservative/right side *PC opponents* and the liberal/left side *PC advocates*, believing that these terms have neutral lexicographical meanings and are unambiguous in the sense that it is possible to apply them more generally and are very clear in their positioning: either being against or in favour of PC.

The focused review of the literature presented above will help inform our analysis and the way we deduce the PC response types, and we expect that what have been drawn from the academic discourse on PC also will be reflected in the practical discourse evident in our data, finding the two camps to be reflected. A further elaboration on how the academic discourse informs our analysis is given in section 4.4.1.1 Qualitative data selection. Compared to other PC researchers, this theorisation of the response types will be our contribution to the exiting academic discourse on PC, attempting to comprehend apparent PC attitudes beyond the confines of the two most prominent and highly debated positions or orientations within the PC discourse. With this contribution, we will furthermore be able to make empirically-based suggestions about social media users' attitudes towards potentially offensive content of advertising and in which direction the PC discourse is developing.

This takes us to accounting for the theoretical reflections which to some extent will further our comprehension of PC as a discursive phenomenon.

3. THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

Introductory, we would like to note and emphasise that these theoretical reflections merely serve to support our understanding of PC as a discursive construction with the potential of being established in multiple ways. The literature review creates a basis for our general understanding of the PC phenomenon and the deduction of the different response types, while these theoretical reflections will assist us in the process of examining the content and meaning of the comments.

As already proposed, rather than illuminating the PC discourse from the perspective of one or the other PC camp, our objective is to reach a point that makes us capable of elucidating the PC discourse from both sides. In order for this to be possible, we attempt at viewing the discourse by means of particular theoretical reflections acting as guidance as to how the discourse unfolds within the selected comments. Using Becky Ford's (2017) conceptualisation of PC as an intergroup phenomenon, manifesting itself through opposing views of ingroup and outgroup members, we will draw inspiration from her theoretical perspective in order to explore how the PC discourse plays out between ingroup and outgroup members as an intergroup phenomenon. While the idea of group norms in relation to PC contributes to finding how PC is discursively established as a norm or an ideology, different discursive approaches to the establishment of norms will be included for guidance as to how the commentators discursively create these norms: is PC unfolding as a power struggle, where people continuously collide or are people trying to reach a common understanding of PC ought to unfold.

3.1 PC norms: ingroup and outgroup

Having already accounted for the contribution of Becky Ford's article in relation to PC, this section goes further into detail with PC as an intergroup phenomenon used by both PC advocates and PC opponents to engage in intergroup competition.

In attempting to elucidate the PC discourse from the perspectives of both PC opponents and PC advocates through research on normative influence and ideological thinking, Becky Ford (2017) theorise how PC functions in order to explain why PC is a strong instrument for partaking in intergroup competition. Thus, through the idea of intergroup competition, Ford sets out to give an explanation for why the debate taking place between the two disagreeing parties still has not resolved

although having unfolded for several decades. (Ford 2017, 1-2) In her article, Ford considers PC norms a characteristic of both PC camps and not only a characteristic of PC advocates, to what camp these norms typically have been associated, being regarded as principles guiding the protection of groups historically constructed as disadvantaged minorities. As PC is a strategy that can be used to elevate a certain ideology as a means to influence how the discourse shapes, she maintains that PC also is used by PC opponents to present their own ideological beliefs. Furthermore, in deeming PC an intergroup group phenomenon that gives way for engagement in intergroup competition (an act by which groups reframe the discourse of opposing groups in negative ways), Ford holds that PC once again becomes a domain of both camps. (Ford 2017, 2)

Ford ascribes few features to PC norms; they are descriptive and they are group norms prescribing behaviour for ingroup as well as outgroup members. Firstly, in relation to how norms are perceived, they can be divided into descriptive (how people really act) and injunctive (how people think they should act) norms, and in this regard, Ford argues that PC norms are injunctive and not descriptive. This, she believes, can be rather problematic for PC, because it consists of conflicting norms where sometimes those enforcing PC norms discipline those who make the group prominent, and at other times these enforcers may also discipline those who avoid making the group prominent. Then when norms are enforced, the descriptive norms are difficult to detect, giving way to injunctive norms, and when the descriptive norms are vague, people might resort to others to judge what the injunctive norms are, which entails the possibility of discrepancies occurring between people's perceptions of the norms and what the descriptive norms really are. (Ford 2017, 3) Secondly, although PC norms are often considered group norms that in most cases only prescribe behaviour for the ingroup, Ford asserts that PC norms go beyond simply establishing/imposing norms onto ingroup members but does so onto outgroup members as well. In this regard, group norms have different functions. They work to help maintain harmony within the group (intragroup) by connecting the members and establishing a sense of order, where it is evident who are the typical type of member belonging to that specific group. This function can help make clear why people sometimes are criticised for coming across as being politically incorrect. Seeing that most norms describe or prescribe behaviour for the ingroup, when people then do not follow the lines of the group norms, it potentially decreases the integrity of the group and makes the boundary between who are ingroup and outgroup members more indistinct. Group norms also exist to differentiate groups from other groups, with PC norms sometimes sharing resemblance with other groups' norms and at other times not. When the belief is held that ingroup members are required to act in accordance with the established ingroup norms and outgroup members

are disciplined for embracing other norms than their own (an action labelled ‘appropriation’), the idea behind any given norm plays out. However, on the other hand, oftentimes prescribers of PC norms also take it as given that their PC norms have a moral authority and should be followed by ingroup and outgroup members in similar ways. In such instances, Ford argues that PC can become an ideological conviction (and not just a multitude of norms), where rivalry groups are capable of imposing disciplines on to each other when norms are being violated. Thus, when norms come to be levelled with ideologies, groups impose their norms on to outgroup members alike, and when outgroup members then are required to accept these norms but instead violate them, advocates of the norms are in a position to use PC to take part in intergroup competitions with effect subscribing validity to claims of violations. (Ford 2017, 3-4)

In this regard, Ford argues that there are some factors contributing to this sort of intergroup competition taking place between PC advocates and PC opponents as a result of PC becoming an ideological conviction: *paranoid style* and *perceptual biases*. She proposes that when people advocate PC norms through a paranoid style, it does not make way for open conversations, because when people are overshadowed by this style, they “*do not see disagreements as differences of opinion or values, but instead attribute them to malicious intent*”. (Ford 2017, 5) More, as PC sometimes comes to be seen as an ideology through which members view the world, she believes that it can cause members to overperceive indications of norm violations, and that this is ascribable to some psychological mechanisms, that of perceptual biases. First is confirmation bias, where if a person abides by the PC ideology, this person will express preference to and sometimes look for information that corroborates this position. Second is overperception bias, where if a person abides by the PC ideology, this person is of the opinion that it is more risk-free to overperceive instances of norm violations than to think that a person from the opposing group has good intentions for behaviour. Therefore, sometimes PC ideologies can cause people to seek out norm violations, where they might not be present. Thus, paranoid style and perceptual bias might play a role when people make judgements about norm violations in a PC context. (Ford 2017, 6)

3.2 Discourse: a power struggle or a normative establishment

In attempting to elucidate the establishment of the PC discourse in our data, the following sections provides account of Fairclough’s (1986) understanding of discourse as a power struggle and Habermas’s (1990) comprehension of discourse as a normative establishment.

While Michel Foucault is also a prominent scholar theorising the power phenomenon in discourse, we will be following Fairclough's conceptualisation, as his focus is on power in relation to ideology and language, which seems to couple perfectly with Ford's proposal of seeing PC as an ideological construction.

3.2.1 Fairclough: discourse as a power struggle

In this thesis, we will to some extent use Fairclough's comprehension of discourse and power to explore whether the discourses of social media users contribute to shaping the PC discourse as a power phenomenon. Thus, the focus of this elaboration is on the power dimension of discourse and whether PC is produced as a hegemonic discourse.

As Wodak and Meyer (2001, xx) write in accounting for methods of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA), the power phenomenon is one of the main elements in this discourse type, as researchers undertaking such analysis often explore language usage from the perspective of those who are responsible for the inequalities that might exist due to these people being in the position of power. Usually, the interest of CDA researchers is to illuminate how power is used by one group to dominate over another and also how the groups dominated may try to combat such power abuse through language (Wodak and Meyer 2001, xxvii). This power dimension among others plays out in texts, as in such subjects of analysis, differences in discursive practices seem to be debated and settled upon; texts are platforms where struggles of power take place as they provide the possibility of displaying how deviating discourses and ideologies are trying to maintain and endeavour the dominant position (Wodak and Meyer 2001, xxix).

In his book *Language and power* from 1989, Norman Fairclough focuses on the correlation between language use and unequal power relations by scrutinising the ideological dimension of discourse through language and power practices. By that, he makes an attempt at clarifying "*existing conventions as the outcome of power relations and power struggle*" (Fairclough 1989, 2), while putting an emphasis on ideologies (or what he also terms common-sense assumptions), maintaining that these are underlying conventions that people interact in accordance with linguistically and generally are not conscious of. Fairclough sees ideologies as closely connected to power and language: power in the sense that ideological assumptions are ingrained in specific conventions, which are contingent upon the power relations that form the basis of these conventions; and language because he sees it as the most typical way to behave socially, believing that it is the behaviour people

depend the most on when in the process of interpreting and communicating ideological assumptions. With the connection between ideology, power and language, his motive for addressing the ideological dimension rests on the presupposition that the practice of power is an element that is realised through ideologies and the ideological functioning of language. (Fairclough 1989, 2-3) In this regard, he argues that ideological struggles take place in language (Fairclough 1989, 89), with a central feature of these ideological struggles being the power to decide which meanings of words or discursive norms are valid and significant (Fairclough 1989, 88-89).

Fairclough's apprehension of power in discourse is dependent upon the belief that "*language contributes to the domination of some people by others*" (Fairclough 1989, 43), and in focusing on how language works to maintain and change power relations, he explains how the structuring of a specific discourse is shaped and constituted by power relations. Of aspects evident between the power and language relation, he distinguishes between power *in* discourse and power *behind* discourse. (Fairclough 1989, 43)

Power *in* discourse revolves around how powerful discourse participants to some degree control and constrain non-powerful discourse participants' inputs, with power being exercised and enacted by the powerful and non-powerful. In this respect, constraints might be exercised on three elements: contents (what people say and do), relations (the social relations apparent in the particular discourse which people can occupy) and subjects (the role people can take on in a certain discourse). In relation to discourse, these constraints require that people follow different linguistic practices, and rather than the constraints manifesting themselves because of the conventions characteristic of the discourse type called upon, often the powerful participants are the ones who not only directly but also indirectly can constrain non-powerful participants by entering into a specific type of discourse. (Fairclough 1989, 46-47)

Power *behind* discourse denotes the idea that power is hidden and typically not clear to people (Fairclough 1989, 55), and compared to power *in* discourse, focus is on how the social structuring of a discourse itself is formed by power relations (Fairclough 1989, 43). One aspect of this way of seeing power in language as being hidden is standardisation, signifying the method through which social language peculiar to a specific group becomes seen as the standard and having a high social standing. An instrument of achieving this standard language is by means of codification of the standard. By that, prescribed language principles are established in written form, attempting to avoid variation in language use. However, although being standard, not all will use the social language prescribed or simply use it in full, but instead resistance might be met, and while the people resisting the standards

sometimes are knowledgeable about power being performed in the process of standardisation (knowing that the language is applied by a specific dominant party) they are not inevitably aware that the dominant block has the responsibility for standardising the language. (Fairclough 1989, 57-58) Another aspect of power behind discourse is seeing it as a discourse type. Power behind discourse as a type of discourse has established conventions that provides an environment for certain relations of power, where the power behind these conventions is held by power-holders of a particular institution and often at different levels within that same institution. (Fairclough 1989, 60-61)

Fairclough propounds that the power evident in these two types of relationships between power and language is not something an individual or social group holds permanently and without dispute. Those participants in powerful positions and those in non-powerful positions are either continuously in the strive for maintaining their power or trying to obtain power. Thus, power at all levels is seen as always endeavoured through social struggle. (Fairclough 1989, 68) More, in the context of power and language, three mechanisms for attaining practices that are organised so that they share common features and attributes is differentiated between: 1) some practices are automatically followed, because no other practice appears to be plausible, which make for these practices to be considered as being established; 2) some practices can be levied with power of hidden character (mechanism termed inculcation); and 3) some practices can be established by means of people communicating and debating rationally (mechanism termed communication). As Fairclough contends, the most noticeable of these three mechanisms are inculcation and communication, with inculcation typically being a mechanism used by those who hold power as an attempt to maintain their power, and with communication being the mechanism through which people attempt to become free from social relationships or social identities and fight domination of the powerful participants. (Fairclough 1989, 75)

3.2.2 Habermas: discourse as a normative establishment

Another way of regarding discourse than as unfolding through a power struggle is by means of German philosopher Jürgen Habermas' normative approach to discourse. One of the things Habermas (1990) is concerned with is what he terms *discourse ethics*, which conveys an argument that tries to create “*normative or ethical truths by examining the presuppositions of discourse*” (Encyclopedia.com 2018), resulting in an establishment of norms. Habermas is of the opinion that humans are naturally aiming for consensus and that it is naturally stored in our social lives to pursue it (Flyvbjerg 2000, 2). In reaching consensus, people engage in what Habermas (1990) terms

communicative action. Communicative action takes place when actors are willing to “*harmonize their plans of action through internal means*” (Habermas 1990, 134), thus following their own goals “*on the condition of an agreement - one that already exists or one to be negotiated - about definitions of the situation and prospective outcomes.*” (Habermas 1990, 134) When a claim is put forth, the hearer either accepts or rejects the speaker’s claim by taking a yes or no position to it, hence accepting or rejecting the speaker’s ‘claim to validity’ (Habermas 1990, 136).

For universalism or an agreement to take place, Habermas refers to four conditions that need to be attained, which in turn can lead to a common understanding among the parties that are communicating: “*(...) the comprehensibility of our utterances, the truth of their propositional component, the correctness or appropriateness of their performative aspect, and the truthfulness or authenticity of the speaking subject.*” (Benhabib 1986, 284) In a conversation, if these conditions are challenged or not met, argumentation serves in trying to reach consensus and thus a common understanding. (Benhabib 1986, 284; Jacobsen, Lippert-Rasmussen and Nedergaard 2012, 521). Yet, Habermas does not think that most conversations end up successfully with a common understanding, the point is that values and norms can only be true and ethically valid if they live up to these conditions for communicative rationality. (Benhabib 1986, 286). As Habermas puts it: “*Ego’s speech act can be successful only if alter accepts the offer contained in it by taking an affirmative position, however implicitly, on a claim to validity that is in principle criticizable.*” (Habermas 1990, 134) Thus, Habermas sets up a procedure for universal, communicative rationality, however without stating what the process should result in exactly.

With the above in mind during the analysis, we will investigate if and how the commentators engage in discussions relating to PC; whether they attempt at reaching consensus and a common understanding of the phenomenon and thus succeed in establishing common norms, or if they establish the discourse by means of a power struggle.

CHAPTER 2

4. METHOD

The present chapter builds upon our methodological considerations, making the entire research process available and transparent. It touches upon the philosophy of science guiding our view on the research followed by consideration on research strategy and design along with the more operationally research-oriented processes such as data collection, analysis and interpretation. We start with presenting the philosophical scientific perspective forming the foundation for our research and the decisions taken.

4.1 Social constructivism

The way researchers view the world is decisive of and affects the entire research process (Grix 2002, 179), why the choice of philosophy of science constitutes the foundation of one's research, as it provides researchers with a paradigm to work from. Paradigms entail particular basic beliefs that in turn determines how the researcher views the world and thus approaches and analyses it. In our dissertation, we approach the research from a social constructivist perspective.

Being a social constructivist and dealing with a phenomenon, one claims that the phenomenon in question, which is by others considered to be “natural” and existing independently, is in fact man-made and carry signs of its human origins, being formed and influenced by human interests (Collin and Køppe 2014, 419). An example that has been subject to discussion is that of *gender*, which has traditionally been considered biologically and physiologically determined, with women being emotional and weak, and men being insensitive and hardy (Collin and Køppe 2014, 419-20). This assumption has been questioned by sociologists and philosophers, arguing that gender in fact is culturally determined and therefore a social construction (Collin and Køppe 2014, 420). Thus, constructivists argue that it is through interaction and communication that we constitute the worlds we live in, and by virtue of relations to others that our world becomes filled with meaningful concepts like for example *gender*, *death* or objects like a *chair* (Gergen 2010, 16). As, according to constructivists, the worlds we live in are built upon interaction and communication, different traditions will come into contact with other traditions, which then might result in creative combinations or conflict due to different beliefs. It is in these ‘challenge of tradition’-encounters that, according to Gergen, the social life is stabilised and anchored. (Gergen 2010, 74) With social media

still being a rather new and contemporary tradition with norms to be established and manifested, we will be examining how this new tradition is affecting social life and practices. More, with the Internet being more or less at everyone's disposal, different nationalities and thus traditions will meet online, in this case as comments to advertisements, why it will be interesting to see how it affects social media users' representations of the PC discourse in relation to advertising.

Doing research as a social constructivist, one attempts at relying as much on the participants' views of the phenomenon as possible and doing so while trying to comprehend the particular contexts and/or settings of the participants (Creswell 2009, 8). We also acknowledge that our world-views affect the interpretation process, as we are affected by our own prior personal, cultural and historic experiences (Creswell 2009, 8). In similar vein, we acknowledge that there cannot be a single truth due to the multiple possibilities of interpretation by people coming from different 'worlds' (Gergen 1985, 267). Thus, we accept that the outcome of the dissertation is likely to change and that the result will not be the ultimate truth. Comparably, social constructivists stress that theories and assumptions are not final either, as what we know is only a beginning, why the social constructivist paradigm encourages people to go beyond simple settlements and to reconsider traditions (Gergen 2010, 50-51). As we examine the phenomenon of PC, which is also subject to change over time, we regard it as necessary to reconsider status quo, especially in regard to social media playing a central role in modern society, exploring how the PC phenomenon unfolds within this new tradition.

Despite the above-mentioned beliefs, social constructivism also entails other elements for consideration, namely that of ontology and epistemology. Before addressing the two, for the sake of clarity and since many different terms are used in describing the two, it needs to be emphasised that we apply the terms used by Jonathan Grix (2002). The suppositions that are the basis of research are both ontological and epistemological, with ontology being the starting point of research, which is then followed by and affects the epistemological position (Grix 2002, 177-78).

Ontology

According to Grix, ontology is "*what is out there to know about*" (Grix 2002, 175), meaning 'what we may know' (Grix 2002, 177). One might possess an *objectivist* perspective on ontology, indicating that the studied phenomenon's existence and its meaning is independent of social actors. If you, on the other hand, have a *constructivist* perspective on ontology, you believe that a phenomenon and its meaning is recurrently realised by social actors, produced through social interaction and thus subject to continuous revision. (Grix 2002, 177) In our research, we have a constructivist perspective on

ontology, as we are studying the phenomenon of political correctness, believing that its existence and meaning is not independent of social actors, but instead is altered by social interaction and communication. We seek to gain knowledge about people's perception of PC in relation to minorities in advertising, examining social media user statements. By examining the attitudes coming from social media users, who all live in their own world in their own way, knowledge is produced that however cannot be said to be true nor false, due to the existence of more than one reality.

Epistemology

While ontology deals with “what we may know”, epistemology is about “how we come to know what we know” (Grix 2002, 177), hence being about the relationship between the reality and the researcher. It is concerned with how knowledge of social reality can be acquired, as Grix writes: “*how what is assumed to exist can be known*” (Grix 2002, 177). Being about the theory of knowledge while acknowledging that nothing is static when it comes to acquiring new knowledge, epistemology is involve a reflection on existing theories, concepts, or knowledge in general, investigating or challenging their continuous applicability (Grix 2002, 177) Doing research on the phenomenon of PC, we challenge the existing knowledge about the field and how the PC discourse unfolds in an online setting as responses to companies' advertising.

An epistemological position is that of *positivism*, which entails studying social reality by means of natural science methods. In contrast, *interpretivism* as an epistemological position emphasising the need for a strategy that respects the differences among people and thus requires researchers that can comprehend the subjective meaning of social action. (Grix 2002, 178) Our research is based on an interpretivist approach, as we regard our phenomenon as being dependent of social actors, where we seek to analyse social capital as a dependent variable, which in turn allows for subjective comprehension of different social contexts (Grix 2002, 183).

4.2 Research strategy: mixed methods

Having provided a reflection of the philosophical worldview informing our dissertation, this paragraph proceeds with an explanation of the research strategy from which the PC discourse will be scrutinised. Initially, a short review of qualitative and quantitative research strategies and their ideas is given, followed by more paper-specific explanations of the approaches to be taken in this paper.

Research strategies, or what Creswell (2009) refers to as research designs, are commonly considered orientations within which social research is conducted (Bryman 2012, 35), researchers' philosophical assumptions on which the study builds and research procedures guiding overall decisions about e.g. data collection and data analysis methods (Creswell 2009, 3). In recent publications³, there seem to be agreement that three different approaches to research are found to be present in today's research traditions: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Qualitative research provides a background for examining the meaning attributed to a social phenomenon by individuals or groups, where data is usually collected from the settings of the people under scrutiny, and where the research builds from the specific to the more general through the researcher's interpretations of the data. Quantitative research is a measure for testing theories, exploring correlations between particular variables, and building from there, these variables are typically employed in analyses based on statistical techniques. While people embarking on qualitative research emphasise the value of individual meaning and the significance of making the intricacies of contexts available, people engaging in quantitative research subscribe to the assumption that one can generalise findings and advocate being able to remove potential biases embedded in a researcher's own interpretation. Yet, Creswell propounds viewing qualitative and quantitative research as different ends on a continuum (not as opposing strategies), and with mixed methods in the centre, combining elements from both. Mixed methods research, however, entails more than merely incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches. This form of research also implies using the strategies in a manner that allows for a strengthening of the study that would not have been possible had it solely been based on either of the strategies. (Creswell 2009, 3-4)

Mixed methods research

As Creswell (2009) alludes to, in most cases, the premise for selecting one research strategy over another rests on the research problem and what type of approach the problem calls for. Qualitative research problems are exploratory, seeking insights into human accounts and providing detailed

³ The third edition of Creswell's book on research designs e.g. accounts for an expansion of the two strategies scholars originally concerned themselves with, qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell 2009, xxi). As he notes in rationalising the addition of mixed-methods research through a short historical account, mixed-methods research evolved "*during the latter half of the 20th century*" (Creswell 2009, 4), and it is thus not apparent in all books on social research.

views of the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to phenomena. Quantitative research problems are driven by explanation, testing theories, identifying factors that influence outcomes and generalising findings. Mixed methods research is then ideal if not one or the other approach is adequate for understanding the research problem (Creswell 2009, 18-19). Given that the focal point of our research problem revolves around exploring human behaviour and interactions, as we are focusing on how PC is addressed discursively through insights into public reactions on social media platforms to potentially racist advertising that has caused offensiveness among social media users, the character of our research problem falls in line with the qualitative research approach in its philosophical assumptions. However, in this thesis, we are not merely interested in developing a detailed account of how PC is addressed in potentially racist advertising, but with basis in our research problem, we also have in view to examine whether one PC attitude dominates the discourse among social media users by generalising to a larger population than the one explored in the qualitative analysis. Thus, in this paper, we are undertaking a mixed-methods research by approaching the research question using qualitative as well as quantitative ideas and measures to collect and analyse our data. To be specific, we collect qualitative data in the form of textual social media comments across three cases to examine social media users' attitudes in relation to the PC discourse, and this data, while being qualitative, is subsequently the subject of exploration in both the qualitative and quantitative analysis. We analyse the data qualitatively by searching for concepts within it in order to develop a comprehensive mapping of the PC attitudes apparent within the comments and then quantitatively by applying the map derived from the literature and the qualitative analysis to generalise the attitudes to a larger population, drawing quantitative results from the qualitative data. Therefore, we will start out by exploring the data to learn what variables to study and subsequently we study those variables with a larger sample of individuals. Based on this and in trying to find a way of explaining the findings of one method with the other, we will undertake a sequential mixed methods study, which is one of the designs offering a specific course for the procedures in our paper (Creswell 2009, 11). Specifically, a sequential transformative approach is applied, because we will use the theoretical lens of PC to overlay the sequential qualitative and quantitative procedures, making a framework of the PC discourse available for guiding the exploration of the research problem. Furthermore, as described above and in following the procedures of this strategy, the initial phase is qualitative and explorative in its objectives, whereas the second phase is quantitative and aims at building on the first phase, expanding the findings by generalising the results to the larger sample. (Creswell 2009, 212-13)

Therefore, initially, we will have a deductive orientation to the relationship between theory and research, deriving knowledge about the PC field from literature and using the literature as our theoretical lens. In being deductively oriented in our very first move, we let our theoretical pre-established knowledge guide our qualitative data collection and analysis to some extent. However, the theoretical lens of PC will not be the only factor guiding our understanding of the phenomenon because our initial theoretical lens then will be filled up inductively in the second move, letting the data guide us in gaining a more differentiated understanding of the PC discourse. This inductive move is twofold; firstly, we review the data prior to the qualitative data analysis finding apparent categories and secondly these categories are then explored and defined in analysis. Additionally, when undertaking the quantitative analysis, this third move will again be deductively approached, applying the analytical mapping to the collected data using quantitative techniques (the deductive- and inductive-oriented moves are further elaborated on in sections 4.4.1 Qualitative data collection and 4.4.2 Quantitative data collection when accounting for the measures guiding our qualitative data collection and analysis processes and quantitative data analysis process).

How the different aspects forming part of the research strategy contribute to the quality of our study is addressed when relevant, accounting for the reliability and validity of the research. We acknowledge that these issues ought to be viewed differently according to whether basis is taken in quantitative or qualitative research, and since we are undertaking a mixed-methods, we follow different understandings of the terms when addressing the issues of reliability and validity qualitatively and quantitatively.

How do our philosophical stances comply with quantitative research methods?

Incorporating quantitative research into our dissertation provides us with the ability to quantify the significance of the occurring attitudes within the PC discourse, giving our readers guidance as to what the prevalence of the attitudes are among social media users; what qualitative research is often criticised for not being capable of (Bryman 2012, 624). Nevertheless, it is important to take notice of how people doing qualitative or quantitative research disagree whether the two research strategies are in compliance with each other and thus can be combined. In arguing against the compatibility of the two research strategies, researchers on this side, the position termed the epistemological version of the debate, assert that the nature of epistemological commitments act as hindrances, believing that it is not simply about combining different data collection and analysis methods, but that certain research traditions can be inimical to certain views because they are consistent with another view. On the

other hand, those in favour of fusing the two research strategies, the position termed the technical version of the debate, also believe that certain research traditions are associated with specific epistemological assumptions, but the difference is that these researchers do not consider the commitments and connections established or inescapable. Rather, they attribute more considerable importance to the different strengths found within the qualitative and quantitative research. (Bryman 2012, 629-31) Accordingly, we find ourselves aligned with the technical version of the debate about the compatibility of quantitative and qualitative research, contending that the addition of quantitative measures to qualitative research is valuable for our research findings.

Furthermore, while qualitative research methods are often the ones associated with the constructivist perspective, which is the philosophical stance we align ourselves with in our dissertation, Bryman (2012) directs attention to the benefit of using quantitative research methods when taking this perspective. Once again, although some might disagree with the concord of the ontological characteristics between constructivism and quantitative measures, quantitative research is believed to contribute notably to the constructivist stance in being able to provide a background against which qualitative researchers can make wider connections between what is being investigated. (Bryman 2012, 618) Thus, while we through our philosophical stance in social constructivism is interested in the issue of PC representation in social media user's comments with a focus on qualitative data, examining what role potential racist advertising plays in their constructions of PC and believing that these are social constructions and not pre-given, we still apply quantitative research techniques to analyse the data with a larger sample. As noted above, we believe that this quantification is valuable in showing the prevalence of the apparent PC attitudes. However, in the eyes of the qualitative researcher, quantitative research is also thought of as deficient in certain areas. By this, quantitative research is often regarded as failing in distinguishing phenomena as products of individuals and without an emphasis on viewing meaning from the individual's point of view. Often quantitative researchers are criticised for displaying a disregard of possible differences between individuals when trying to bring out the relationship between variables without acknowledging that the process of interpretation varies from the human group from which they are seeking to comprehend the phenomenon. (Bryman 2012, 178-79) While these are concerns directed towards quantitative researchers, we find ourselves accommodating these to some degree. As we are undertaking a mixed methods research, our basis is also taken in certain qualitative measures that rest on the type of characteristics that are seen to be absent from the quantitative research traditions. What we are referring to is our focus on the accounts of individuals and with the ontological and epistemological

positions we subscribe to in this dissertation, our acknowledgement of the importance of the social context as a dependent variable, believing in the value of subjective accounts.

4.3 Research design: comparative case study

The decision to undertake mixed methods research is reflected in the research design, seeing that it is the framework within which the social research is carried out. At the end, the chosen research design will help guide the elements that form part of the research method, such as the processes of collecting and analysing data. (Bryman 2012, 45)

Specific research strategies are typically associated with certain research designs, however, considering that mixed methods is the strategy chosen for this research, it might entail a combined use of research designs (Bryman 2012, 77). Since the objective with our research is to explore what social media users deem acceptable in the representation of minorities in advertising, and at the end, their position in relation to PC, we are interested in doing a cross-organisational study. A research design applied both in relation to quantitative and qualitative research and that is applicable for the type of research we are seeking to undertake is the comparative design, which entails exploring more than one case using nearly identical methods. Using a comparative design, we will be able to better understand the studied phenomenon when comparing three cases that are meaningful in relation to our research question, sharing characteristics while perhaps being contrasting on other levels. (Bryman 2012, 72) Yet, a criticism against this design, using multiple cases, is that researchers often come to focus primarily on how cases are differing, thus tend to forget to focus on the context of each case (Bryman 2012, 75). Trying to accommodate this, and remembering to pay attention to the specific contexts, our idea is not to find cases that are contrasting, but rather to find cases sharing similarities, but varying in the degree of potential racism (Bryman 2012, 74). Hereby, this provides a possibility for acquiring an insight into social media users' attitudes towards the PC discourse in different contexts. While having collected three cases sharing similarities, the purpose is not to draw generalisations across the findings, because the cases were collected on the basis that one is more offensive than another, the objective is rather to examine how this is reflected in social media users' attitudes towards the PC discourse.

Case study as a research design is often associated with the notion that when applied by researchers, it is not capable of providing a method for obtaining reliable knowledge about the research phenomenon, because when derived from a specific case, knowledge cannot be generalised in a

broader sense. Although many scholars hereby question the quality of context-based research, researcher Bent Flyvbjerg (2010) argues that case studies can enhance the overall understanding of a phenomenon and by that also serve as means for in-depth generalisation aimed at contributing to the collective and accumulated knowledge of a certain field. With this reasoning, he propounds that case studies are located at another level of generalisation compared to what he refers to as formal generalisation that often is statistically grounded, which has come to be presented as the most recognised way of generalising. (Brinkmann and Tanggaard 2010, 471-72) Furthermore, in attempting to go beyond the lines of predicting theories and universal terms, case study design proves advantageous for our research, where we to some degree through the study of people and the society endeavour obtaining knowledge about the PC discourse through accounts of social media users. As cases are specific, context-based knowledge emerges, knowledge that is not possible to be determined by predicting theories and universal terms. Thus, although case studies are criticised for generating practical rather than theoretical knowledge, this type of design is beneficial for our study and research. (Brinkmann and Tanggaard 2010, 468)

Having accounted for case study as the research design applied in this thesis, the next section goes into detail with the motive for sampling the selected cases and includes an explanation for the choice of media from which the empirical data is collected. This is followed by paragraphs offering presentations of the three selected company cases and their crisis situations.

4.3.1 Sampling cases

To help illuminate the PC discourse on social media, a selection of cases perceived as potentially offensive, perceived as portraying racism to some degree, has been gathered. Since our speculation is to explore how advertising practices are under scrutiny by social media users for appearing politically incorrect (cf. section 2. Literature review) focusing on the potential offence caused by perceived racist advertising, the starting point was to identify advertisements representing minorities in a potentially racist way and with the companies behind the advertisements experiencing a backlash as a reaction to this. Thus, the selected companies would have had to be subject to a crisis situation with public reactions, as we anticipated that these public reactions would convey attitudes about how social media users take a stance on the PC discourse when confronted with a potential politically incorrect acts. We reckon that the best possible way to gather these opinions is by scrutinising comments made on social media to the respective companies in crises, as it can be assumed that these crises might have caused attention and thus provoked people from the two camps within the PC

debate, PC advocates and PC opponents, to speak their minds if dissatisfaction was awakened within them (being either displeased with the advertisement or being displeased with other people's critique of it). Consequently, the data has been collected from social media sites, where people tend to take their discussions to get opinions across, and where companies easily experience criticism from consumers. In this connection, we reserve the position that those commenting on social media posts tend to be people with strong opinions about the issues in question, entailing that some opinions might not be expressed within these comments. Therefore, we will only use the chosen data as a basis for approximating the general attitudes of social media users on PC in advertising.

When sampling cases, it was necessary that certain criteria were met. First, since the PC discourse focused around racism is ever changing, the cases had to be rather contemporary (within a time range of two to three years) for it to be up to date with current discursive trends, as we from our social constructivist stance presume that discourses are constantly liable to change when people interact and communicate. Second, in order to operationalise the problem statement, exploring how social media user's PC attitudes unfold as result of companies' advertising practices being subject for scrutiny, the advertisements had to express a variation of potential racism hence being more or less offensive. By that, we attempt to find out how heavily the advertisements are or are not criticised according to their different potential racist character, with the aim of the research being to find out what is perceived to be racist from a constructivist perspective, letting the data speak for itself. It is our subjective interpretation that the three advertisements could be more or less offensive, yet it is not our objective to decide the ranking of potential racism evident in the advertisements. Instead we seek to find out what the opinions are among social media users. This can help yield an insight into what causes people to react and to locate their boundaries, exploring whether different representations of minorities cause people to react differently.

In search for cases fulfilling these criteria, we found three suitable company cases, H&M, a Swedish clothing brand, Dove, a British personal care brand, and Qiaobi, a Chinese laundry-detergent brand (the cases will be presented in section 4.3.2 Case presentations). The Qiaobi case is somehow unique in itself, seeing that Qiaobi is not a company represented in the West. As will be accounted for later in this chapter, the choice of including this case in our research will likely add something special to the research (cf. section 4.4.1.1 Qualitative data selection).

Moreover, these cases have been selected on the basis of it being possible to access comments given on social media to the respective advertisements, providing insights into people's attitudes towards

them. When comparing cases, we would have preferred to have as similar conditions as possible, yet we have had to select empirical data from two different social media sites: H&M and Dove from Instagram and Qiaobi from YouTube. The comments related to H&M and Dove are responses to the respective companies' apologies as part of their crisis communication. The comments in these cases are therefore direct responses to something communicated by the companies, whereas in the case with Qiaobi, the comments are not responses to something communicated by the company itself. Qiaobi's official company apology was published in Chinese and was not to be found on Instagram, why we found ourselves necessitated to obtain this data elsewhere. In looking for Qiaobi's advertisement, we found several versions on YouTube, with one of the only unedited ones, not presenting preconceived ideas, being posted by DailyNation. In spite of knowing that Daily Nation is a Kenyan independent newspaper (Daily Nation 2018), with the majority of the subscribers supposedly being blacks hence perhaps being racially biased, this post and its comments were chosen as a case. In reviewing some of the comments, it was evident that they consist of a variety of different opinions and attitudes. This, and because of the rare and extreme character of the Qiaobi case, providing yet a dimension to the analysis, has been suffice for selecting the case despite it being posted on YouTube. Yet another reason why it does not act as a significant hindrance for us that the data has been collected from two different social media sites, is that the structure of the comments are nearly identical on Instagram and YouTube, providing a by some means comparable unit for analysis.

The motive for selecting YouTube as a social media platform for Qiaobi is therefore evident, however choosing Instagram for the H&M and Dove in preference to other social media sites is ascribable to other reasons. Facebook was deselected because H&M and Dove did not post their apologies here, and Twitter, seeing that certain nations use this social media to an extreme degree compared to others (Statista 2018). Whereas the use of Instagram is more evenly distributed among countries across the world (Statista 2018), thus being more representative in showing more diverse representations of different nations. Lastly, we chose the global Instagram profiles of H&M and Dove, considering that they also provide us with greater geographical diversion among the commentators. It is also worth noting that H&M posted three different apologetic statements over a period of seven days (January 9th, 10th and 16th 2018), but we chose the first post, because people's initial and first reactions were most desirable, seeing that we simply want the first reactions that are the perceptions of the case and not the perceptions about what other people say.

Company name	Year of publication	Social media platform	Country of origin
H&M	2018	Instagram	Sweden
Dove	2017	Instagram	UK
Qiaobi	2016	YouTube	China

Table 1: Case information

4.3.2 Case presentations

The next paragraphs present the three selected cases, H&M, Dove and Qiaobi, and their crisis situations.

H&M: the crisis situation

Hennes & Mauritz, often called H&M, is a global fashion and design company founded in 1947 in Sweden. H&M is part of the H&M Group, which consists of the brands H&M, H&M Home, COS, & Other Stories, Monki, Weekday, Cheap Monday and ARKET (H&M Group 2018).

In January 2018, H&M published an advertisement in its online store that attracted much attention from groups of consumers worldwide, picturing a black child model wearing a green hoodie reading *“COOLEST MONKEY IN THE JUNGLE”* (See picture below). Due to intense outrage, H&M retracted the advertisement and the hoodie from its online store, as well as from physical stores globally.

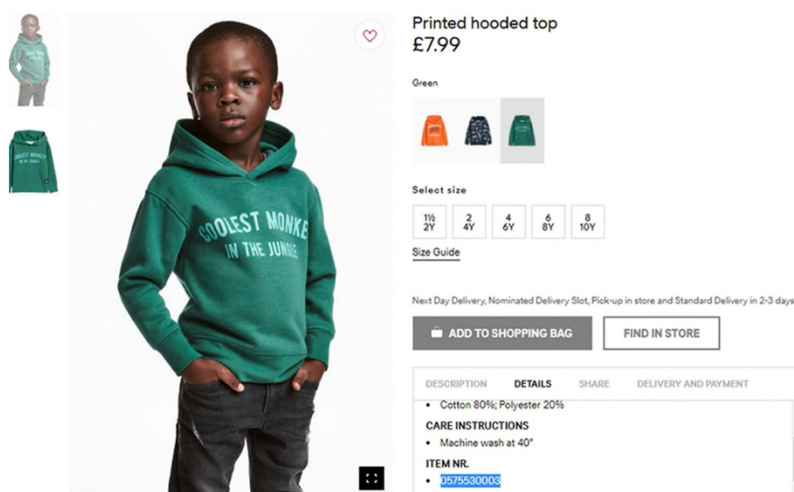


Illustration 1: Screenshot of H&M's online advertisement, retrieved from The Telegraph (Rudgard 2018)

The reactions to the advertisement were many and strong, coming from both consumers and celebrities. Consumers accused the advertisement of being racist, while others claimed that H&M itself is a racist brand. Social media users expressed the situation as being unacceptable and disrespectful to blacks, however acknowledging poor judgement as a possibility. Singer, songwriter and record producer *The Weeknd* and rapper *G-Eazy* both cancelled future partnerships with H&M, clearly wanting to dissociate themselves from the fashion company and the incidence. (Beaumont-Thomas 2018) In South Africa, H&M's stores were vandalized as a counteraction to the advertisement, why H&M decided to temporarily close its stores (Hosie 2018). Furthermore, from 8 January 2018 until 31 January 2018, H&M's stocks fell with 14.55 percent, and on the day of reporting their annual results of 2017, analysts stated that this crisis also had impacted the company's corporate image (Molin and Mulier 2018).

As a response to the allegations, H&M published a press release on 9 January 2018 (H&M Group 2018), as well as a series of posts on its global Instagram account, addressing the issue (the issued apology can be found in Appendix 1). The first communication was posted on 9 January, the second the following day, on 10 January, and the third on 16 January.

Dove: the crisis situation

Dove is a personal care brand that originated in the United Kingdom in 1957, and today the company forms part of the Dutch conglomerate, Unilever (Unilever 2018). Unilever's product portfolio comprises of approximately 400 brands divided between three product areas: home care, personal care and food and drink (Unilever 2018). Dove's products are sold in nearly all countries and are developed for and targeted at women, men and children (Unilever 2018).

Throughout the years, Dove has been subject to several critics, accusing the Unilever-brand of being racially-insensitive in its marketing. Adversaries of Dove's way of representing women in its marketing, claim that the company has had a history of carrying racist messages by advocating white supremacy, and with one of the most notable marketing initiatives being the launch of its Summer Glow Lotion poured into a bottle saying "for normal to dark skin". (Taylor 2017) The latest in this string of advertisements causing commotion was a three-second clip showing a frame with a black woman and a bottle of Dove body wash in the corner. The woman reaches down to take off her t-shirt revealing a white woman underneath the shirt. Then, the white woman removes her t-shirt to reveal

yet another woman of a third ethnicity.⁴ However, when reposted by news media and others, they failed to show the clip in its entirety, leaving out the woman of the third ethnicity.



Illustration 2: Screenshot of Dove's advertisement, retrieved from The Guardian (Slawson 2017)

The clip was posted on Dove's US Facebook page on 6 October 2017 and was since deleted on Facebook and related marketing material have not been published nor used in marketing campaigns. (Slawson 2017) The following day, 7 October, Dove admitted in a post on Twitter and other social media sites that it had "*missed the mark with representing women of colour thoughtfully*" (Appendix 1) and on 9 October, a lengthier apology was posted expressing regret and explaining that the intention with the advertisement was to celebrate diversity (Appendix 1).

The advertisement did however cause a substantial amount of reactions from both consumers and famous names on social media sites, with some blaming Dove for being racist and insensitive to diversity and others being uncertain about what the company in reality meant to convey with the advertisement (Wootson Jr. 2017). On the other hand, the black woman portrayed in the advertisement, model Lola Ogunyemi, defended and praised Dove for displaying diversity and expressed honour of being able to represent her "dark-skinned sisters". While recognising why people would jump to conclusions and regard the advertisement as racist, considering the history of Dove's advertising, she also believed that people were too quick at judging. (Taylor 2017)

⁴ The advertisement can be found on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZY4t8sz9e60>

Yet, Dove is also a company that in the past has received praise for its “Real Beauty” campaign, one that celebrates women. Branding experts, however, claim that this latest digital advertisement might turn out to discredit all that Dove has tried to build during the past decade, because the perceived message of the advertisement seems to clash with celebrating the diversity of women. (Dua 2017) Therefore, it is argued that this, what Dove itself refers to as a mistake, might lead to Dove losing the brand advantage that it has spent years building.

Qiaobi: the crisis situation

Qiaobi is a Chinese laundry-detergent brand, produced by the Leishang cosmetics company that has been criticised for being behind a controversial commercial bringing about discussions of racism. Stories about the controversy have been highlighted by foreign news media as BBC, CNN, Global Times and many more, calling the commercial the most racist ever made. Originally, the commercial for the Qiaobi Laundry Gel Balls was only to be shown in Chinese media, but after having circulated around since the end of March 2016, it went viral in May 2016 when the Chinese news blog, Shanghaiist, wrote about it, attracting global attention. (Chin 2016) In the commercial, a black man with paint splattered around his face comes out of a room with a paintbrush and a paint bucket in his hands to a Chinese woman doing her laundry. He stands at the door, looking flirtatiously, winking and whistling at her. With hand gestures, she encourages him to come over to her, and when he does, she leans towards him, making as if to kiss him. Then she stuffs a laundry pad into his mouth, shoves him into the washing machine and jumps onto it, sitting there with a smile on her lips. After some time, she opens the lid of the machine, and a clean Chinese man comes out. He winks and Chinese letters appears on the screen, translated by The Guardian as “Change begins with Qiaobi” (Graham-Harrison 2016).⁵

⁵ The advertisement can be found on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Few8kJ0zfnY>

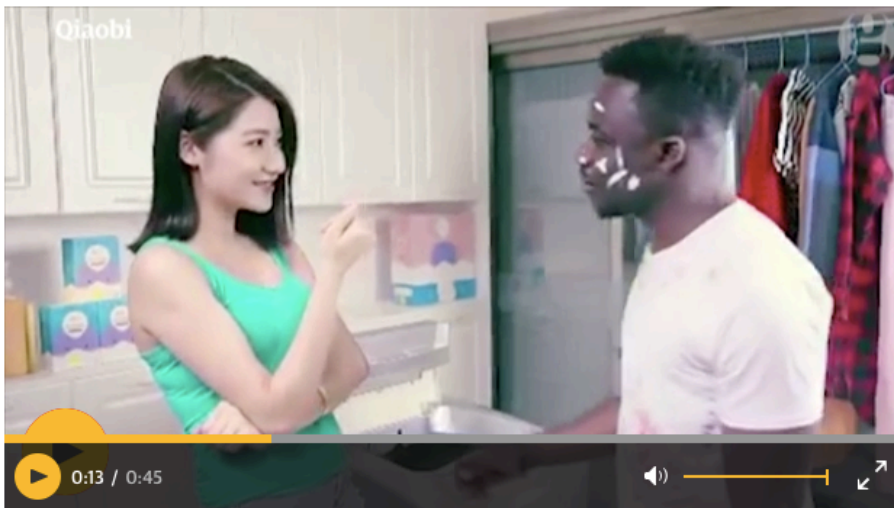


Illustration 3: Screenshot of Qiaobi's advertisement, retrieved from The Guardian (Graham-Harrison 2016)

According to BBC, the commercial allegedly picked up more than 6.5 million views on YouTube (accumulated views of all versions posted on YouTube) (BBC 2016), with reactions taken to social media sites, criticising the Qiaobi brand for demonstrating obvious racism, being ignorant and behaving unsophisticatedly (Bromwich 2016). When contacted by the Global Times, a spokesperson for the Leishang cosmetics company stated that the company had no racist intentions with the commercial and implied that “the foreign media might be too sensitive about the advertisement” (Lingzhi and Jie 2016). Nevertheless, on May 27th 2016, the company posted an apologetic statement on the Chinese equivalent to Twitter, Weibo, declaring that the company had “properly managed the situation” and expressing an apology to people of African descent and a regret for the controversy. Emphasised was also a hope that Internet users and the media would stop sharing the commercial and not over-analyse the situation (an English version of the original Chinese apology can be found in Appendix 1). (Horwitz 2016)

When issuing the apology on Weibo, criticism also came from Chinese users, accusing the Leishang cosmetics company of providing yet another reason for foreigners to regard and treat China with contempt. While others exchanged views about the extremity of the commercial's degree of offensiveness, some made a point of emphasising that the advertisement appeared to be a blunt copy of an older advertisement produced for an Italian laundry-detergent brand (Chin 2016). In fact, China's racial bias has been taken to the broader global scene more than this once over the past decade with several other Chinese companies trading on images of black people (Bromwich 2016).

Having singled out the cases and social media platforms from which to collect the empirical data, the next section moves on to elaborate on the process of collecting the data from the three cases.

4.4 Data collection

In order to reach the point of having collected the final comments from the three cases and for both the qualitative and quantitative part, we went through three different phases before reaching our cleansed data (see table 2 below for an overview of this process).

Phases	H&M	Dove	Qiaobi	App.
<u>1. Raw data</u>	227	218	206	App. 3
Deselection of entries from users commenting more than once	- 27	-18	- 6	App. 2
<u>2. Reduced data</u>	200	200	200	App. 4
Reduction using deselection manual (cf. table 3)	- 69	- 57	- 48	App. 2
<u>3. Cleansed data</u>	131	143	152	App. 5

Table 2: From raw to cleansed data

The first phase involved collecting the raw data (comments) from the entire population (H&M: 62,727, Dove: 5,805 and Qiaobi: 5,415) and as mentioned in paragraph 4.3.1 Sampling cases, this was gathered from social media sites. To get the first and uninfluenced (being the ones taking into account the assessments from others the least) attitudes of the audience, a vital criterion was to select the first entries/comments⁶ made to the posts made by the companies, H&M and Dove, and the news media, Daily Nation. Subsequently, sufficient numbers of comments were collected from each case to ensure that we had enough comments to select among in order to conduct research based on data that is saturated, meaning having gathered data with the possibility of representing the attitudes of the full crowd. By this, we aim at ensuring having as many attitudes represented as possible. Thereby, guaranteeing that we would end up with enough comments during the final phase of the data collection process.

In the second phase, which was carried out simultaneously with selecting the sufficient numbers of comments in the first phase, the raw data was reduced, which entailed sorting through all comments,

⁶ An entry on social media is when a person posts something, i.e. when posting or commenting on the posts of others.

making sure that the sample consisted of 200 comments from different users for each of the three cases. If the commentators⁷ left more than one entry, their original comment⁸ were chosen.

After having selected 200 comments, all posted by different users, the final and third phase required a more analytical procedure, which meant sorting out those comments regarded as meaningless to the research question. Thus, this phase entailed using the research question as a starting point, establishing what needed to be examined. For this, the PC discourse guided us as the overall theoretical framework in helping to identify the arguments of the two camps, PC advocates and PC opponents. By that, it was possible to single out comments related to the PC discourse. How PC as a categorisation framework will guide us in the coding process is specified in section 2.4.1.1 Qualitative data selection. A deselection manual listing those specific criteria against which the comments had to be deselected in the final phase was drawn up (cf. table 3: Deselection manual) A table of the comments deselected for each case can be found in Appendix 2.

Notice that in the first and second phase, the comments are referred to according to their original comment number, named during the first selection phase. In the third phase, the comments have been renamed so that their names appear chronologically, and those are the numbers that will be used in the rest of the dissertation.

Deselection manual	
No.	Descriptions of deselection criteria
1	Hyperlinks
2	Hashtags (unless they provide meaning)
3	Abbreviations such as LOL, oof etc. (unless a response is given to the comment providing a context that makes it possible to interpret the statement)
4	Tags (people tagging other people without related text)

⁷ A commentator is a person who writes a comment, whereas a respondent is a person who leaves a reply to another comment.

⁸ We regard the original comment of a person as that commentator's first post and as one that does not form part of a discussion taking place in another commentator's post.

4	Emojis (comments containing nothing but emojis without related text)
5	Comments of clarification (asking “what happened”)
6	Other topics (people commenting on subjects that do not concern the advertisement in question)
7	Written skills acting a hindrance (when impossible to understand the meaning of a statement)
8	Comments only related to the respective apology
9	Identical comments appearing more than once from the same commentator

Table 3: Deselection manual

Both the qualitative and quantitative research will take their starting points in the cleansed data described above. As the quantitative research is based on findings from the qualitative research (cf. 4.2 Research strategy: mixed methods), we start by accounting for the qualitative part. The sections deal with the research methods behind the two approaches: how the comments have been and will be collected and/or analysed for the quantitative and qualitative parts of the analysis. Included in the qualitative part are paragraphs delving into data collection and data analysis, seeing that basis for the analysis is taken in a selection of the cleansed data, while included in the quantitative part is a paragraph delving into data analysis, seeing that basis is taken in the entire poll of cleansed data.

4.4.1 Qualitative data collection

The purpose with delving into a restricted number of comments in the qualitative part of the research is to go in-depth with the content, examining arguments and claims in relation to PC. Doing this explorative research, which is the pre-coding process where codes will be established for the quantitative analysis, the purpose is also to investigate what could be relevant to count later on. The following section provides accounts of the selection of the data for the qualitative analysis along with a description and explanation of the proposed theoretical concept and of a special category inductively identified.

4.4.1.1 Qualitative data selection

As explained in the 4.2 Research strategy: mixed methods section, we started the research with a deductive orientation by deducing two main camps within the literature on PC. These camps however

are open to discussion and are not exclusive, why we with this more general orientation in mind went through the cleansed data with these two positions guiding us while still maintaining an inductive orientation towards our data. In doing so, we found that the comments seem to be possible of being divided into six different dimensions or subcategories based on *high*, *medium* or *low relevance*, three belonging to the PC opponents camp and three to the PC advocates camp, thus on the basis of this inductive establishment, the conceptualisation of the PC discourse moves across this simple binary logic of the two camps. Thus, it is also worth stressing that our orientation to the data has been deductive in an additional manner (besides being guided by the division between the two PC camps), being contributing to shaping the formation of the subcategories. However, the orientation in this process should not be regarded as simply being deductive, but it is also inductive, as we by reviewing the data have been able to link already available concepts from the literature relating to PC with our dataset. To start with, Ford's (2017) theorisation of PC in relation to social norms of ingroup and outgroup members has contributed to guiding our conceptualisation of the six subcategories. More specifically, her take on PC has shaped our understanding of the range of attitudes evident in the comments, resulting in us being able to range the categories in accordance to *perception of relevance*. This idea is based on Ford's notion of *intergroup competition*, seeing that if you are *high*, *medium* or *low* it can affect your need to engage in intergroup competition and thus determines how relevant it is for the commentator in question to defend his/her attitude towards PC. While Ford's notion has shaped our understanding of both camps, being a PC opponent, O'Neill's discussion about PC advocates has contributed in developing our categorisation of the 'PC advocates'-camp. He believes that PC advocates do not take the element of intention into consideration when assessing whether something is offensive or not. Thus, besides ranging comments into high, medium or low for both camps, it is also possible to range the comments of PC advocates into the perceived degree of intention of those offending; ranging from those who believe that the offender acted intentionally to those who believe that the offence was unintentional. The PC concepts discussed in this notion can be found in section 2. Literature review. These proposed subcategories can be found in the following that includes a preliminary description of these subcategories.

Initially proposed theoretical PC concept

Below is a description of the proposed subcategories. It needs to be emphasised that the meaning deducted from each statement is regarded solely in relation to the particular advertisement and will not be regarded as the commenters' attitudes to the subjects in general. The theoretical PC concept

that will guide us through the qualitative analysis will be referred to as either the *initially proposed theoretical PC concept* or merely as the *proposed theoretical PC concept*.

PC advocates

All attitudes found within the 'PC advocates'-category convey a belief that how the wrongdoer is representing minority groups is inappropriate, indicating an opinion that one ought to respect the personhood of other individuals or groups.

High relevance

Statements belonging to the 'high relevance'-category of PC advocates can be characterised as possessing no tolerance to potential racism. More, the statements express a belief that the company produced a (to them) offensive advertisement intentionally. Having no tolerance or doubt about the intention, these individuals see anything and everything as being an attack and thus as racism.

Medium relevance

Individuals with an attitude expressing medium relevance are characterised by a strive for racial equality, as well as a belief that there are certain ways to portray and verbalise ethnic groups. Additionally, such statements express that the wrongdoer could have acted unintentionally.

Low relevance

Statements belonging to the 'PC advocates'-category of low relevance can be characterised by a belief that the wrongdoer acted unintentionally. Through their statements, people express a dissatisfaction with the advertisement, however acknowledging that the offence was not done intentionally by the company, hence being a mistake.

PC opponents

PC opponents believe in freedom of expression to different degrees. Important to note is that being part of the PC opponents camp does not entail being racist nor being against multiculturalism. Therefore, a person might be against racism, however not finding these particular advertisements offensive or include elements of racism. PC opponents might find racism to be a societal issue, yet still finding people too sensitive in relation to the cases.

High relevance

Belonging to the high relevance as an opponent of PC, one express hatred towards other races and/or be against multiculturalism. This type of statement can therefore be categorised as carrying a racist attitude.

Medium relevance

The subcategory of medium relevance as a PC opponent is defined by people believing in freedom of expression in that individuals and companies have the right to act, speak or write more or less as they please. Statements belonging to this category can also carry the opinion that people today are too sensitive, thus believing that the particular case has blown out of proportion. Statements of this category may also express incomprehension as for why the particular case has turned out to be a problem to the public. Overall such attitudes disregard the racism discourse in the particular advertisement.

Low relevance

A statement coming from an individual belonging to low relevance under PC opponent use the platform to address other things than that of racism or the particular advertisement. Such an individual could be joking* or simply indicating finding the advertisement amusing, thus indirectly disregarding the relevance of a racism discourse in that advertisement.

*It needs to be emphasized that we are aware that humour is a subjective matter. Nevertheless, in every instance where humour occur, we will make an attempt at assessing the type of humour more objectively by thoroughly deliberating all possible meanings of it and thereby not solely resting on our predetermined assessment. However, we are recognisant of that it will be difficult for us to interpret comments featuring humour without drawing on our subjective perception of it. We are also aware that humour is not necessarily an indicator of an 'I do not care'-attitude and therefore belong to PC opponents, low, since humour can also be used in many ways to express varying emotions, where for example cynical humour can be an expression of both concern or discontent and the previous mentioned careless attitude.

From a short conceptualisation of the initially proposed theoretical PC concept follows a clarification of a distinctive response type identified inductively from our data.

Triangulation: racism against racism

In the process of selecting comments for the qualitative analysis from the Qiaobi case, comments significantly different from those found in the H&M and Dove cases surfaced. These comments appeared to include negative stereotyping or contain wording that can be characterised as being potentially racist towards Asia, Asians and whites. Thus, instead of having racist undercurrents or negative stereotyping in relation to black people (the people potentially represented in an offending manner in the three advertisements) as the comments from the other cases, some of the Qiaobi comments appeared to be racist towards those potentially offending black people (in this case the Chinese or those white people that historically have been perceived as degrading blacks). Another varying element in relation to some of these comments is that they are not targeting the company behind the advertisement, like the comments to the advertisements by H&M and Dove, but they are rather targeting the country or its inhabitants. Thus, a supplementary category was identified during this inductive process of going through the dataset for the Qiaobi case, which is response we label 'racism against racism' (r-a-r). These comments are unique cases that do not adequately fit in with the other comments and the proposed theoretical concept accounted for in the previous paragraph, why they require a category themselves.

Besides resting on the issue of r-a-r, some of these comments are also unique in the sense that they do not solely address racism and discrimination in similar ways to the other two cases, which draws on the distinction between black and white people, but instead they attend to racism and discrimination voicing a triangle of ethnicities consisting of blacks, whites and Asians. This might show that the Qiaobi case is somehow special, which could be attributed to basis being taken in a company that is not present in the West. However, the way in which this triangle is manifesting itself might in fact add something interesting to our research, because it challenges the theoretical discourse of PC; this response type does not fit in with the two categories, because it neither reflects believing that people have the freedom to express themselves freely (the stance of a PC opponent) nor does it reflect people being in the quest for racial equality (the stance of a PC advocate). Alternatively, this response type reacts to the advertisement by being racist towards the offenders, repressing racism with racism. Somehow this category is a place where commentators with extreme attitudes meet by drawing on features from both PC camps, which is also the reason why it becomes impossible to locate them as either belonging to the advocates or opponents side. Hence, inductively and by not regarding the two camps initially identified deductively, once again the data shows us something that is not included in the simple binary logic presented in the idea of the two camps. A similar response

type also possible to categorise as r-a-r is comments appearing to be negatively stereotyping or racist towards people who historically have been considered those treating black people in a discriminating way (in this case, presented as white people). Common for these comments is that it is not possible to position them within either of the camps, instead they appear to contain elements from both camps with repressing utterances of racism, and thus being part of the 'r-a-r'-category. Yet, while some comments in all three cases do feature negativity towards white people, this exact type of comment found in the Qiaobi case is not apparent in the H&M and Dove cases, where it is clear whether a comment belongs to one category or another (see section 5.3 A triangulation? for an exploration of why these comments do not fall in line with the characteristics of the 'r-a-r'-category).

4.4.1.2 Selection of comments for qualitative analysis

The purpose with the qualitative analysis is to inductively arrive at an even better understanding and clear definitions of the above mentioned proposed subcategories, what we will refer to as our theoretical PC concept, which in turn will serve as a coding guide for the quantitative analysis (see section 4.4.2.1 Quantitative data analysis for an elaboration). Therefore, on the basis of our proposed subcategories, 18 different comments have been collected, as we need data in the form of comments representing these subcategories, why a selection criterion was to select one comment representing each of the six subcategories for each advertisement, hence ending up with a total of 18 comments: six for H&M, six for Dove and six for Qiaobi. By selecting one example for each subcategory for the three advertisements, we aim at finding out exactly what types of responses and attitudes are present in the data. More, in order to be able to illustrate all apparent responses and attitudes within each subcategory thoroughly, we will include other comments as well when they enable us to deepen the understanding of each subcategory. As the analysis unfolds, we will determine when and how many will be drawn upon. By defining the different categories into detail, we will be able to count the comments in the quantitative analysis knowing what each subcategory typically entails and hence exactly what to look for in the counting process. Thus, to some degree, we apply a grounded coding idea in that we discover how to define the codes (or categories) for the counting in the quantitative analysis and how to make sense of these codes. More, from this grounded coding idea, we will also draw on the aspect of constant comparison. This entails that maintaining a close connection between the data being analysed and the initially proposed conceptualisation of the PC camps so that the theoretical elaboration of the PC subcategories can emerge and result in a more comprehensive and inductively derived theoretical PC concept. (Bryman 2012, 568) As accounted for above, a

supplementary category, that of ‘racism against racism’, was identified inductively in the comments to the Qiaobi case. Operationally, the comments that are related to the issue of ‘r-a-r’ are disregarded when selecting data illustrating the subcategories of the theoretical concept, but ‘r-a-r’ comment-examples will instead be handled individually in a separate subsection in the analysis. Thus, we include additional comments that accounts for the uniqueness of the Qiaobi case. Yet, when selecting comments illustrative of the ‘r-a-r’-issue, we will carefully determine whether we are dealing with this issue or just Asia or anything Asian. These elements are allowed in comments reflecting the ideas behind the proposed theoretical concept provided that they do not address potential racism by being racist.

Overall, we have therefore selected 18 comments from the poll of cleansed data for the qualitative analysis helping to explore the theoretical PC concept, while a selection of comments from the Qiaobi case is chosen to illustrate the triangulation issue. A table listing the comments selected for each case, subcategories and r-a-r can be found below and screenshots of the comments can be found in Appendix 6.

Case	PC Ad. H	PC ad. M	PC ad. L	PC op. H	PC op. M	PC op. L	r-a-r
H&M	48	80	57	102	18	15	-
Dove	100	60	4	123	27	20	-
Qiaobi	85	42	39	31	81	14	*

Table 4: Comment numbers selected from each of the cases, for each of the subcategories

* the selection of comments consists of: 4, 121, 129, 72, 86, 75, 102, 117

We acknowledge that we somehow are selecting comments from the poll subjectively, and that this might undermine the quality of our research. This therefore brings the issues of reliability and validity into play. For the qualitative part, we understand *reliability* as the degree to which the findings are derived from deliberate and well-defined procedures, not being a product of accidental research conditions, and with *validity* entailing to what extent the data interpretation is diversified and not narrow-minded (Kirk and Miller 1986, 7). In order to meet these two quality criteria, we have attempted to uphold a systematic procedure for selecting the comments for the qualitative analysis, nevertheless knowing that subjectivity somehow will be a problem for qualitative researchers when interpreting what is relevant to scrutinise. To attain a systematic selection procedure, the main criteria was to identify comments that touched upon the proposed characteristics of the six subcategories and

the ‘racism against racism’-category, looking for ‘typical’ examples for each category that are instructive, illustrative and somehow representative of that category. More, the comments selected will typically include a discussion in the form of answers from other users to the original post. Therefore, in some cases, we prioritised comments, where the commentator commented further in such a discussion, as these additional comments help provide a more accurate understanding of that person’s attitude on the topic.

4.4.1.3 Qualitative data interpretation

As explained previously, the purpose with the qualitative analysis is to create clear definitions of the subcategories, and in order to arrive at this point, an explorative and in-depth interpretation and analysis process is required, and as explained previously, (4.1 Social constructivism), we approach our research as interpretivists, taking into consideration social contexts, drawing meaning from the subjective experiences of people. More, in the process of interpreting and analysing the data, we will be focusing on the original comment and not equally on the discussion belonging to that comment. The discussion related to the original comment will only be taken into consideration if it helps clarify the original commentator’s position.

Seeing that our qualitative analysis is inductive, no specific theory will dictate the process of interpreting and analysing the data. Instead, we will be using discourse analysis as an underlying approach when analysing, which corresponds well with our social-constructivist standpoint, as discourse analysis is part of this social sciences research, believing that basic beliefs about existence are established by people ‘living in a historical and cultural context’, created by speech and acts. (Pedersen 2011, 2) Also, according to Foucault, discourse analysis is a historically specific way for human sciences to relate to reality (Pedersen 2011, 3), why we also intent to take into account the historical contexts of the comments and their content, resulting in a revelation of societal characteristics of the comments. Discourse analysis is also often concerned with linguistics, yet, as explained, we will be focusing on the content of the comments and not as much on the linguistics, looking at relations between comments and societal and historical contexts. The examination of these interactions will to some extent be informed by a theoretical lens in the form of our literature review, where we will be examining arguments within the discourse, investigating from what perspectives they are coming. Thus, we conduct an analysis on the basis of a discourse analysis approach, which

in turn results in clearly defined categories, which we will then refer to as our *deducted theoretical PC concept*.

By conducting qualitative research with the aim of obtaining in-depth insights into the perspectives and world views of human beings, it is likely that researchers will interpret the account of others based on their own subjective assumptions about the world. This therefore might be counterproductive to the validity of our study, but by taking a discursive approach, we heighten the validity by attempting to bring in a wider and more objective understanding of the topics occurring in the comments. Adding to the validity, two researchers will be making sense of the objects for interpretation, whereby more viewpoints are brought into play.

4.4.2 Quantitative data collection

Whereas the qualitative data and the analysis of it work to provide a comprehensive account of the commentators' positioning and response types in relation to the PC discourse evident in the proposed theoretical concept, the purpose with the quantitative analysis in this last deductive move is to test the theoretical concept, quantifying the subcategories that are to be defined qualitatively and looking for how these are dispersed.

The data that will be subject for handling in the quantitative part of the analysis is the cleansed data accounted for in section 4.4 Data collection (cf. Appendix 5), consisting of comments given on social media to three different potentially perceived racist advertisements by H&M, Dove and Qiaobi. The data will be approached taking inspiration from the quantitative research method, content analysis, which provides a flexible and systematic procedure for quantifying content with reference to pre-established categories. The fundamental notion of this method is to uncover content, apparent or latent, of the texts that are to be scrutinised, examining what they concern. (Bryman 2012, 289-90) In being especially interested in what social media users deem acceptable when minorities are represented in advertising, the purpose is to search for ideas within the comments, uncovering how people through their arguments decide their attitudes on PC to the three advertisements. On this basis, the aim is to quantify these apparent or latent attitudes towards the PC discourse.

The technique of content analysis is especially reflected in the analysis process and will be touched upon when relevant. The following paragraph starts out by providing an account of the data treatment method that will be applied in the quantitative analysis, delving into the procedure and the necessary steps taken to ensure consistent handling of the data.

4.4.2.1 Quantitative data analysis

The paragraphs to come deal with the management, analysis and interpretation of the qualitative social media comments that have been collected. The data will be treated quantitatively using coding as a quantitative analysis method, drawing inspiration from content analysis. The idea is to test the theoretical PC concept extracted through the qualitative in-depth analysis of the subcategories, searching for the elements to be counted. In our dissertation, we will code with basis in subjects and themes, interpreting the comments according to the proposed theoretical concept established in the qualitative analysis, subcategories that can help us bring into being a classification of the different attitudes found within the PC discourse (Bryman 2012, 297).

Using coding to treat data

Coding is an approach we will follow in the quantitative analysis in order to be able to quantify our data in relation to the theoretical PC concept, according to which the PC attitudes are classified. The coding process is a means for structuring and categorising the entire poll of data that before being treated using coding is labelled unstructured data, because it does not provide any meaningful understandings to the research problem without established connections (Bryman 2012, 247).

While the qualitative part of the analysis can be compared to a form of pre-coding process within which categories are derived inductively by reading through data and designing a coding frame in advance that makes the foundation for the codes, this quantitative part is similar to a post-coding process, whereby the data is carefully examined and assigned to these established subcategories (Bryman 2012, 247). This data treatment procedure of post-coding will be guided by two elements: a coding schedule and a coding manual. The subsequent paragraph presents the structure of the coding schedule and explains the components constituting it, while the following paragraph provides details of the coding manual used to instruct us when coding the cleansed data. These elements are highly essential principles to include, as the post-coding process might entail potential variability in the coding of the data (Bryman 2012, 247).

Clarification of coding schedule and its application

To arrange the cleansed data according to the deduced theoretical PC concept, a coding schedule is modelled, which is a scheme into which all data related to the research problem is to be entered (Bryman 2012, 298). As illustrated below, the coding schedule, into which the data for the quantitative analysis of this dissertation will be entered, is organised into three columns; *comment no*,

advocate and *opponent*. The first column label ‘comment no.’ is more or less self-explanatory, but it is worth noting that the comment no. is based on the numbers the comments were entitled during the third phase when all data had been cleansed. Finally, the second and third columns, ‘opponent’ and ‘advocate’, are expressions of the two camps commonly found within the PC debate, and these are further divided into three subcategories, each labelled ‘low’, ‘medium’ and ‘high’ according to how relevant the commentator in question deems the issue. This subdivision follows the lines of the theoretical PC concept, labelling the degrees of a PC advocate or PC opponent (for a more detailed explanation of the deduced theoretical PC concept, see section 4.4.1.1 Qualitative data selection). When in the process of coding, the design of the schedule allows us to tick the box that represents the PC attitude expressed in the comment in question. The process of ticking each comment in the schedule will be repeated for each collected comment and for each of the three cases (H&M, Dove and Qiaobi). It should be noted, that in the case with Qiaobi, since a supplementary category was identified, comments of this character will not be coded against the theoretical concept but will instead be labelled ‘racism against racism’. The results of this coding process can be found in Appendices 7, 8 and 9.

Comment no.	PC advocate			PC opponent		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
1					X	
2						X
3	X					
4						X
5	X					
6	X					
7	X					
8		X				

Illustration 4: Screenshot example of coding schedule

Before carrying out the coding process of all comments, we will be conducting pilots test of the coding schedule, seeking to support an enhancement of its quality and thus ensuring that it is possible to arrange the data according to the modelled schedule. However, piloting is not solely a procedure necessary in the final coding phase, but it might also contribute to warrant against the risk of not having available categories to cover all potential types of cases. Piloting as well as coding manuals

can be conducive to securing consistency between us as coders for the sake of intra-coder reliability (this is further covered in the following paragraph *Clarification of coding manual*) (Bryman 2012, 304), and according to recommendations, reliability can also be checked by letting more than one coder conduct the coding process of at least 10 per cent of the data. (Bryman 2012, 623) We, however, have decided to code the entire dataset together, because the subcategories offered by the theoretical PC concept is checked against qualitative data that oftentimes is open to varying interpretations, adding to the complexity of coding the dataset with regularity.

As for now, having presented an account of the coding schedule to be applied in the quantitative analysis, together with an explanation of its usage, the next paragraph describes the guidelines to be followed when coding the comments, determining whether a comment belongs to one subcategory or another. Inspiration is drawn from the idea behind a coding manual.

Clarification of coding manual

A coding manual is basically instructions on how to code in relation to the modelled coding schedule. The manual includes instructional material, listing all possible categories and subcategories to be coded and advises what each category covers (Bryman 2012, 299). Thus, these manuals aim at providing definite principles for coders with the result that the people coding are fully familiar with what content should be included under each specific category and are enlightened about how to interpret the different categories, making them capable of determining what piece of data to allocate to what particular category. (Bryman 2012, 248) It is on the basis of this instructional listing in the coding manual that coders will complete the coding schedule (Bryman 2012, 299).

The guiding principles of our coding manual is first and foremost constructed during the qualitative analysis of the selected comments. As already touched upon, during this step, the objective is to scrutinise the response types evident in the comments, deducing the characteristic selection criteria for each subcategory and deriving definitions of them (the deduced theoretical PC concept). These derived definitions then form part of the guidelines against which the content of each comment will be coded in the quantitative part. These definitions are also those corresponding to the subcategories listed in the coding schedule under the columns ‘opponent’ and ‘advocate’ and thus provide guidance on what each of these dimensions concern and what should be noticed when deciding to allocate a comment to a certain subcategory.

Second of all, prior to conducting the qualitative analysis, we have formulated additional guidelines that are to be followed during the coding process, yielding a background against which to assess the content of the comments ensuring that all comments are coded with a large degree of uniformity. These secondary principles relate to how we as coders must go about the more conventional SoMe layout and content of the comments, meaning how the comments are organised with related responses and untraditional forms of text (emojis, which are small digital images used to express an idea or emotion). In short, these guiding principles relate to the notions that follows. 1) As it is possible for third-parties (not the original commentator and not the company under scrutiny) to comment on the first entries of commentators, so is it possible for the first commentator to respond to the responses of other social media users. These potential responses by a commentator might bring forth additional significance of this individual's attitude towards the PC discourse and thus help determine the attitudes with more certainty when being able to obtain more informed details. 2) Emojis will merely be included in the interpretation of the apparent PC attitudes if they follow text, because emojis that do not follow text are particularly open to interpretation (words might carry different meanings, but emojis carry an even more varied palette of connotations dependent on the interpreter and often their true meaning is lost in translation (Carmen 2016)). Moreover, as covered in section 4.4.1.1 Qualitative data selection, a supplementary category was identified in having an inductive orientation to the data, which was the issue of 'racism against racism' in the Qiaobi case. In this case, it is consequential that we do not simply regard the comments referring to Asia or anything Asian as belonging to the category 'racism against racism'. Not all the comments have racist undercurrents, but it is rather natural that many of these comments possibly make mention of things related to Asia due to the advertisement being produced by a Chinese company.

Conclusively, by treating data using coding where we institute guidelines making sure that the data is treated consistently, provides a means for ensuring reliability. Consistency is more easily obtained when those carrying out the coding process are given these guidelines to follow (as described above) and thereby seeking intra-coder reliability, trying to make certain that each coder is consistent over time. Additionally, as our data is coded by more than one individual, these guidelines can help support inter-coder reliability because consistency is pursued across all possible coders. (Bryman 2012, 304)

4.4.2.2 Data interpretation

Based on the ticks made in the coding schedule, quantitative results will be drawn using percentages to illustrate the prevalence of each PC subcategories, thus with the qualitative character of the comments being supported by quantitative results. A frequency table and graphs will illustrate the findings from the coding process, listing each of the main categories and subcategories contained in the theoretical concept and the percentages that these people represent of the entire sample belonging to each of the subcategories (cf. section 7.2 Results from quantitative analysis). The comments coded as belonging to the ‘racism against racism’-category will not form part of the statistical results of the subcategories from the deduced theoretical PC concept, but as an alternative, the results from this category will be listed with its own results and handled on equal terms as each of the PC categories from the theoretical concept. It will however be included in the total percentage of the data, which is constituted by the main camps and r-a-r.

As quantitative research forms part of our research strategy as well, a research strategy within which quantitative researchers often have particular preoccupations that reflect the beliefs about what is acceptable knowledge, we find it necessary to convey our stance on the issue of generalisability. When conducting quantitative research, the researcher is typically interested in being able to generalise the findings beyond the confines of the distinct context within which the research is undertaken. (Bryman 2012, 176-77) However, in conducting a mixed methods study, we do not believe that the preoccupation with generalisability restrains our view on what we regard as acceptable knowledge and findings. In taking an interpretivist and constructivist position, we contend that the context of the phenomena being explored is vital for the results we draw, finding that these are not independent of social participants’ actions. Thus, we believe in acknowledging potential contextual differences and also the possibility of different interpretations, which we believe will exist when aiming at gaining an insight into the phenomenon of PC based on the subjective accounts of individuals. In this connection and although seeking to draw quantitative results, we regard these subjective accounts as valuable for our research by virtue of their ability to provide in-depth interpretations and attitudes about the PC discourse without pre-establishing the nature of this phenomenon. On this basis, we realise that when we are left with the results from the quantitative analysis, the results might be subject to change over time concurrently with the PC discourse being subject to changes through social interaction. Due to these illuminated elements, the aim of our research will not be to generalise the findings in its entirety beyond the cases that form part of our

sample. Yet we might assert that the results can be indications of something in relation to cases sharing similarities with our cases and with almost identical confines, but the mere purpose of our research will be to generalise to the members of the population from which we have collected our data, and in that way, provide an insight into the status quo of the PC discourse in online settings.

The issues of reliability and validity are equally relevant in the process of doing quantitative research as a means to ensure quality in research. In this regard, we understand *reliability* as revolving around whether the derived results are capable of being replicated and *validity* as being concerned with whether what is set out to be measured is actually measured (Bryman 2012, 46-47). By providing an as transparent and straightforward account of the procedures applied during the quantitative part, we are attempting to ensure a high level of reliability in that it to a larger extent becomes possible for us or others to repeat the same research at a later point in time. Also, by seeking to further develop the proposed theoretical PC concept through a qualitative analysis of selected comments, the validity of the quantitative results is increased, because through a systematic qualitative procedure, we strive at reaching a well-founded theoretical concept that are to serve as coding guide in the quantitative analysis. Therefore, we expect to arrive at an as accurate measure for illuminating what we want to denote, namely the elements contained within the different PC subcategories, which contributes to making the quantitative results really denote the different perspectives on the PC discourse.

4.5 Analysis design

Whereas the preceding sections have provided detailed accounts of the elements contained in the research strategy, the below overview will recap and connect the previous accounts and thereby lay down the structure for the following chapter.

The first part (section 5) of the analysis chapter will be based on a qualitative approach and scrutinise selected comments in order to enhance our understanding of the proposed theoretical PC concept, resulting in a well-founded and analytically-based deduced theoretical PC concept (section 6).

While the first part will be based on qualitative research, the second part (section 7) is quantitative and within this step, the result from the previous analysis, the deduced theoretical PC concept, will be applied, serving as a coding guide in drawing quantitative results.

Having acquired qualitative and quantitative results, a new chapter (Chapter 4) will emanate from the results. Here, we will interpret the findings from the first and second parts, continuously relating the interpretations to the problem statement, and besides revolving around making sense of the quantitative results, Chapter 4 will also include a discussion focusing on connecting reflections that occurred to us during the analyses to the objective of our research problem.

The following section initiates Chapter 3, section 5 and the first part of the analysis.

CHAPTER 3

5. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The first analysis part explores the proposed theoretical PC concept derived deductively from the PC literature as well as inductively from our data (see Chapter 2, Method for an elaborate account). In the following paragraphs, an in-depth analysis of comments belonging to each of the six subcategories constituting our theoretical PC concept, expressing different degrees of advocacy and opponency, is conducted. Thereby, we attempt to draw up clear-cut definitions of the six subcategories, finding what distinguishes them from each other. The analysis is divided into three main parts: 1) PC advocates, 2) PC opponents and 3) triangulation. The first and second parts deal with the two PC camps of the PC literature and within each of these, we explore the six subcategories, three for each camp. The advertisements from H&M, Dove and Qiaobi are not addressed individually, but collectively during each of the six subcategories. The third part explores the special issue of racism against racism (r-a-r) found within the Qiaobi case. We include discussions, those unfolding from the comment, when they are insightful and provide an additional meaning to the attitude of the original commentator. From this introductory account, we begin with the first PC category, PC advocates, and its subcategories.

5.1 PC advocates

Following the lines of the literature on political correctness, PC advocates are the ones believing that there are certain ways to make mention of and represent minority groups. Relative to the data of this study, the attitudes found within this main camp and category evaluate the portrayal of minority groups in the advertisements as inappropriate in having racist undertones. The subcategories belonging to the 'PC advocates'-category are analysed starting with high relevance, then medium and at last low relevance.

5.1.1 PC advocates: high relevance

As propounded in the method section in attempting to distinguish the six subcategories from each other, a PC advocate, high, can be characterised as having no tolerance to potential racism. Such an individual believes that the wrongdoer acted intentionally, and thus this attitude appears to be the most extreme version of a PC advocate. We start by looking into a reaction to H&M's advertisement.

H&M: PC advocates, high, comment no. 48

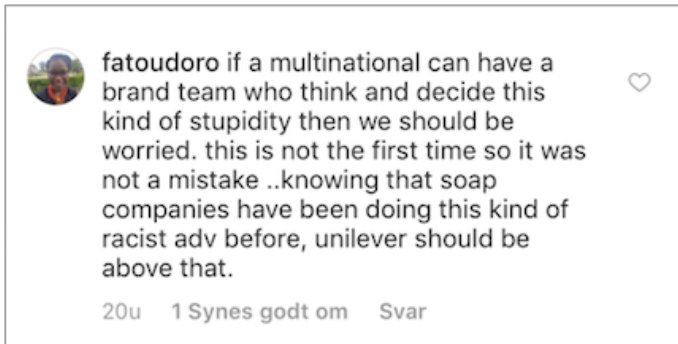


From *tk_fablv*'s comment, it is evident that this person is highly offended by H&M's way of representing the black boy in its advertisement, attacking the company claiming that it wanted to distress the black community deliberately. In doing so, he/she asserts that it was a fully intentional move by H&M to be racist, but by stating "*@hm you are full of it*" (Appendix 5.1, 48 H&M), it comes across that this person not only believes that this was an isolated incident, instead seeing H&M as a company possessing racist intentions. More, it appears that this person imagines that H&M's marketing team accepted the advertisement "knowing" that it was racist and with the intention to displease the black community. However, considering the discussion between the commentator and the respondents, to this person, the perceived clash seems not to be the only conflict, which is conveyed in the following statement: "*In a world where black people are targets and made fun of.*" (Appendix 5.1, 48.1 H&M) It is as if *tk_fablv* takes this clash to a more societal level, expressing dissatisfaction in believing that black people are disadvantaged and stand alone against the rest of the society. Adding to this, the commentator not only directs this comment towards non-blacks but also directs frustration towards black people who, in *tk_fablv*'s opinion, fail to recognise the ostracism taking place. By stating, "*(...)if you are black and feel this is over reacting then I feel sorry for you!*" (Appendix 5, 48.1 H&M), it comes across that the person has no tolerance of other interpretations made about blacks' current societal position. More specifically, the commentator implies that if you are black and do not understand the seriousness of the issue then you are truly lost and have failed in life as a member of the black community, not defending one's ancestry. This, and that the person explicitly states that there is no amount of money capable of disregarding the importance of maintaining respect to one's own culture (Appendix 5.1, 48.1 H&M), alluding to the boy (and his parents) failing in doing so, possibly indicate that this person has strong loyalty towards his/her origin.

Referring to Becky Ford's (2017) proposed connection between PC and group norms, some notions might contribute to explaining why *tk_fablv* choose to censure both non-black people who disagree with his/her opinion about H&M's advertisement and black people who do not find H&M's portrayal of black people disrespectful (cf. section 2. Literature review). First of all, as this comment seemingly addresses the issue of PC in the way the commentator expresses that there are certain ways to make mention of marginalised groups, and that this applies to both non-black and black people (outgroup and ingroup members), something suggests that he/she communicatively establishes PC as an ideology. It seems as if this person attacks opponents of his/her opinion offending and accusing them of being dumb or racist, expressing displeasure with those who do not follow what he/she regards as ingroup norms. This is seen in the utterance *"And to everyone stating what's wrong with the hoodie , either you are racist, dumb or just sleep!!!!"* (Appendix 5.1, 48 H&M), which also somehow reveals that he/she has no tolerance to other people's opinions or interpretations of the advertisement, maybe being influenced by perceptual bias or paranoid style when making this claim about group violations. Ford posits that once ingroup members prescribe norms to outgroup members as well, norms are not just descriptive (how people behave) or injunctive (how people are expected to behave) but they become ideological. By some means, *tk_fablv*'s comment leaves the impression that he/she is using PC as an intergroup phenomenon to engage in intergroup competition by making an attempt at reframing the black/white rivalry issue in a manner that represents non-blacks (what he/she sees as the rival group) negatively. (Ford 2017, 2-3) In censuring all people who do not share the same view on the H&M issue as *tk_fablv* does, this person puts these people in unfavourable positions, representing them as the ones that have the incorrect worldviews, for what he/she considers violations of what *tk_fablv* considers group norms (Ford 2017, 3-4). Second of all, by attacking black people for not following the presumably agreed upon group norms that he/she regards as common for blacks, this person sees the ingroup norms of black people as injunctive, because he/she believes that there are certain ways for people to behave, communicate and think. (Ford 2017, 3) In directing frustrations towards black people, believing that some are ignoring the issue of black ostracism, by linking the comment to Ford's conceptualisation, one might argue that this person shows disparagement of the actions of those who he/she articulates in the comment as ingroup members. The wording of the comment conveys that these people who he/she is referring to are avoiding to make group membership salient (those who choose not to see that racism towards black people is evident in the society), which is asserted by Ford to be due to the possibility that it might entail a dilution of the integrity of the group (Ford 2017, 3-4). By this, it can be proposed that this person through the

comment creates the boundaries between in- and outgroups, and by means of communication, the blacks who are considered to have a more relaxed relationship towards potential racism are constituted as being outgroup members.

Dove: PC advocates, high, comment no. 100



In the way the person leaving the above comment to Dove's Instagram post draws up her view on the case, seeing the creation of the advertisement as being intentional and giving the company no benefit of the doubt, this comment clearly shares the features of the initially synthesised subcategory of a PC advocate, high. In the wording of the commentator, *fatoudoro*, it comes across that she is convinced that the advertisement by Dove is meant to offend people with its racist insinuations, labelling the action of the company with words and phrases such as 'stupidity' and "(...) *when an adv is clear then there is no misunderstanding*" (Appendix 5.2, 100 Dove). It evidently appears that she has the belief that Dove consciously produced an advertisement with a racist message, seeing that, as she states, the company has done it before. As noted in section 4.3.2 Case presentations, Dove has indeed been subject to criticism previously resulting from advertisements carrying potentially offensive messages, e.g. in 2011 when airing an advertisement with three women, progressively paler-skinned, standing underneath signs saying 'before' and 'after', with a black woman underneath the 'before-sign' and a white woman underneath the 'after-sign'. Additionally, in expressing her dissatisfaction with the Dove advertisement, *fatoudoro* not only refers to prior racist advertising produced by Dove, but she also emphasises the history of racist advertising by soap companies (for further reference, see section 5.1.2 PC advocates: medium relevance, Dove 60). With this, it seems that she possesses no toleration of Dove's action (not even when challenged by a respondent with a completely opposite view on the case), maintaining that the company ought not to have created an advertisement with the potential of offending, knowing that other soap companies historically have been doing these kinds of advertisements before. In stating "(...) *unilever should be above that*" (Appendix 5.2, 100 Dove), it is not inconceivable that perhaps she draws on the notion that Dove as part of its marketing

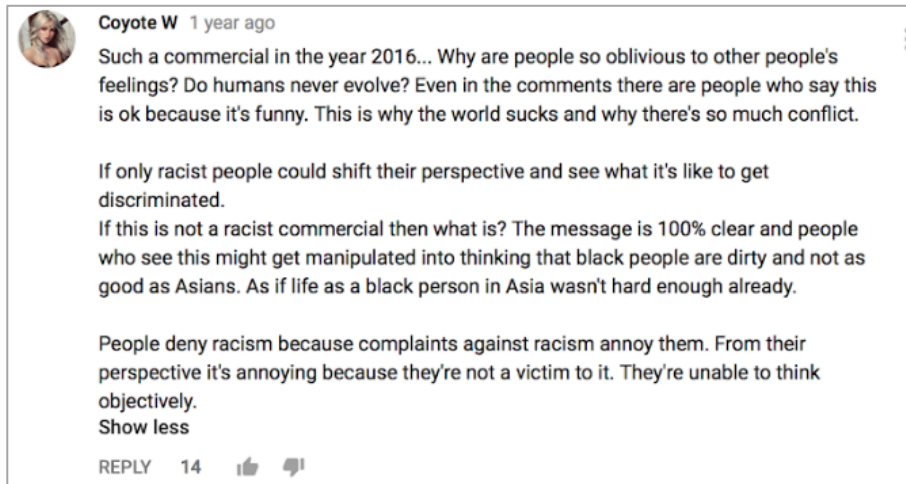
cornerstones launched a campaign for ‘Real Beauty’, claiming to support the education and inspiration of girls “*on a wider definition of beauty and to make them feel more confident about themselves*” (Conor 2017). In referring to this image-like focus, one can argue that *fatoudoro* might see the potential racist degree of this advertisement as clearly standing in opposition to what the company is trying to communicate with the ‘Real Beauty’-campaign.

The commentator reinforces her view by seemingly proclaiming the issue over portraying black people in a potential racist manner as being more comprehensive and profound as such. By asserting “*if a multinational can have brand team who think and decide this kind of stupidity then we should be worried*” (Appendix 5.2, 100 Dove), it comes across as if *fatoudoro* is concerned about the growing influence multinational organisations have with their advertising. In attempting to interpret the meaning of this statement, one might make suppositions about whether she is apprehensive of what role the influence and power of organisations can play in society; whether organisations through their marketing efforts have the ability to affect attitudes. In that way, for her, this issue might be a larger cultural problem with organisations affecting perceptions of ethnicities when sustaining the stereotypes available in society. With reference to the literature review, the belief that discourses might contribute to shaping the way in which people perceive and talk about each other, is in reality one of the concerns of PC advocates (cf. section 2.3.1 The left side of the PC debate). Thus, as alluded to, this concern uttered by *fatoudoro* might just as well rest on her believing that people are capable of changing perceptions and attitudes through discourse. In this connection, her comment furthermore shows signs of a reprimand, believing that multinational organisations have responsibilities and ought to know better. Yet again, this is something addressed in the PC literature, where scholars such as Katsanis (1994) and Bart et al. (1994) refer to the concepts *politically correct brands* and *marketing correctly* within which organisations are advised to take into consideration the notion of sensitive groups, because if seen politically incorrect, consumers might perceive organisations as being ignorant to societal issues and as marketing controversial issues intentionally (cf. section 2.4 PC and advertising). Thus, the issue over portraying certain groups with sensitivity is presumably also a concern found among PC advocates, high.

As the first comment belonging to this subcategory, the commentator in this second example also communicatively establishes a distinction between outgroup and ingroup members, suggesting that those who are not black will not feel offended by the advertisement. However, in writing “*pls historical add from dove*” (Appendix 5.2, 100 Dove), it seems that *fatourodoro* is making an attempt at

explaining herself, pointing out that the reason why she is offended is rational and not plucked from the air.

Qiaobi: PC advocates, high, comment no. 85



Similar to the other two comments selected for this subcategory, in the comment by *Coyote W*, a view is signified in which it can be argued that this person shares the same opinion about the intention behind the production of the potentially racist advertisement. In writing “*If this is not a racist commercial then what is? The message is 100% clear (...)*” (Appendix 5.3, 85 Qiaobi), it becomes evident that this person has no doubt that Qiaobi intended for the advertisement to be racist, and adding to this she somehow indicates that the advertisement contains an extreme degree of potentially portrayed racism. However, she not only directs her critique towards Qiaobi, emphasising the underlying problem of having companies today that create advertisements revolving around controversial content and with the possibility of giving offence to certain people, but she also makes the issue much more human oriented instead of solely organisation oriented. In stating “*Why are people so oblivious to other people's feelings? Do humans never evolve?*” (Appendix 5.3, 85 Qiaobi), she relates the issue to other problems than organisational affairs, applying it to the behaviour taking place between human beings. In doing so, she narrates this behaviour as a societal problem, where people in her opinion are insensible to the feelings of others when disregarding the problem with racist advertisements, stating that the reason for the world being conflict-ridden is because people fail to take these considerations into account. By that, it can be propounded that she is problematising the idea of individual rights, furthering Feldstein's (1997) assertion that these rights are entitlements where people do not acknowledge that others are born with inherited disadvantages and thus are conducive to undermining certain minorities (cf. section 2.3.1 The left side of the PC debate).

Moreover, in attempting to motivate her view about the need for a diminution of issues over racism, *Coyote W* somehow singles out racists, contending that the problem is found in their behaviour, i.e. their lack of being able to “shift their perspectives” (Appendix 5.3, 85 Qiaobi) and put themselves in the place of others. This conveys that by means of communication, she determines what members belong to ingroup and outgroup, verbalising racists as outgroup members, who ought to align their attitudes and views with what she establishes as ingroup norms. Thus, in articulating this perspective, it can be argued that *Coyote W*’s view supports the proposition of PC as an ideology that must be adhered to by ingroup as well as outgroup members. In addition, in the following extract “*From their perspective it’s annoying because they’re not a victim to it. They’re unable to think objectively*” (Appendix 5.3, 85 Qiaobi), it is also possible to detect an act of delegitimising (known as intergroup competition, cf. section 3.1 PC norms: ingroup and outgroup) the people she considers racists and constructs as outgroup members, claiming that their arguments are invalid, as these people are incapable of showing empathy and remaining objective. With these elements manifesting themselves in the comment, it is clear that she has no tolerance to potential racism and seeks racial equality over everything by making claims about racists being the scapegoats suppressing anti-discrimination. The idea of seeking racial equality is further detectable in one of her responses, where she is trying to defend black people committing criminality: “*If you want the crime rate to decrease then help them to evolve. Otherwise the problem will cease to exist no matter how much you discriminate them (...)*” (Appendix 5.3, 85 Qiaobi). This extract indicates that she sees discrimination as counterproductive to helping crime rates come down and people move forward from the stereotypes projected on to them. By some means, this adds to the ‘PC advocates, high’-subcategory, because the person writing the comment to this case argues in a more outspoken and solution-oriented way rather than just pointing at those who do not share a view similar to his/hers or act in accordance with his/her beliefs.

Once again found within this subcategory is the belief that the way we talk about certain groups is the way we come to see them: “*(...) people who see this might get manipulated into thinking that black people are dirty and not as good as Asians. As if life as a black person in Asia wasn’t hard enough already.*” (Appendix 5.3, 85 Qiaobi) Thus, it seems that she too believes that companies can play part in affecting the ways in which we come to decide our attitudes towards specific ethnicities. In this instance, she provides a perspective on the case in relation to the situation black people find themselves in, in Asia. This is a perspective alluded to by others as well, who recall actions indicating racism towards blacks in both China and India. For instance, African people who are complaining

about persistent racism when coming to China and India as students, businessmen, merchants and backpackers (Tharoor 2016) or a mother of a black family who is narrating in the National Geographic about how the scrutiny from the Chinese became too much when her family and her visited China, telling about her frustrations with the Chinese for making a virtue out of their difference in appearance (Davis 2017). While suggesting that black people are already disadvantaged in Asia, *Coyote W* also points to the problem that some black people are subject to discrimination as a result of the actions of other black people: "Should good people suffer because of other people's mistakes?" (Appendix 5.3, 85 Qiaobi) In that way, she seemingly refers yet again to the issue of black people being in an unfavourable situation because of people's memories and unwillingness to accept that one should not generalise across an entire population.

Although presenting her arguments more argumentative *Coyote W* is not in the least solely nuanced. She appears to be overshadowed by her own interpretation and worldview on the state of discrimination. Some of the other people commenting on Qiaobi's advertisement might very well find it funny, but she is incapable of seeing this, contending that because people do not display sensitivity to other's feelings, it makes the world a bad place to be. Furthermore, in one of her responses, when associated with the left camp (the side of the PC opponents), she states that her view has nothing to do with her being left, but for her the act of showing sensitivity towards others is common manners and the right way of displaying humanity and respect towards fellow human beings. (Appendix 5.3, 85.1 Qiaobi)

Summing up

Comparing the elements synthesised in the proposed theoretical PC concept with the elements surfacing in the analysis of comments belonging to the 'PC advocates, high'-subcategory, these comments evidently feature the elements initially proposed. However, few things are also possible to deduct from the comments scrutinised. In claiming that groups not sharing the same inherited history as blacks and attacking both what are established as ingroup and outgroup members, the commentators seemed to express a high degree of anger, often seeing the advertisement as a direct attack on blacks. More specifically, in some of the comments, a range of the commentators draws on their previous experience with and knowledge about the company or in the Qiaobi case the country in question, predominantly negative. In addition, some also seem to be of the opinion that multinational companies have responsibilities when portraying sensitive groups, frequently believing that discourses are social constructions conducive to shaping ways of thinking. While commentators

within this subcategory for the most part have a low tolerance towards other interpretations and understandings of the issue surrounding the racism discourse, these commentators might also be more argumentative in their statements, trying to justify what might be seen as a strive for anti-discrimination.

5.1.2 PC advocates: medium relevance

The attitude of a PC advocate, medium, is proposed as the moderate version of a PC advocate, distinctive in its way of striving for racial equality while in spite of that possibly expressing that the wrongdoer could have acted unintentionally. However, being characterised as a PC advocate, statements located within this subcategory do convey a belief that there are and should be certain ways to represent and make mention of ethnic groups.

H&M: PC advocate, medium, comment no. 80



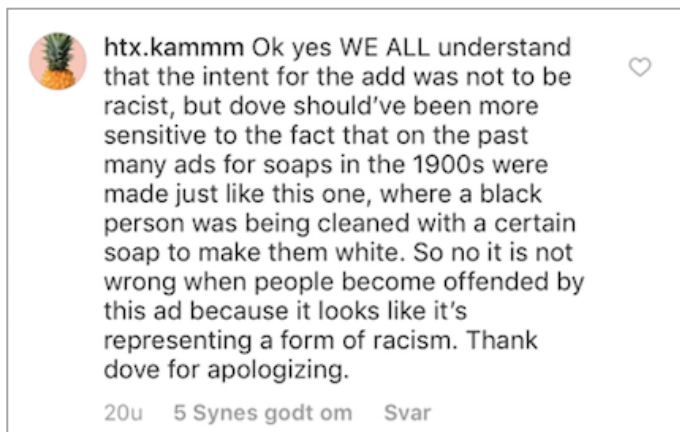
In the first comment explored for this subcategory, *carlaoffthewall* focuses on the advertisement's use of the word 'monkey', claiming that it is a derogatory term used about black people. Taking a look into the history of comparing blacks with monkeys, seemingly, a comparison was made that date as far back as to the year 300, however then being between apes and pagans. Later on, in Christian discourse during the Middle Ages, simians (apes or monkeys) were thought of as being lustful and conducting sinful behaviour, which later resulted in a sexual union between them and humans, and in the 1600s, stories about black women conceiving "drills" (1700s word for 'baboon') reached Europe. Additionally, as AIDS was, and still is, said to have its origins in the careless dealings of simians with Africans, it might have contributed to an understanding that blacks are somehow closer related to monkeys. (Hund and Mills 2016) Having entered into different sciences, the issue of simianisation also became popular within literature, arts and entertainment, which embarked on the dehumanisation of blacks. The aesthetic distance (appearance and geographical distance) between whites and blacks created a feeling of otherness, yet the fact that great apes stem from Africa might also have contributed to the perceived relation between the two. Additionally, and maybe most importantly, the hundreds of years of slavery is likely to have had a psychic impact on the perception

of blacks. In the mid 1800s, leading American material on racial differences depicted black people as being closer to apes, and along with global white dominance, this was taken as evidence for the evolutionary superiority of whites. Lastly, during the first half of the 20th century, popular culture is said to have helped disseminate the belief of white superiority. A genre of jungle movies was created, showcasing the ‘white imaginary’ where white men ruled the black continent. (Hund and Mills 2016)

Having accounted for some historical factors that could have contributed to the use and understanding of ‘monkey’ as a reference to blacks, this might help elucidate *carlaoffthewall*’s attitude towards the subject. She appears to believe that people criticising H&M’s advertisement is doing so rightfully, as due to the history of black people, the word ‘monkey’ cannot be used in connection with black people without it coming across as offensive. Believing that the history of the word in relation to blacks is more or less common knowledge, she finds it hard to believe that H&M could have acted unknowingly, hence stressing that it could be H&M’s intention to offend. It seems as if she believes that it is impossible that this shirt could have been marketed as it was, without it being intentional due to her clear perception about everybody’s knowledge of monkey being used as a derogatory term for black people. Hence, wishing that people do not use the word at all in such situations, *carlaoffthewall* seemingly seeks racial equality. She insinuates that there are certain ways to portray blacks, all the while alluding that these constitute a group that is still facing discrimination. By writing “*You’re lucky to post emojis bc it doesn’t effect you*” (Appendix 5.1, 80 H&M), *carlaoffthewall* creates distance between blacks and whites, alluding that white people are free of racism. Furthermore, *carlaoffthewall* seems to not acknowledge the development of the use of the word, and instead she seeks racial equality in trying to expand the knowledge of ‘monkey’ as a derogatory term. She points to the younger generations by writing: “*A lot of younger people, regardless of race, aren’t aware(...)*” (Appendix 5.1, 80 H&M), alluding that they are not familiar with the history, not considering that other people might just see the word in its lexicographical meaning.

H&M comment no. 36 adds another dimension to the subcategory of PC advocates, medium, as in seeing the action of H&M as being intentional, this person attributes the wrongdoing to another party than that of H&M, whom is not clearly expressed in the comment but can be assumed to be the advertising teams that produced the advertisement (Appendix 5.1, 36 H&M).

Dove: PC advocate, medium, comment no. 60



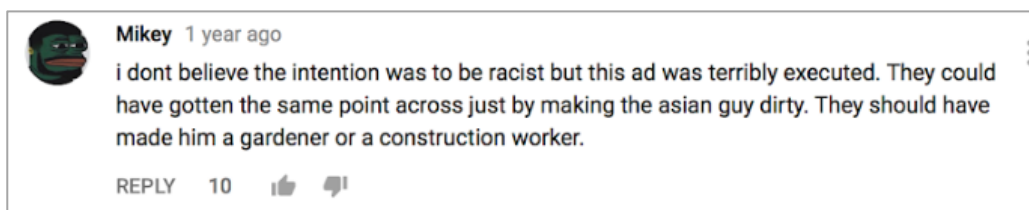
In opposition to the first comment explored for this subcategory, it appears almost literally that *htx.kammm* does not believe that it was Dove's intention to offend or create a racist advertisement. However, this person is still clearly dissatisfied with the content of the advertisement, stressing that it to him/her appears that Dove did not pay any attention to earlier use of black people in soap advertising by stating: *"(...)on the past many ads for soaps in the 1900s were made just like this one, where a black person was being cleaned with a certain soap to make them white."* (Appendix 5.2, 60 Dove) What *htx.kammm* probably is referring to here, is that soap advertisements from the late 1800s and early 1900s in the United States companies used black people to illustrate the efficiency of the their soaps, typically implying by an illustration that the black person wished to be white, hence the washing, or that white children would not want to play with a black child until he/she was washed white, depicting blacks with a willingness to go far in order to become white (AdAge 2003). Evidently, it can be suggested that *htx.kammm* sees significant similarities between these early designs and Dove's advertisement, and it could imply that he/she therefore believes that it is the same message that comes across in Dove's advertisement as in the ones from the late 1800s, why he/she wants it different. On this basis, it can be assumed that *htx.kammm*, like *carlaoffthewall*, believes that there are certain ways not to portray black people in advertising, even though the negative portrayal of blacks that *htx.kammm* is referring to take place more than 100 years apart.

Notably, even though *htx.kammm* is displeased with the advertisement, at the same time, he/she appear to be forgiving and appreciative of the apology coming from Dove, an apology he/she deems necessary. By not being 'blinded' by the potential racism as the commentators in the high subcategory, *htx.kammm* possesses a degree of tolerance towards the potential wrongdoer, which might be a contribution to the 'PC advocates, medium'-subcategory, adding that a person can be

dissatisfied with the content, however at the same time showing a certain degree of forgiveness in regard to the potential wrongdoer.

Comments nos. 44 and 129 from the Dove case appear to be adding other aspects to the ‘PC advocates, medium’-subcategory. In comment 44, in writing “*notice how the white people are saying it’s okay but all of the poc [people of colour] aren’t (...)*” (Appendix 5.1, 44 Dove), *no.1milf* leaves the impression that he/she depreciates whites by differentiating between the typical response by whites and blacks, maintaining that whites do not feel offended because they perhaps historically have not met the same disparagement in life. Thus, the commentator leaving this comment somehow shares this similarity with PC advocates, high, but compared to the attitude found within this subcategory, a PC advocate, medium, does not seem to have the same degree of racism intolerance. For this reason, this comment cannot be characterised as falling within the ‘PC advocates, high’-subcategory, especially because it appears that *no.1milf* merely objectively is stating how the entire issue surrounding the racism discourse unfolds between white and black respondents, verbalising who sees the advertisement as carrying racist insinuations and who do not. Comment no. 129 builds on the understanding of the ‘PC advocates, medium’-subcategory as well, but differently. In *jcole36_*’s statement, it seems that he/she thinks that the advertisement causes just enough offence to make him/her become unsupportive of Dove: “*(...) Like, who approved this? Who came up with it? What was your intent??? I once was a patron, not anymore...(..)*” (Appendix 5.2, 129 Dove). By that, it can be propounded that PC advocates, medium, also might feel so offended by an advertisement that they choose not to endorse the actor behind the potential offence caused.

Qiaobi: PC advocate, medium, comment no. 42



Saying so literally, *Mikey* does not believe that Qiaobi meant for the advertisement to be racist or offensive. Yet, and why this comment still belongs to this subcategory, by stating “*this ad was terribly executed*” (Appendix 5.3, 42 Qiaobi), *Mikey* alludes that Qiaobi did not think of the reactions the advertisement could (and would) cause, as well as insinuating that he understands why it could offend some people. Thus, it seems that he would prefer if the advertisement was constructed differently, and he even makes suggestions for how it could have been executed, in that way seeking

some sort of racial equality. Therefore, he seems incomprehensive of why Qiaobi would produce an advertisement with the potential of causing offence.

While believing that the advertisement was executed badly in that Qiaobi could have gotten the same point across possibly without offending anyone by only using Asians, he points to the decision of choosing a black person to feature in the advertisement. In order to portray a Chinese guy as ‘dirty’, *Mikey* argues that Qiaobi “(...)could have made him a gardener or a construction worker” (Appendix 5.3, 42 Qiaobi), which most likely would have resulted in equally visible degrees of “dirtiness” with dark spots on lighter skin instead. Portraying a black guy as dirty could somehow be assumed to be more “difficult”, as for example soil would not be as visible on dark skin, which could be why Qiaobi chose white painting when “dirtying” him. In order to get the message across, *Mikey* does not come up with any suggestions as for why it was necessary for Qiaobi to feature a dirty black guy instead of a dirty Chinese. It could have been simply to illustrate how effective their detergent is (exaggeration furthers understandings), which in turn could be argued to send similar signals to the aforementioned soap advertisements from the late 1800s/early 1900s (cf. section 5.1.2 PC advocates: Medium relevance, 60 Dove). However, there is also a chance that it could simply be an example of Chinese humour, something people from the West have a difficult time comprehending. In fact, several comments point at this being typical Chinese humour (see Appendix 5.3, Qiaobi comment nos. 37, 64, 65 and 139), which however does not disclaim degrading representations of blacks.

Summing up

Once again, numerous of the features synthesised for the ‘PC advocates, medium’-subcategory also emerged from the comments scrutinised. Predominantly, these commentators seem to be striving for racial equality, however it also became evident that a mix of beliefs whether the wrongdoers acted intentionally are present in these comments; some believe that the wrongdoer acted intentionally, alluding that they do not understand how companies can produce such advertisements without knowing that they might cause offence, meanwhile others clearly state that they believe that the wrongdoer acted unintentionally. Lastly and interestingly, an element of forgiveness is also apparent in some of these comments.

5.1.3 PC advocates: low relevance

While a PC advocate, high and medium, are certain or uncertain of the intent behind the action of the wrongdoer, a PC advocate, low, believes that the wrongdoer acted unintentionally. While seeing the

actions as mistakes, these comments are also distinguishable in that they to some degree express a dissatisfaction with the advertisement.

H&M: PC advocate, low, comment no. 57



Comment 57 no. from the H&M case is considerably representative of the characteristics associated with a PC advocate, low, in the way the commentator seemingly expresses a discontent with the content of the advertisement, meanwhile interpreting the offence enacted by H&M as being unintentional. Yet, this is not conveyed in the commentator, *bejeweled721*'s, original comment, but rather in this person's response to a respondent: *"I doubt that it was done in a racist tone, but if it is offensive to so many it deserves an apology. I don't like the saying on the shirt in the first place."* (Appendix 5.1, 57 H&M) In this response, it appears that she has contemptuous regards of the print on the sweatshirt, but still her comment reflects the belief that she does not think the company intended for the advertisement to be offensive to anyone, while on the other side believing that if it did cause offence, the offended ought to receive an apology.

However, comparing this response to the original comment given to H&M's apology on Instagram, doubts about *bejeweled721*'s attitude towards the advertisement might arise: *"So it would be ok if it were a white or Spanish child????"* (Appendix 5.1, 57 H&M). In this statement, a sort of scepticism towards other commentators' beliefs about the intent behind the advertisement is possible to detect. From the wording, it seems that the commentator by some means believes that it is irrational of people to think that the advertisement is meant to be racist and at the same time, when coupling *bejeweled721*'s original comment with the response, it somehow appears that overall, she dislikes the print on the sweatshirt and does not think that the saying is sustainable even if it had been a child of another ethnicity wearing it. Interpreting the mixed and shifting attitudes apparent in this comment, it seems that this person had an immediate attitude, incomprehensive of the reactions of critics, but then is influenced by a PC advocate into thinking that the advertisement might have provoked some, dissociating herself from the saying on the sweatshirt. By this, it can be argued that her attitude towards the advertisement is reproduced through interaction with other people, changing her stance to a certain degree.

Although comment no. 32 is an additional comment that somehow is a typical response of a PC advocate, low, it also works to extend our understanding of the characteristics of the attitudes found within this subcategory. It contains elements of a recognition that the advertisement was not produced with racist intentions, with the commentator expressing a certainty that it was not intentional to use the black boy in the advertising to offend anyone, while still believing that the character of the advertisement is somehow unethical. Yet, in responding to the apology articulated by H&M, the commentator also expresses forgiveness: “*its cool(...)*” (Appendix 5.1, 32 H&M). Thus, the content of this comment enhances the understanding of the ‘PC advocates, low’-category by providing a dimension of forgiveness.

Dove: PC advocate, low, comment no. 4



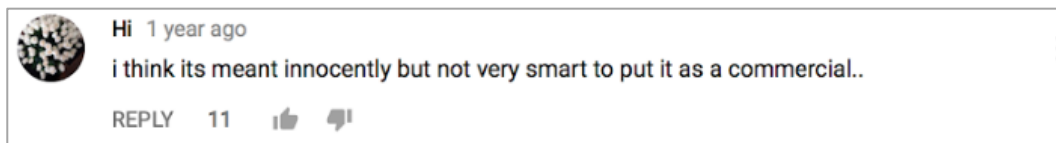
In her comment, *lov.her* explicitly states that she does not think that it was an intentional move by Dove to put out an advertisement with the potential of causing offence, rather believing that the company judged the situation incorrectly, thus seeing it as a mistake. While considering it a misjudgement, an expression of disparagement is also apparent in the way she by some means is attempting to attribute the mistake to what she sees a lack of diversity within the marketing team: “*This happens when you don’t have enough diversity within the marketing division (...)*” (Appendix 5.2, 4 Dove). Thus, within this extract, a remark is reflected in which she alludes to the idea of politically correct cultures, where “*unspoken canons of propriety govern behaviour in cross-cultural interactions*” (Ely, Meyerson and Davi 2006, 2). It seems that she believes that if Dove merely had fostered the idea of politically correct cultures, this advertisement would not have had this (to her) offensive character, because such cultures, as Ely et al. (2006) make mention of, are meant to encourage the racial equality that is fundamental to political correctness.

An additional point to add to this comment emanates from the following statement: “*Dove has a long history of trying to be inclusive.*” (Appendix 5.2, 4 Dove) Connecting this statement with the general attitude conveyed in the comment, it seems that *lov.her*’s prior association and knowledge about Dove as a company, its history and image influence her attitude towards the case in its entirety, believing

that because the company previously has had a focus on inclusion, they would not intentionally put out such advertisements nor have an incentive to do so when it contradicts their branded values. From a crisis communicative point of view, this might tell something about her evaluation of how well she believes Dove is meeting stakeholder expectations based on past behaviours and the prior relational reputation she evaluates Dove against. In her opinion, it seems that Dove's reputation is favourable because she apparently might see Dove as a company that has a history of showing consideration for its stakeholders and having respect for diversity through inclusion. (Coombs 2007, 167) From this, it can be argued that an element is added to the 'PC advocates, low'-subcategory, namely the influence of prior reputational associations in assessing the cases. In this context, the commentator had a positive view on the company, which affected her attitude, making her assess the actions as being unintentional. Yet, as explored in for instance the 'PC advocates, high'-subcategory, some of the commentators had an unfavourable evaluation of the case because their prior reputational association was negative, believing that the companies had histories of treating stakeholders without consideration, which made them assess the situation differently (cf. section 5.1.1, PC advocates: High relevance, Dove comment no. 100). Different experiences of prior reputational reputations might therefore make these commentators assess the actions of the companies in varied ways.

Two additional comments from the Dove case have been selected to illuminate this subcategory, comments nos. 58 and 78, both are indicative of positions attempting to remain more constructive in relation to the situation Dove finds itself in. In comment no. 58, *chyannn.harris* puts it as if she clearly believes that Dove did not intent to be racist, noting that she understands what Dove meant to convey, but that the company should have created the advertisement differently to communicate the message properly in her view (Appendix 5.2, 58 Dove). Comment no. 78 is a bit different, because *iamrazan* instead of commenting on the communicative aspect of the advertisement makes mention of the crisis strategy Dove followed once accused of causing offence. She is of the opinion that Dove should not have withdrawn the advertisement but rather explained the intent behind it. (Appendix 5.3, 78 Dove) With both commentators seemingly suggesting that Dove did not mean for the advertisement to be racist, it is also possible to extract from both comments that the advertisement is seen as representing black people incorrectly, alluding to the belief that certain terms and portrayals should be avoided in order to not cause offence. These two comments thus add to the subcategory in the way the commentators relate more constructively to the issue, however still giving the impression that they believe that Dove's advertisement portrays black people in a wrongful manner.

Qiaobi: PC advocate low, comment no. 39



This last comment selected for exploration of the 'PC advocates, low'-subcategory resembles the other comments explored for this subcategory by the means that it seems that the commentator, *Hi*, does not believe that Qiaobi, meant for the advertisement to be racist and cause offence. However, the degree of perceived unintentional behaviour is expressed by another reasoning. By stating "*i think its meant innocently but not very smart to put it as a commercial.*" (Appendix 5.3, 39 Qiaobi), it seems that *Hi's* attitude is slightly different, giving the impression that he/she believes that the company probably was fully aware of its way of using a black man for advertising purposes, but that the advertisement was never meant to offend anyone. It is furthermore as if *Hi* thinks that the advertisement possibly is misinterpreted by those critiquing the company. Yet, *Hi* acknowledges that there should be certain ways to represent people, while to a lesser degree than the other examples within this subcategory, maintaining that the company did not have bad intentions. By that, this commentator leans somewhat against the attitudes of a PC opponent, medium, but in still maintaining that companies need to make certain reservations when portraying minority groups, the commentator can clearly be identified as possessing the attitude of a PC advocate. It rather appears that this person is trying to placate the commentators belonging to the advocates category, explaining them that it was never the intention to be racist. By this, yet another element can be added to the characterisation of the 'PC advocates, low'-subcategory. This person is more objective in his/her view capable of clearly seeing it both from the side of those offended and from the side of the company.

Summing up

Apparent in the comments explored for the 'PC advocate, low'-subcategory are definite expressions of forgiveness and beliefs that the people/companies they consider wrongdoers did not create the advertisement with the desire to cause offence to anyone. Commonly, the comments seemed to convey that the commentators do not approve of the ways in which the minority group are represented while still contending that the companies did not mean for it to be insulting, thus thinking of the advertisements created as mistakes. Few features however add to the initially proposed theoretical PC concept. To begin with, some might evaluate the entire case surrounding the issue of perceived racism based on their positive view on and experience with the company or even the country in

question, and more, although still believing that advertisements portray blacks inappropriately, they are also likely to relate more constructively to the issues, being more objective and sometimes capable of seeing it from different points of view. Finally, it was observable that commentators' PC attitudes might not inevitably be fixed, since as became evident, these attitudes may possibly change through interaction with other commentators/respondents and the like.

5.2 PC opponents

Having examined a selection of comments belonging to each of the three subcategories within the advocates camp, we now move on to examining comments within the three 'PC opponents'-subcategories. Before delving into the comments, as it is stressed in the method section (4.4.1.1 Qualitative data selection), we would like to stress once again that being part of the 'PC opponents'-camp does not necessarily entail being hostile towards other races. Instead, a commentator with a PC opponents attitude might, like PC advocates, be against racism, however not inevitably find the particular advertisement to include it. Therefore, these results are not expressions of the commentators' general positions to issues of racism, it is instead an examination of how people perceive these particular advertisements in relation to racism. We start by looking into PC opponents, high.

5.2.1 PC opponents: high relevance

As elucidated in the method section, a PC opponent, high, will according to our proposed theoretical PC concept express hatred towards other races, as well as manifest to be against multiculturalism. Starting with H&M, comment nos. 102 and 106 each have their own way of expressing such emotions.

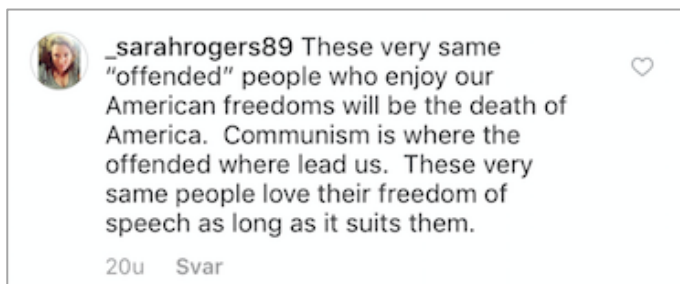
H&M: PC opponent, high, comment no. 102



In comment no. 102, *dylannix_* opposes the PC advocates that are criticising the advertisement, saying that it is wrong of H&M to represent a black boy wearing a hoodie with that exact print. Instead, *dylannix_* alludes that the only ones that actually *can* wear the hoodie with the statement

‘*Coolest monkey in the jungle*’ are African Americans, believing that the statement on the hoodie fits with the boy wearing it. This might indicate that *dylannix_* is permeated by the outdated common belief dating back to the mid 1800s that black people were closer related to apes (cf. section 5.1.2 PC advocates: medium relevance, H&M comment no. 80). In similar vein, in H&M comment no. 106, by simply stating that H&M is not mistaken in dressing the black boy in that particular hoodie, *_proxy.j* does not beat about the bush, as this is simply “how it is”, namely implying that blacks are closer related to apes. Hence, these two examples include strong degrees of negative stereotyping, which is something that ought to be added to the subcategory of PC opponents, high, as it is an element we had not identified previously, as well as noting that these types of responses can be very simple and to the point, not feeling the need for explaining what makes the basis of their attitudes.

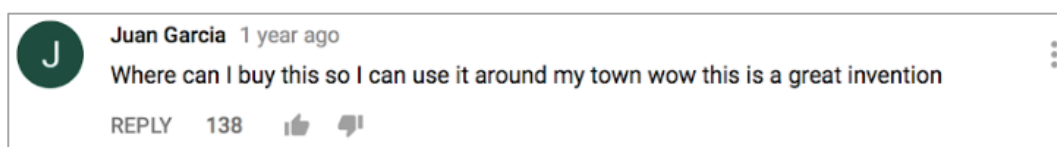
Dove: PC opponent, high, comment no. 123



While the above two comments are rather short and simple in their expressions, this comment, which is a response to Dove’s advertisement, has a different and more elaborative nature, referring to societal issues. Here, *_sarahrogers89* clearly stresses that she believes that the offended party, which in her opinion are likely to be blacks, clearly have double standards. By writing: “*These very same offended people who enjoy our American freedoms will be the death of America*” (Appendix 5.2, 123 Dove), she expresses that black people are taking advantage of the goods that come with living in the US, however showing ingratitude and somehow keep managing to act offended, thus alluding that no matter how much the US does for these groups, it will never be enough, which will consequently result in the end of the American society. *_sarahrogers89* goes on to express that if the offended party gets to keep up their “practice” of being offended, it will lead to a communistic American society: “*Communism is where the offended lead us.*” (Appendix 5.2, 123 Dove) She thus appears to believe that if PC advocates get a say, then it will lead to communism and thus a reduction of ‘everything to commodities’ (Contreras-Véjar 2012). The above can be compared to what Howard S. Schwartz (2016) terms *the pristine self*, meaning people that consider everything that contradicts with own values as being an attack on that person (cf. section 2.3.2 The right side of the PC debate), as

according to *_sarahrogers89*, PC advocates leave the expression of all the time being offended by others and while not considering the intent of an action. Meanwhile she also plants doubt about the sincerity of PC advocates in doing so. Dove comment no. 123 hence reveals something that adds to the proposed subcategory of PC opponents, high, as *_sarahrogers89* is not solely addressing the content in the Dove advertisement in a racist way, she also argues why black people deserves this treatment with stereotyping and racism, which is something the above two comments do not include.

Qiaobi: PC opponent, high, comment no. 31



In Qiaobi comment no. 31, *Juan Garcia* implies that he would like to get rid of the black people living in his town, however doing so with a ‘sense of humour’: “*Where can I buy this so I can use it around my town wow this is a great invention*” (Appendix 5.3, 31 Qiaobi). This particular comment can be argued to possess a rather crude character, as by using the humour-element, *Garcia* manages to stress that he really do think less of black people. It can be argued that he somehow dehumanises them with the phrase “*so I can use it around my town*”, seemingly regarding it very lightly and easy to walk around town on any given Sunday, changing the colour of blacks, hence alluding that he does not acknowledge them as human beings. It seems as if he sees the black population as an epidemic in his neighbourhood, which according to him would be desirable to obliterate by use of this detergent, or almost insecticide.

While the subcategory of PC opponents, low, is characterised by joking, this exact comment uses the same, however in a more hateful way than the comments characterised as PC opponents, low, attitudes. Instead, the inclusion of a mix of maliciousness and humour adds more to the proposed subcategory of PC opponents, high, as it has now been revealed that racist comments can in fact also include humour and not solely hatred. More, *Garcia*’s comment to some degree reveals that he draws clear distinctions between ethnicities, which corresponds well with the above. This is seen in the additional comments written by *Garcia* in the same discussion: “*(...) no where close nig I am Latin American will choose a Latin over your race*” (Appendix 5.3, 31 Qiaobi). Here, *Garcia* clearly regards people as belonging to different ethnicities, which in turn eclipse his view on people and their immediate significance, again alluding that he particularly dislike blacks, whom he refers to as “nig” (niggers), which is typically seen as a degrading word when not used by blacks (Hughes 2010, 150-

52). Interestingly, *Garcia* himself writes that he belongs to the group of Latin Americans, a group that can also be argued to have been subject to discrimination, which once again proves that he dislikes blacks in particular. All above points strongly suggest that *Garcia* is con racial equality, and that he thus might very well be against multiculturalism, as he seems to be biased when it comes to certain ethnicities.

In an additional comment, *Google One* writes a statement that can be interpreted as including humour, “*Just look at the black guy, he looks like he was about to rape her*” (Appendix 5.3, 134 Qiaobi), which however also could be interpreted as simply being crude. This person believes that he/she has reached the single truth about blacks, while being capable of seeing through all PC advocates, whom *Google One* thinks, deeply within, also regard blacks as inferior. For example, by the use of negative stereotyping, *Google One* communicatively projects black people as criminals (see previous quote), being completely blunt about ‘the truth’ of blacks.

Qiaobi comment no. 90 is also completely blunt and definitely includes hatred towards blacks, as *epocs* puts it, “*black people ARE the most vile, malicious, hateful, destructive and violent people on the face of the earth (...)*” (Appendix 5.3, 90 Qiaobi), hence leaving no doubt about this person’s attitude towards this particular group of people. Remarkably, *epocs* initiates the comment by stating that Qiaobi’s advertisement does not include racism, instead he/she asks the PC advocates: “*where is your respect for other cultures and their values and cultural norms?*” (Appendix 5.3, 90 Qiaobi). Thus, initially it seems as if *epocs* is rather ‘large’ in that he/she wants to make room for other cultures and their ways and wants others to do so too, however he/she expresses hatred towards black people, resulting in a strong indication that *epocs* holds double standards. Being otherwise inclusive to other races, the commentator seems to believe that it is obvious that black people constitute a societal problem. This duality might reveal something about the seriousness of his/her resentment, namely that it is a permanent worldview that follows this person when accessing anything and everything concerned with races. Moreover, when stating that blacks are actually the racist ones (“*thats right you black racist animals*” (Appendix 5.3, 90 Qiaobi)), *epocs* is likely to be referring to the PC advocates who are angry with the Chinese over the advertisement, maybe finding it odd that black people are attacking the Chinese, as the Chinese are also people of colour facing some of the same issues as blacks.

Besides having demonstrated that Qiaobi comment no. 90 includes hatred towards blacks, the examination reveals that comments belonging to the subcategory of PC opponents, high, do not need to be blind towards ‘otherness’ and not accept other cultures than the commentator’s own, nor do

they have to believe in white supremacy. Lastly, as comment no. 7 reveals (“*Does it word with Arabs and Turks too?*” (Appendix 5.3, 7 Qiaobi)), attitudes belonging to this subcategory can also be racist towards other ethnicities than that of blacks.

Summing up

The analysis corroborates the feeling of hatred and dislike towards others initially proposed as the characteristics setting PC opponents, high, apart from the other subcategories. Additionally, these comments tend to include strong degrees of negative stereotyping, with the comments being either short and simple with no need for explaining one’s point of view, or they can be elaborative and argumentative of their attitude. Humour is also a frequent facet, however using it in a malicious way, while other comments reveal that commentators with this attitude is not necessarily blind towards ‘otherness’.

5.2.2 PC opponents: medium relevance

To shortly catch up on the subcategory of PC opponents, medium, we initially proposed that they are defined by a desire for freedom of expression. Also, the opinion that people are too sensitive today is an esteemed frequent factor within this subcategory, thinking that the reactions to the particular cases have blown out of proportion. More, a feeling of being incomprehensive in regards to why the particular cases are perceived to be a problem to the public is a proposed characteristic, why commentators typically disregard the racism discourse in the advertisements. Once again, we start with H&M:

H&M: PC opponent, medium, comment no. 18



The attitude apparent in the comment written by *a.hangal* to H&M’s apologetic Instagram post gives the impression that the commentator is of the opinion that the way people are constructing the issue surrounding such cases (where companies put out advertisements with controversial content) effects

how messages are understood and interpreted by recipients: “(...) *people made it racist. If I looked at the photo without all the hype I probably wouldn’t even have seen that.*” (Appendix 5.1, 18 H&M) With this statement, it seems that *a.hangal* has a sceptical tone towards what he brings about as people making a hype out of the potential offence given, declaring that even if people had not been fussing about the case, he would not have interpreted the advertisement as being racist. In addition, by writing “*Also, if it were a white boy wearing the same sweatshirt, no one would have a problem with this (...)*” (Appendix 5.1, 18 H&M), it is as if he thinks that because it is a black boy wearing the sweatshirt with this particular saying, people are discerning racism in something that ought not to be understood as being racist, perhaps referring to what black people historically have encountered (cf. section 5.1.2 PC advocates: medium relevance, H&M comment no. 80). In continuation of this statement, it comes across that the commentator finds it problematic that one ought to be cautious about how one is referring to and talking about different ethnicities, hence being incomprehensive. By that, it can be argued that this person contends the idea of freedom of expression, thinking that people are too censorious towards companies. The elements manifested in *a.hangal*’s attitude seem to signify that he disregards racism in this advertisement, having the opinion that people come across small-minded by making unnecessary fuss out of nothing.

The element of disregard of a racism discourse is something that is very apparent in the type of comments belonging to this subcategory. The element may however manifest itself in varied ways. H&M comments nos. 22, 64 and 130 are examples displaying this disregard differently. In comment no. 22, *giabadd* seems to be overtly disregarding the concern of people taking offence by clearly stating that people should move on, referring to the fact that this is the wish of the mom whose boy was featured in the advertisement (Appendix 5.1, 122 H&M). While the commentator behind comment no. 130 comes across as being rather sarcastic, getting at the offended people by suggesting that they too would see this person as racist because he/she calls his child *monkey* every day (Appendix 5.1, 130 H&M), the person leaving comment no. 64 appears to be bluntly disregarding the relevance of the potential offence caused by the advertisement, simply stating “*@hm people are destroying your store in South Africa....*” (Appendix 5.1, 64 H&M). By that, *_mellodee* does not address the issue of potential racism in the advertisement but instead refers to what is happening with the stores of the company as a result of the advertisement.

Furthermore, the arguments made in H&M comment no. 49 also contributes to deepening our understanding of this subcategory. In that he/she leaves arguments indicative of the commentator

believing that people are misinterpreting the message of the advertisement, *neoneutral* emphasises that she is black and still does not take offence. In stating “*H&M was one of the first brands to embrace black models including those with natural Afro hair. (...) I think we’d prefer they keep black models on their books and forgive them when culturally insensitive errors are made*” (Appendix 5.1, 49 H&M), she leaves the impression that she would rather have companies being inclusive than not having different races portrayed in advertising. So, while she by some means seems to find people’s reactions unsubstantiated, she does however believe it is of great importance that different ethnicities are portrayed in advertising. This therefore alludes to that a PC opponent, medium, as well can have great interest in issues over inclusion of multiculturalism.

Dove: PC opponent, medium, comment no. 27



Comment no. 27 belonging to the Dove case seems to be composed of elements that distinguishes the ‘PC opponents, medium’-subcategory from the other subcategories. In writing “*(...) the ad wasn’t racist, people take offense to anything these days, snowflakes everywhere*” (Appendix 5.2, 27 Dove), *bellzer.jpg* leaves different impressions. First of all, she does not assess the advertisement as being racist, disregarding overtly the relevance of a racism discourse in the advertisement. Second of all, because she utters that people take everything as affronts to racial equality, it is reflected that she might find it appalling that through the comments of PC advocates, in this case, companies are not permitted to express themselves like they desire without people seeing it as an offence to them, thus contending the principle of freedom of expression. By that, it can be argued that she sees it as a more comprehensive societal problem that people are confined from uttering themselves as they please, and in this connection, alluding to the widespread prevalence of what she refers to as *snowflakes*. In Collins Dictionary, the term ‘snowflake’ is used about “*the generation of people who became adults in the 2010s, viewed as being less resilient and more prone to taking offence than previous generations*” (Collins Dictionary 2018). Other sources build on this definition, describing people belonging to this generation as supposedly ‘overly sensitive’, thinking that the entire world revolves around them and believing that they are entitled to protection from anything with which they disagree. The term received great popularity in 2016 when other generations ridiculed the reactions of the younger people for the result of the UK leaving the EU, labelling these reactions ‘hysterical’.

However, the term ‘snowflake’ has not always had this connotation; it has gone from in the 1860’s to define a person who was against the elimination of slavery, cherishing white people over black people; to in the 1970’s to be used as a derogatory term for a white or black man who was seen as taking on the behaviour of white people; and to today where the term is often used to label sensitive university students who are protected from any ideas they might find offensive, being given trigger warnings before reading books or receiving lectures that might revolve around potential distressing themes. (Harrison 2018) The term ‘snowflake’ has also recently been more popularly used to describe the younger segment of the Millennials for their repellent view on inpolitically correct content and has as a result lately been criticised for posing a threat to comedy due to their focus on portraying sensitive subjects in politically correct manners. This emphasis is asserted to be a reflection of the recent cultural shift to a society that is more inclusive with what the ‘snowflakes’ consider improved attitudes towards gender and racial equality as well as LGBT rights. (Brown 2018)

The idea of a Generation Snowflake can provide some insight into the notion of the PC discourse on social media. As proposed in the article published by The Sun, every generation gets offended by different things, and as they do that, it can be suggested that generational differences might exist between the different PC attitudes deducted from the PC literature and the collected data. More specifically, in exploring articles about this so-called Generation Snowflake, it appears that this younger segment of the Millennials is the one most easily offended and often described as being pro political correctness. Then, as so often argued, when this younger segment is one of the age groups most prevalently found on social media platforms (Statista 2018), it can be proposed that PC opponents might consider this younger segment the ones constituting a large proportion of the PC advocates commenting on the posts of the three selected cases, yet with the possibility that other generations constitute other PC categories. However, it should be noted that this is merely a speculation based upon the articles written about Snowflakes and that the objective of this study is not to make an attempt at defining the different PC subcategories demographically but rather in terms of attitudinal positions. Although being beyond the scope of this dissertation, this however could be subject to further exploration in explanative studies, aiming at finding correlations between the subcategories deducted in this study and people’s demographic characteristics.

Besides being vastly indicative of the commentator’s stance within the initially proposed theoretical PC concept, the further remarks made by *bellzer.jpg* may also contribute additionally to the understanding of this subcategory. In stating “*nah I’m black (...)*” (Appendix 5.2, 27.1 Dove), it is conveyed that *bellzer.jpg* communicatively constructs herself as also forming part of the group of

people claiming to be censured, hence being black. However, interestingly she does not engage in the practice of consistently declaring that other people are offending black people with the entire world being against them. This somehow adds to the ‘PC opponents, medium’-subcategory, because people sharing the same skin colour with those allegedly censured in the advertisement do not automatically have to feel offended by it. Thus, it seems that not all black people construct themselves as being PC advocates, some might also share the attitudes of PC opponents.

Furthermore, by leaving this remark to one of the respondents, *“oh look another victim (...)”* (Appendix 5.2, 27.1 Dove), it appears as if *bellzer.jpg* makes mention of those offended by the advertisement with an ironic tone. To this, one might refer to Howard S. Schwartz’ (2016) notion of the pristine self. In the above further response, it can be asserted that the commentator relates negatively to those acting as a pristine self, people seeing other people’s indifference as an act of offence (cf. section 2.3.2 The right side of the PC debate). Thus, when companies fail to recognise the potential offence given by the advertisements, this commentator sees these people as short-tempered in attacking companies for what they consider a misconduct.

In the last response, *bellzer.jpg* furthermore refers to ‘white privilege’, and in doing so, clearly the commentator disregards the relevance of it within this advertisement. However, she does acknowledge that it is something that exists or has existed, but she gives the impression that it is not something she thinks is conveyed in Dove’s advertisement. In continuation of this response, *bellzer.jpg* writes *“(...) what you’re doing now is segregating yourself”* (Appendix 5.2, 27.1 Dove), and with this, it can be interpreted that she is of the opinion that perhaps some black people are setting themselves apart from other groups, presumably contending the idea that the way people are talking about themselves becomes the way they themselves and others see them. Perhaps in her view, *Danajoyt*, the person she is replying, could be depicting himself in a way that makes him disadvantaged, and also, he might himself contribute to the racial inequality he is seeking to escape. Comment no. 66 is yet an example suggestive of this point. In stating *“I just don’t pull out the race card for every single thing. Use it too much then no ones going to care. I prefer to choose my battles wisely”* (Appendix 5.2, 66 Dove), it appears in this case as well that the commentator considers it an issue that every single time people feel that they are exposed to censure, they are calling attention to it, because in her view, it makes other people careless of their feelings of distress, attributing less value to their concerns.

This element found in the comments explored before, nos. 27 and 66, where a belief that the people offended by the advertisements need to stop interpreting every indication of potential racism as

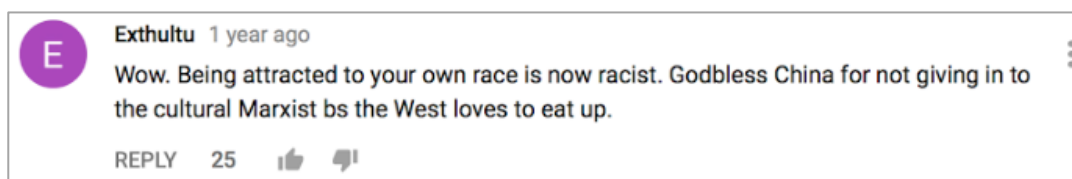
offensive, is one of recurrence, however taking different forms. While the commentators in these two comments address the point at issue by shedding a light on the issue as being more societal, claiming that the ways in which people feeling offended view and talk about themselves are contributing negatively to the racism discourse and the prevailing stereotyping taking place, the person behind comment no. 121 tries to explain the feeling of offence as being attributed to differing interpretations. This commentator maintains that some people interpreted Dove's advertisement as being racist, because they watched the video out of context, i.e. they did not watch the advertisement in its entirety but rather a cut of the video, which is how many media have presented it (Appendix 5.2, 121 Dove).

Although *bellzer.jpg* (the person behind comment no. 27), disregards the relevance of a racism discourse in the advertisement withdrawn by Dove, two further comments might help reveal the different manifestations of a disregard of a racism discourse. In both comments nos. 25 and 30, an overt disregard of the relevance of the concerns communicated by those feeling affronted by the advertisement is evident. However, the ways in which this element expresses itself varies across the two comments. In *Ellegypsy's* comment, this is reflected in the sense that she believes that the issue over racism with people taking offence to little things trivialises more important issues (Appendix 5.2, 25 Dove). In comment no. 30, *ms_mekgoe* disregards the relevance of the concern over potential racism by not in the least making mention of the potential offence caused, stating that this issue is insignificant to her: *"I still love your products @dove"* (Appendix 5.2, 30 Dove). Yet, these two forms of disregard still vary from the one communicated by *bellzer.jpg*, who merely disregards the notion of potential racism being portrayed in Dove's advertisement.

Lastly, adding to the aspect revealed in comment no. 27 about the problematic of a Generation Snowflake, comments nos. 42 and 91 might contribute further to comprehending why PC opponents, medium, believe that the people who asserts to be affronted by the commercial are oversensitive. In comment no. 42, *blissfulbab22* writes *"(...) we have ridiculous people in our generation (...)"* (Appendix 5.2, 42 Dove), and while this statement evidently conveys this commentator's view on the people presumably offended, it could also refer to the idea of 'snowflakes', the people being more sensitive than other generations. By that, this person might, just as the commentator behind comment no. 27, consider the ways in which the attitudes of these people are affecting freedom of expression as a problem posing a threat to individual rights. More, comment no. 91 also conveys something about the attitude of *chazitylynn* towards the people offended. By stating *"@dove you guys realize this is the new way to get attention. (...) getting attention is addictive an these (racists) have realize"*

this is a way for them to get attention so they will continue“ (Appendix 5.2, 91 Dove), it becomes apparent that this commentator clearly sees the claim of offence as a stunt through which the people claiming to be censured or offended are attempting to attract attention to themselves. Hence, common for these commentators is that they in some way or another are trying to ridicule the concerns of the people feeling offended by attacking the more personal traits of these people.

Qiaobi: PC opponent, medium, comment no. 81



This last comment explored for the ‘PC opponents, medium’-subcategory brings forward the element of overt disregard of a racism discourse in the advertisement as well. This is reflected in a reply given by *Exhultu* to a respondent: *“It’s a joke. What is it like being offended by everything? You enjoy living your lives like that? Learn to take a joke and move on.”* (Appendix 5.3, 81.1 Qiaobi) In the wording, it appears that the commentator believes that people have become too sensitive, and in this regard, this person queries whether the quality of life is affected negatively when feeling a need to censure anything that possibly causes offence, believing that it must be exhausting to constantly take offence in everything. Hereby, a disregard of relevance of a racism discourse seems to be explicitly expressed, which is also reflected in *Exhultu’s* original comment *“Wow. Being attracted to your race is now racist. Godbless China for not giving in to the cultural Marxist bs the West loves to eat up.”* (Appendix 5.3, 81 Qiaobi) Instead of focusing on what to many might be interpreted as a representation of potential Chinese superiority, this person draws attention to the matter by ridiculing the offended people’s opinions, claiming that the problem with the advertisement is not that it shows superiority, but instead the problem might be that races are only attracted to their own races, a problem that in *Exhultu’s* opinion should be non-existing. In the statement, it seems that the commentator is not able to comprehend why it should be racist to be attracted to one’s own race, indicating a scepticism towards the way the racism discourse has changed. To some extent, it appears that *Exhultu* draws attention to how the focus on multiculturalism has gone to people’s heads, introducing more and more restrictive guidelines, which in turn affects people’s privileges of individual rights and freedom of expression. In this connection, this person seems to be praising China for not letting the focus on multiculturalism go too far and with the following statement, it comes across as if the commentator believes that in the West, people take everything as being insulting and as instances of

perceived racism” (...) *bs the West loves to eat up.*” (Appendix 5.3, 81 Qiaobi) In pointing to the existence of a difference between Chinese and Western advertising, one might interpret it as if this person is relieved that at least in China advertisements with potentially controversial content are produced, advertising that can be fed to the people in the West, perhaps signifying a worry that everything becomes ordinary, characterless and too culturally sensitive if having to constantly think about how certain representations will have the potential of causing offence. Thus, a belief in freedom of expression is evidently conveyed in Qiaobi comment no. 81 in the way the commentator clearly ridicules the concerns of the people potentially offended by the advertisement and furthermore expresses a concern that everything has come to be seen as offensive.

Summing up

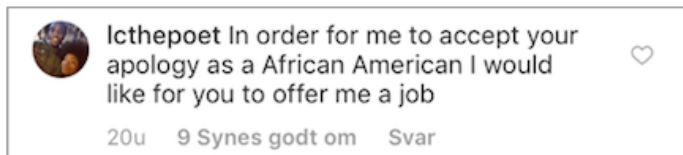
To shortly sum up the above examination of the selected comments belonging to the subcategory of PC opponents, medium, these commentators express to believe that it is the people who made the advertisement racist, seeing that as a problem as they also believe that the negative discussion makes other people see the advertisement as including racism. It also appeared that being part of the ethnicity censured in the advertisement does not automatically mean that these people feel offended, instead they can sometimes even be ironic towards those who do, expressing that people need to stop interpreting every instance of potential racism as an offence made to them. Lastly, comments are characterised by including a lot of attitudes believing in freedom of expression and that people generally are too sensitive, as well as a disregard of a racism discourse in the advertisement.

5.2.3 PC opponents: low relevance

While PC opponents, medium, can express a desire for freedom of expression, PC opponents, low, can be characterised as addressing other elements than the discussion of racism or the content of the advertisement. We also proposed that humour and joking is a frequent characteristic within this subcategory, this way indirectly disregarding the relevance of a racism discourse in that advertisement. In H&M comment no. 15, *enrikkkoledeshmer*'s comment carry such an attitude.

H&M: PC opponent, low, comment no. 15

By writing *“I’m offended so give me that hoodie in adult large for free”* (Appendix 5.1, 15 H&M), *enrikkkoledeshmer* is indirectly disregarding the racism discourse, primarily by means of joking, which are both elements that are proposed characteristics for this particular subcategory. It must be assumed that H&M’s advertisement did not offend this person significantly, as he/she seize the opportunity to make a joke instead of conveying dissatisfaction with its content. Thus, nothing indicates that this individual is of the opinion that H&M did anything wrong, as he/she approaches the subject with a sense of humour, simply stating that he/she would like one of the much-debated sweatshirt. Nevertheless, *enrikkkoledeshmer*’s attitude is unveiled by the comment in that he/she evidently ‘applies’ a PC advocate-attitude, maybe hoping that the offended get some kind of compensation from H&M, which could be a way of acquiring the hoodie or a way of making fun of the offended. Assumedly, if this person was actually offended by the advertisement, he/she would not want it.

Dove: PC opponent, low, comment no. 20

Dove comment no. 20 shares similarities with the above comment (H&M no. 15), in that the commentator also jokes about being offended but wanting to forgive Dove if the company comes up with some sort of compensation, in this case in the form of a job for the commentator, *lcthepoet*: *“In order for me to accept your apology as a African American I would like for you to offer me a job”* (Appendix 5.2, Dove 20). Interestingly, as *lcthepoet* writes, he/she is an African American, which in turn once more shows that people do not fall under a certain group on the basis of their skin colour. *lcthepoet* is black, and yet the comment expresses an attitude that belongs to the side of the opponents, because he does not establish himself/herself communicatively as part of the offended group, namely the PC advocates, where you could assume that black people could belong.

Dove comment no. 63 is another version of a PC opponent, low, which features other elements than the above discussed comments do. This person simply felt like showing her support for Dove, not having the need for defending anything at all, which adds to this subcategory in that comments that belong here can also simply include support for the ‘accused’ company (Appendix 5.2, 63 Dove).

Qiaobi: PC opponent, low, comment no. 14



Qiaobi comment no. 14 also features joking, however doing so differently than H&M comment no. 15 and Dove comment no. 20, in that *Ashkoren* is not directly addressing any topics that have to do with the advertisement, whereas the previous comments somehow relate to the advertisement and the critique. *Ashkoren* also manages to indirectly disregard a racism discourse by means of his joke: “*he’s yellow now. put him back in there*” (Appendix 5.3, 14 Qiaobi), implying that when a t-shirt is clean, it is white, however when it is yellow, it needs another wash in order to become totally clean. Comments belonging to PC opponents, high, and PC opponents, low, share similarities in that they both can contain humour. However, the distinction between them can be illustrated by Qiaobi comment no. 14, as it does not include hatefulness or cruelty which would be a requirement for it to belong to PC opponents, high. Instead, this comment seems to be a product of a person with a more relaxed attitude, expressing what happened to come to *Ashkoren*’s mind at the time, which is why it is not considered to carry a racist attitude and instead appears to be just a random statement of no particular importance.

Another comment that belongs to the subcategory of PC opponents, low, is 7341662’s comment, which has a different nature than the previous ones in that it does not feature the same kind of humour, however still appearing to be somehow random; it says: “*That Chinese girl was cute - sexy boobs, and cute ass. That’s all I saw...*” (Appendix 5.3, 74 Qiaobi). By first describing how he/she experienced the Chinese woman in the advertisement, followed by the phrase “*that’s all I saw*”, 7341662 relates to the offended and their critique of the advertisement, alluding that he/she does not agree with them. This contributes to the subcategory of PC opponents, low, as it reveals that comments that fall under this subcategory does not only disregard the racism discourse indirectly, it can also do so directly. Also, 7341662 manages to somehow undermine the PC advocates’ offence in

that he/she is beyond all the issues and trifles other people might identify in the advertisement – 7341662 only sees human beings, particularly a beautiful woman. Hence, it appears that this person pays absolutely no attention to the ethnicities of the people in the advertisement, or at least does not see any issues with their portrayal and find Chinese women just as attractive as women of other ethnicities.

Lastly, the subcategory PC opponents, low, can also include comments that simply find the advertisement to be amusing, which can be illustrated in Qiaobi comment no. 10: “*FUCKING HILARIOUS*” (Appendix 5.3, 10 Qiaobi). Here, it appears that *rorytmeadows* finds the advertisement funny, while not relating to the fact that other people are upset about it, which in turn is what a PC opponent, medium, typically would do.

Summing up

The comments analysed within PC opponents, low, turned out to be characterised primarily along the characteristics proposed initially, namely humour and joking, however they also showed to be characterised by some degree of randomness. In similar vein, as we initially proposed, such comments can be disregarding the racism discourse directly, yet they proved to not only do so indirectly but also directly.

Having explored comments categorised as belonging to the proposed theoretical PC concept, we now move on to illuminate why the comments referred to as containing racism-against-racism are not possible to locate within the PC subcategories.

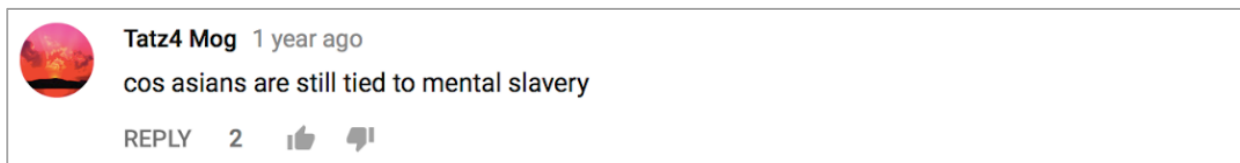
5.3 A triangulation?

As discussed in the methods section (cf. section 4.4.1.1 Qualitative data selection), comments dissimilar to those found in the H&M and Dove cases were conspicuous when reviewing the dataset for the Qiaobi case. With these comments, it was not possible to manage them according to the theoretical PC concept explored in the above analysis, as their mode of expression seemed to give the impression of being racists towards or negatively stereotyping those causing potential offence to black people through the advertisement. Therefore, these comments neither convey a belief in freedom of expression or a search for racial equality, which is why it is not possible to characterise them according to either of the PC camps. Thus, a category classified as ‘racism against racism’ (r-

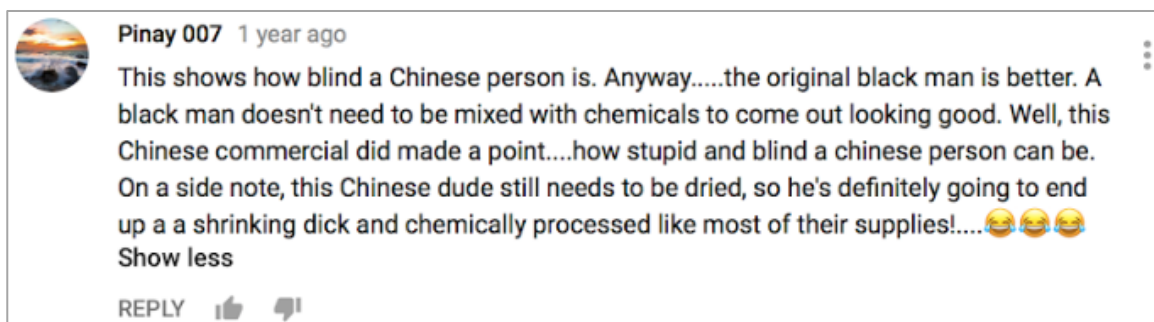
a-r) has been created for comments of this character to which they can be assigned. Through the comments within this category, it seems that commentators by the means of their wording are making an attempt at repressing the potential racism evident in the advertisement, offending those standing behind the advertisement by being racist or negatively stereotyping others. Hence, from this emanates the manifestation of a triangle, implying that in the Qiaobi case, the content of the comments is not solely organised around the distinction between blacks and whites as is the case with H&M and Dove, but in this case, references to Asians are also made. The following scrutiny of these distinctive comments might hence help illuminate the uniqueness of the Qiaobi case, exploring the outcome of choosing a company that is not present in the West and shedding a light on the differences that are evident when compared to data gathered from two companies that indeed are found in Western countries.

In order to uncover and display the different response types and attitudes found within the 'r-a-r'-category, a number of comments have been selected for examination.

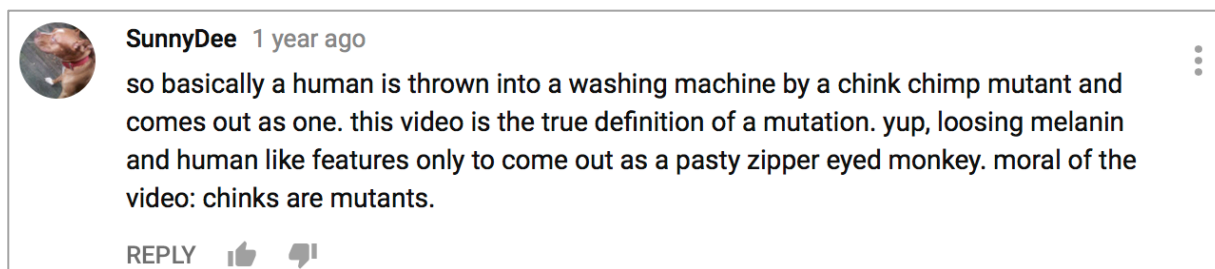
Qiaobi: r-a-r, comment no. 4



Qiaobi: r-a-r, comment no. 121



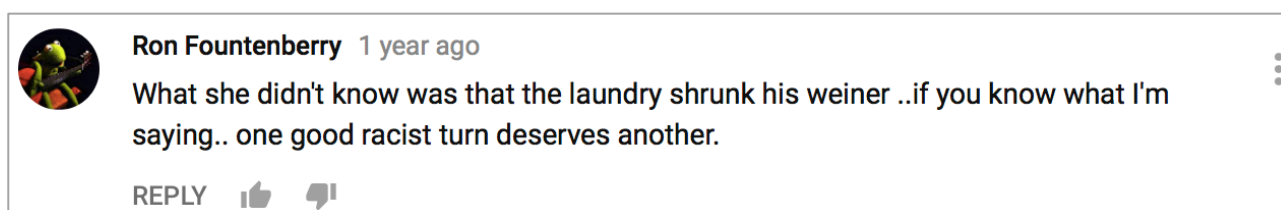
Qiaobi: r-a-r, comment no. 129



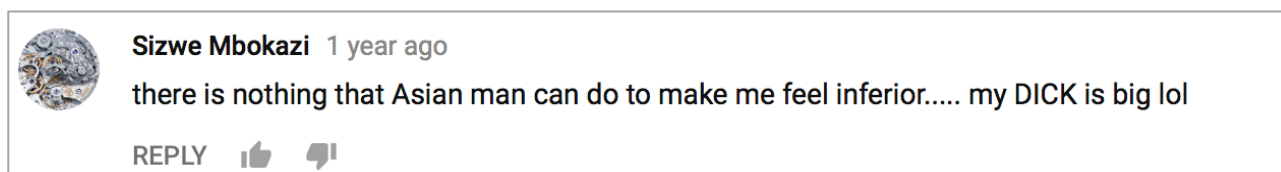
The first three comments explored somehow share the same features, but their degrees of detail, offensiveness and stereotyping vary in the main. In each of these comments, the wording seems to convey that the commentators are striving at assaulting Asian people, generalising traits to all Asian people and stereotyping them negatively according to their beliefs about them. Across these three comments, one seems to build on the other, with the first, comment no. 4, stating “*cos Asians are still tied to mental slavery*” (Appendix 5.3, 4 Qiaobi). This comment appears to be merely touching upon the commentator’s view on what the company is trying to accomplish with the advertisement, which perhaps can be interpreted to be convincing Asians that the only people worthy of being together is Asians. While this comment still looks to be reflecting racism against what the person writing the comment possibly interprets as racism against blacks, comment no. 121 deepens the degrees of detail and offensiveness. In striking at Asians, this commentator seemingly tries to turn the discourse around that has been constructed by the advertisement, claiming black superiority: “*This shows how blind a Chinese person is. Anyway.....the original black man is better. A black man doesn’t need to be mixed with chemical to come out looking good.*” (Appendix 5.3, 121 Qiaobi) Through this, an expression is found reflecting that this person shows overly high opinions of blacks compared to Asians, which perhaps is a way of acting as a defendant. Yet, the higher degree of detail in this comment is displayed in the following statement “*(...) this Chinese dude still needs to be dried, so he’s definitely going to end up a a shrinking dick and chemically processed like most of their supplies! (...)*” (Appendix 5.3, 121 Qiaobi), where the commentator seemingly is influenced by a belief in Asian inferiority while also making reference to what might be considered negative stereotypes about the Chinese and Chinese products. In being more elaborate about what his/her attitude towards Chinese is rooted in, this comment also appears as more aggressive in its wording, as if the commentator resents what the Chinese stands for. More, out of the three, comment no. 129 might display the crudest portrayal of Asians in its wording. In using the term “Chink”, which is a term used about a Chinese person, typically perceived as with offensive connotations, the

commentator makes critical remarks about Asians, calling them “mutants” and “pasty zipper eyed monkey”, which is added by a labelling of the entire process of turning a black man into a Chinese man as being a true depiction of a mutation (Appendix 5.3, 129 Qiaobi). By that, this commentator’s perception of Asians comes across as being rather negative, and without even commenting on whether he/she considers the portrayal of blacks in the advertisement wrong, he/she directly starts unburdening himself/herself.

Qiaobi: r-a-r, comment no. 72

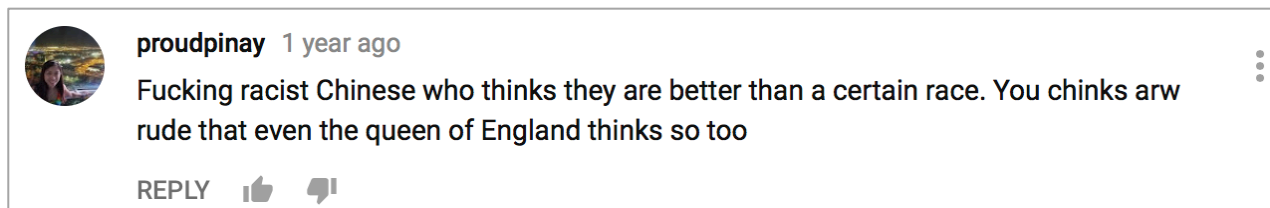


Qiaobi: r-a-r, comment no. 86



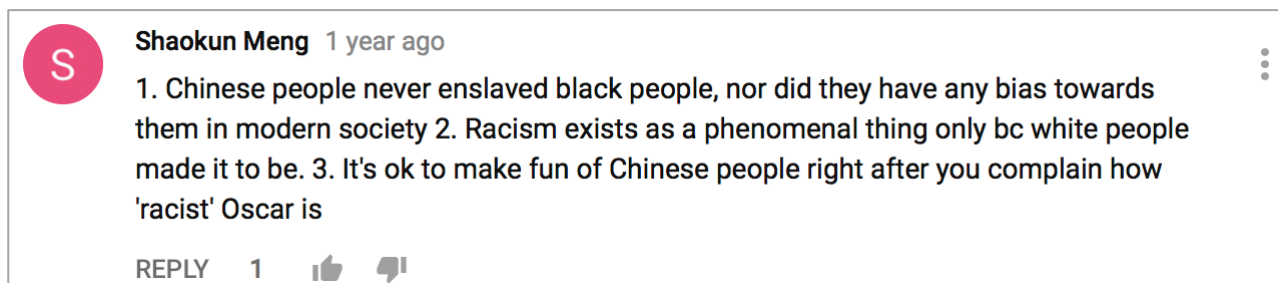
Among the types of comments found within the ‘r-a-r’-category, references to the size of Asian men’s private parts are frequently made in a derogatory way, as what seem to be a means to make Asian men look inferior to black men. Comments nos. 72 and 86 are both such examples, but although they may possess this common reference, comments carrying this shared element may also vary. Comment no. 86 evidently portrays a person believing that he on no account can or does feel subordinate to Asian men, referring to his private parts as being ‘big’, however this portrayal might once again be a way for the person to make Asians of lesser importance, perhaps because he feels troubled by the content of the Qiaobi advertisement. Whereas the person in comment no. 72 indirectly leaves the impression that he feels targeted by the advertisement, the person who has written comment no. 86 is clearly aware that his expression comes across as being racist: “(...) *one good racist turn deserves another.*” (Appendix 5.3, 86 Qiaobi) Thus, although people writing these comments might be attempting to censure Asians (and not the company standing behind the advertisement) for their portrayal of black people, some of these people are not ignorant of their potential reciprocal racist stances. They might also be completely aware of what they are doing, and in this case, at the same time use humour to get the message across, using it to be even more degrading.

Qiaobi: r-a-r, comment no. 75



In comment no. 75, *proudpinay* is clearly dissatisfied and finds Qiaobi's advertisement racist, which is seen by literally stating "*Fucking racist Chinese who thinks they are better than a certain race*" (Appendix 5.3, 75 Qiaobi). Nevertheless, *proudpinay's* way of responding features equally racist undertones, which is once more addressed towards the Asians (or the Chinese in this case), why this comment belongs to the category of r-a-r. The racist undertones can be seen in the use of *proudpinay's* use of the informal and offensive word 'chink', which by some is seen as a derogatory term for Chinese people, also strongly attempting at stressing his/her perceived disapproval of the Chinese by stating that even a royal person ("Queen of England") thinks badly of the Chinese too, a person who otherwise is not allowed to hold opinions on any matter publicly (The Royal Household 2018).

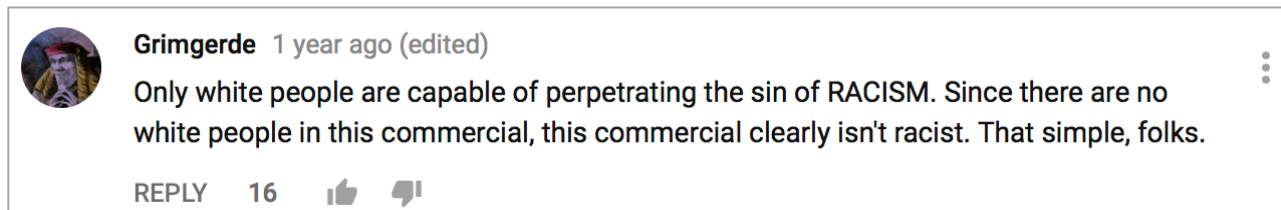
Qiaobi: r-a-r, comment no. 102



Qiaobi comment no. 102 differs a bit from the comments previously examined within the category of r-a-r, in that the commentator, *Shaokun Meng*, is not racist towards the producers of the advertisement or the Asian people, instead, he/she is attacking white people who think the Chinese are racist. *Shaokun Meng's* line of reasoning is, like others before him/her, that racism is a product of white people because of their prior historical actions, why they according to *Shaokun Meng* have no right to claim others to be racist than themselves. (Appendix 5.3, 102 Qiaobi) Thus, once again we have a comment that includes negative stereotyping and racist undertones as a reaction to something this person finds racist against him/her, why the accusations of perceived racism are somehow going in circles.

To sum up, the above exploration of comments categorised as r-a-r clearly rests on issues related to Asia and Asians, expressing discontent with what is perceived as Asian supremacy, yet in the Qiaobi case it was also possible to detect comments within which the commentators appeared to be racist towards whites. Thus, they seem to share the characteristics of the r-a-r-category, which will be illustrated with the scrutiny of the following comments.

Qiaobi: r-a-r, comment no. 117 (whites)



In the Qiaobi case, we identified comments that are also characterised by the same negative attitude towards white people, however doing so while not appearing to belong to either of the main camps. For example, in Qiaobi comment no. 117, *Grimgerde* clearly expresses his/her dislike of white people. By writing “*Since there are no white people in this commercial, this commercial clearly isn’t racist*” (Appendix 5.3, 117 Qiaobi), this comment does not belong to the ‘PC opponents’-category and any of its subcategories, even though it states that there is no racism involved in the advertisement, which is typically what a PC opponent would claim. On the other hand, the comment does not carry a PC advocates attitude either, since it states that there are no signs of racism in the advertisement, which is a requirement for it to fall under that category, but also since he/she writes of racism as a sin. Consequently, this shows that commentators do not only have to be racist towards those causing offence, they can also be racist towards other people they perceive as displaying racial superiority, in this example, white supremacy.

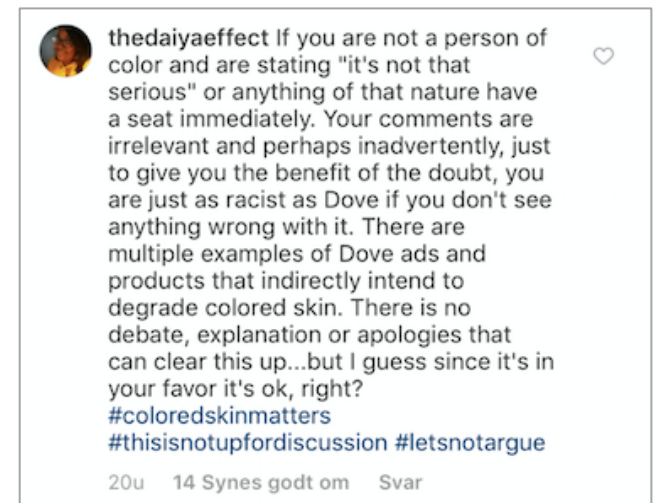
In the process of looking for comments similar to these in the H&M and Dove cases, it was not possible to find comments that were racist towards whites in the same degree. However, comments appeared that can best be described as holding negative attitudes towards whites or people from the West, and the following therefore works to illustrate why these comments do not form part of the r-a-r-category, but instead do fit in our proposed theoretical PC concept.

Negativity towards whites: H&M, 19 and Dove, 137

H&M comment no. 19



Dove comment no. 137



An example hereof is H&M comment no. 19, in which white people's opinions are made unimportant and insignificant, as *lala_royal_queen* does not mean that they understand the issue of racism and therefore white people's meanings are inconsequential. In doing so, she also creates a clear distinction between people on the basis of their skin colour, more or less stating whose statements are discreditable when talking about racism. (Appendix 5.1, 19 H&M) Additionally, in Dove comment no. 137, whites are once again discredited, as *thedaiyaeffect* writes that white people's opinions are 'irrelevant' and 'inadvertently' (Appendix 5.2, 137 Dove), adding that white people are just as racist as Dove if they do not find the advertisement racist. These comment examples might be discrediting whites in some way, but the commentators do not portray the same degree of strong negative stereotyping of whites as the r-a-r-comments do, nor do they express a contempt with what might be perceived as white supremacy. By that and in communicating dissatisfaction with what is being portrayed in the advertisements, these comments are possible to be located within our proposed theoretical PC concept.

Having conducted an in-depth analysis of the comment examples, we now draw up the final version of the theoretical PC concept based on the initially proposed theoretical concept and the qualitative findings.

6. DEDUCED THEORETICAL PC CONCEPT

After having made an explorative analysis of the selected comments, we have acquired a more well-founded understanding of the six different PC subcategories. The following provides comprehensive definitions of each subcategory, drawing on the characteristics initially proposed and the ones found during the analysis. These detailed descriptions of the subcategories are the ones constituting the theoretical PC concept that will be applied in the quantitative analysis, exploring the salience of each subcategory. It is important to note that the attitudes found within the PC subcategories solely denote how commentators relate to the content of the given advertisement and not their general stance on political correctness.

The following illustration depicts our understanding of the dynamics between the subcategories, seeing them as connected on a continuum moving from PC advocates, high to low, and from PC opponents, low to high.

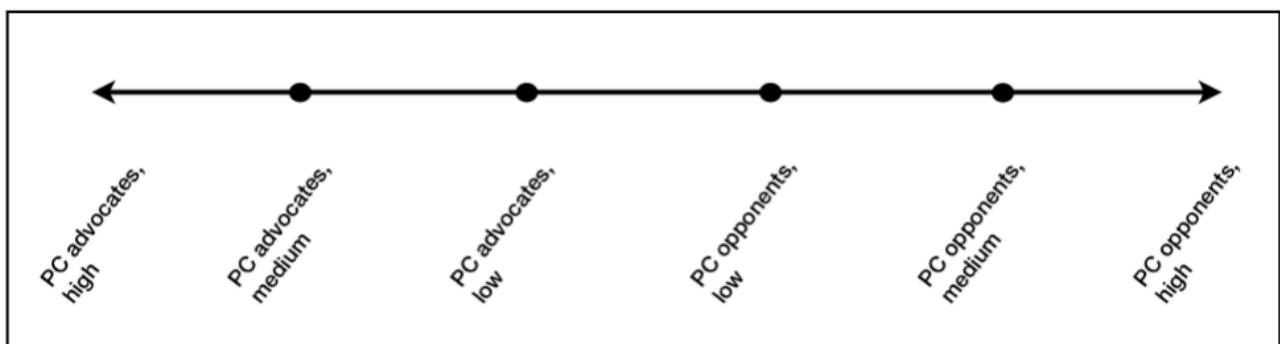


Illustration 5: PC continuum

After the detailed descriptions of each camp and its subcategories, a table follows summarising and displaying the deduced characteristics for each subcategory.

6.1 PC advocates

Characteristic for all attitudes found within the ‘PC advocates’-category is that they convey a belief that how the wrongdoer is representing minority groups inappropriately, indicating an opinion that one ought to respect the personhood of other individuals or groups. With regard to this study, all

comments considered as belonging to the ‘PC advocates’-camp believe that how the advertisements represent black people is wrong, yet each subcategory simply represent different degrees of it.

6.1.1 PC advocates: high relevance

As synthesised when proposing the initial theoretical PC concept to be used as the concept guiding our qualitative exploration of the categories, comments situated within the ‘PC advocates, high’-subcategory are distinctive by not being tolerant of potential racism. Statements found in these comments typically leave the impression that what is considered to be the “performer” of potential racism created the advertisement intentionally, and as a result, these comments seem to convey that the commentator in question has no tolerance to or uncertainty about the intent behind the advertisement. Thus, the wording of individuals characterised as belonging to this subcategory will presumably express an attitude perceiving all things as possibly possessing racist undercurrents as an attack on them or on racial equality. These essential elements initially proposed as characterising the ‘PC advocates, high’-subcategory all seemed to feature in the comments scrutinised for this subcategory in some way. Yet, by carefully examining a selection of comments that to begin with were considered as belonging to this subcategory, further facets appending to the distinctive nature of the subcategory surfaced. While the qualitative analysis corroborates that commentators located within this subcategory see anything and everything as being racist or an attack on them, it also became apparent that such individuals often claim that other groups/ethnicities, who do not share the same inherited historical background as they, do not understand the issue of having companies portray minorities what they discern as derogatorily. Thus, the tolerance of commentators representing the ‘PC advocates, high’-subcategory would seem to be so limited that these individuals do not allow for other beliefs about the advertisement to be expressed, indicating that they presumably have no tolerance towards other people’s opinions or interpretations of the advertisement. Along these lines, by means of communication, it also became noticeable that these people were attacking outgroup as well as ingroup members for violations of what they regard as group norms. Therefore, with the extract of comments demonstrating that the prescription of PC norms should be adhered to by what is being constructed as both ingroup and outgroup members, it can be argued that in the perspective of ‘PC advocates, high’, the PC discourse not solely provides guidelines to be followed but is often regarded as an ideology, presenting the lens through which the world is to be perceived.

In the conveyance of no tolerance, a profound expression of anger seemed to be present in these comments. This emotion primarily unfolded through displeasure with and hostility towards those

asserting or implying that the advertisements conveyed no form of racism or that the companies had no intentions of creating advertisement with potential racist insinuations.

In some instances, and in proposing more specific characteristics, other qualities are also detectable in 'PC advocates, high'-comments. Firstly, some 'PC advocates, high'-attitudes show signs of drawing parallels to their previous experience with the company they are censuring, predominantly negative associations, and once a commentator has evaluated the company against this background, it seems as if he/she is set on this belief. With reference to the Qiaobi case, it instead appears that people within this subcategory are evaluating what they see as a misconduct based on their preceding knowledge and/or experience with the country of the wrongdoer. Secondly, some 'PC advocates, high'-commentators are of the belief that influential actors have responsibilities in the portrayal of sensitive groups, following the principles behind politically correct brands and marketing correct, because they presuppose that the way these minority groups discursively are verbalised is the way people come to see and talk about them. Lastly, simply because a 'PC advocate, high'-attitude typically shows no tolerance of other people's opinions of how the potential racism ought to unfold, an individual possessing the characteristics of this subcategory might also be more argumentative in his/her remark. Although usually being pervaded with a strive for racial equality and a belief that there is only one right way of referring to and representing people, such an individual will appear more argumentative when he/she thoroughly is attempting to justify his/her view on the case.

6.1.2 PC advocates: medium relevance

Whereas a PC advocate, high, characteristically will take everything as being racist and as an offence, a PC advocate, medium, does not by instinct assess the company as being racist, but will instead take an uncomprehending stance, reflecting how it could be possible that the advertisement was created and not the least produced without knowing that it potentially could cause offence. Thus, these comments generally carry an expression of incomprehension.

As proposed in the initial version of the proposed theoretical PC concept, comments located within the 'PC advocates, medium'-subcategory express a strive for racial equality and a belief that people as well as organisations ought to represent and make mention of ethnicities in particular ways. More, statements belonging to the subcategory might as well manifest a belief that the wrongdoer could have acted unintentionally, an element that along with the other features explained is corroborated in the analysis. The comments explored in the qualitative analysis for this subcategory namely seemed

to be situated on a spectrum, where the commentators either believe that the wrongdoer acted intentionally or unintentionally. Thus, when located within this subcategory, the comments do not by definition express a position believing that the company had unintentional or intentional motives with the message of the advertisement, but as an alternative both beliefs are possible to find within this subcategory, nevertheless, they believe that it is important to discuss PC practices.

Another essential point deduced from the analysis of the ‘PC advocates, medium’-subcategory is that, interestingly, some of the comments seemed to express forgiveness. Such comments might insinuate that what is communicated in the advertisement is wrong, blaming it for being inappropriate, but in their wording, some comments still show forgiveness towards the company in question. In this connection, it is worth noting that some individuals communicating the attitude of PC advocates, medium, as well are capable of recognising that perhaps it is not the company in its entirety that should be criticised for putting a racist message across, but that what is represented in the advertisement could be a product of the attitudes of certain people employed by the company. Consequently, some might not see the potential racist undercurrents present in the advertisement as being indicative of the company’s values and image.

Importantly, in some instances, this subcategory can lean more towards the ‘PC advocates, high’-subcategory than the one of low, considering that some commentators describe themselves as being so sufficiently offended by the action of the company that they choose not to support it on this basis prospectively. Where a PC advocate, low, presumably would give the company “the benefit of the doubt”, a high characteristically writes off the company without more, why a medium possessing this feature would share greater resemblance with a high in this regard. Another similarity a PC advocate, medium, might share with a PC advocate, high, is the likelihood of a PC advocate, medium, to express a discredit of white people. However, contrary to a PC advocate, high, a medium does not showcase the same degree of intolerance towards the beliefs of people against other races, because a high will typically state it as a fact that one cannot take the words of white people as the truth in relation to racism as they have not been subject to the same degree of segregation as blacks, and a medium will instead simply allude to this idea without claiming that as the single truth.

6.1.3 PC advocates: low relevance

In comparison to a PC advocate, medium, whose comment might only contain suggestions of an expression of forgiveness, a PC advocate, low, do with certainty express a degree of forgiveness,

excusing the companies for their actions. Additionally, one of the essential differences between a PC advocate, medium, and a PC advocate, low, is also that a medium is far more concerned with bringing about racial equality and equal opportunities and thus relates to the negative aspects of the history of oppression of minorities, while a low is much more occupied with the company and its history. When compared, PC advocates, low, seem to be influenced by their positive view on and evaluation of the company in question to a greater extent, while the relational assessment people from medium have about the company possibly proves not to be to the advantage of the company, because it might not be strong enough in determining whether the company caused offence with its advertising.

The comments explored for this subcategory also appear to be drawing on the elements proposed initially as being characteristic of PC advocates, low. As alluded to, comments within this subcategory are distinctive in the way the commentators hold the beliefs that what they see as wrongdoers acted completely unintentionally. Thus, statements expressed in these comments will point at the commentators being dissatisfied with the content of the advertisements while still recognising it as being a mistake that the company produced the advertisement with potential racist insinuations, unknowing that it might cause offence to some.

As already touched upon shortly, some of the commentators found in this subcategory rely on their view of the company when assessing the issues surrounding the entire situation with accusations of potential racism. While PC advocates, high, also draw on their prior knowledge about and experience with the company, their evaluations will typically be negative whereas the evaluations of PC advocates, low, will be positive. Two additional features of a PC advocate, low, might also help illuminate this subcategory in some instances. First, some will relate constructively to the issues surrounding the racism discourse, and second, they might seem more objective in their evaluation of the cases (while still being a PC advocate in the way the comment reflects that this person believes that the company must consider the ways in which it portrays certain groups). Thus, these people may be capable of seeing the case from both the side of those offended and the side of the company.

Summing up: from PC advocates, high to low

Drawing on the distinction made between PC advocates, high, medium and low in the previous sections, the following lines can be drawn between the three attitudes. A PC advocate, high, is characterised as having no tolerance towards perceived racism or other's opinions about issues over racism, doing everything to fight for racial equality. Interestingly to note, PC advocates, high, are

evidently the ones who feel most offended and are themselves also the ones most offensive when it comes to the choice of language. A PC advocate, medium, also strives for racial equality but does so without blindly accusing somebody of being racist and without leaving semi-racist statements themselves. In some cases, this individual also seems to have much doubt about whether the intent of the wrongdoers was to come across as racist. A PC advocate, low, on the contrary appears to be convinced that it was a mistake that the company portrayed potential racism, all the while maintaining that it was wrong to portray blacks the way it was done. More, they will also be the ones expressing a degree of forgiveness with certainty.

The different characteristics for PC advocates are summed up in the scheme below, yet it is important to note that a comment not necessarily includes all of the characteristics from its subcategory.

PC subcategory	Characteristics
PC advocates, high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strive for racial equality No tolerance to racism No uncertainty that the wrongdoer acted intentionally Racism-biased No tolerance to other interpretations Perceive PC as an ideology (ingroup and outgroup members alike must follow norms) Expression of anger Hostility Draw on negative associations Show concern for the influence of PiC behaviour May be more argumentative
PC advocates, medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strive for racial equality, but instances are not per definition judged as racism Could have acted intentionally or unintentionally Open to other interpretations Important to discuss PC practices (means for avoiding to cause offence) Expression of incomprehension May express forgiveness Nuanced in their judgement - do not necessarily blame company in its entirety
PC advocates, low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear expression of forgiveness Belief that wrongdoer acted completely unintentional Excuse companies for their actions

	Occupied with the company and its history Positive relational assessment of company Dissatisfied with content but recognise it as a mistake Judge the case from the side of the offended and the company
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Table 5: Overview of characteristics within PC advocates subcategories

6.2 PC opponents

Moving on to the other main category, comments belonging to the PC opponents camp can all be characterised by believing in freedom of expression to different degrees. Furthermore, a PC opponent does not detect potential racism in the given advertisement, however, being a PC opponent does neither entail being racist and con multiculturalism, which in turn means that a PC opponent can be against racism while not finding the particular advertisement to feature it.

6.2.1 PC opponents: high relevance

As explained in the method section (4.4.1.1 Qualitative data selection), the initially proposed subcategory of PC opponents, high, is comprised of comments that express hatred towards other races or includes attitudes that express being against multiculturalism and racial equality. In our examination of the selected comments, we did find evidence for the expression of hatred and intense dislike towards blacks, which also turned out to be one of the primary characteristics of these comments, yet we also found that the racist attitudes included in these comments can be addressed towards other ethnicities than that of blacks. More, the size of these comments showed to be either short or of more elaborative character. Some are simple and to the point, with commentators feeling no need for explaining their attitudes. The more elaborative versions include argumentation, either writing the reasons for their discontent or being even more exhaustive in arguing for the reasons for their discontent, meanwhile trying to plant doubt about the sincerity of PC advocates, attempting to convince others about their points of view, yet doing so with racist undertones. While the examination revealed that these comments are likely to include strong degrees of negative stereotyping, it also revealed that they are likely to feature humour, just like PC opponents, low, however doing so in a hostile way, which is what distinguishes it from the other subcategory.

Furthermore, comments belonging to PC opponents, high, need not to be blind towards “otherness” or believe in white supremacy even though they feature hatred towards others, thus these

commentators are still capable of valuing and acknowledging other cultures and races than their own. Furthermore, and in this regard, the examination suggests that some commentators have a tendency of possessing double standards, as being inclusive of certain races and not of others might seem conflicting.

6.2.2 PC opponents: medium relevance

Compared with PC opponents, high, attitudes that fall under the subcategory of PC opponents, medium, has nothing against blacks. As proposed in our initial theoretical PC concept, this subcategory encompasses attitudes that express a belief in freedom of expression, more specifically that companies can express themselves as they more or less please. We also suggested that this subcategory includes comments that carry the opinion that people are too sensitive nowadays and that the reactions to the particular case have been way too extensive. Also, incomprehension is a characteristic that was initially proposed for this subcategory, where commentators express to not understand why the case is perceived by some as a problem. (cf. section 4.4.1.1 Qualitative data selection) During the qualitative analysis, several other facets of this subcategory surfaced, which therefore adds to the theoretical concept. First of all, like PC opponents, high, featured hatred, these comments showed to give expressions of not only incomprehension (as initially proposed), but also of annoyance. Seeing people as being too sensitive, some commentators recognise that people are affected by the way people write about the given advertisement, which might be an explanation of the feeling of annoyance, in that a PC opponent, medium, do not want people to think that a given advertisement is racist, acknowledging and thus fearing that some might be affected in this direction because of the discursive construction. On the other hand, comments can also be very direct, simply stating that there is no way that the given advertisement can be racist, and that we should not be as restricted in our evaluation of it, namely that people should stop interpreting every instance of potential racism as an offence made to them.

More, as initially proposed, comments that fall under the subcategory of PC opponents, medium, include a disregard of a racism discourse, but it appeared in the analysis that a direct disregard can appear in two ways. Firstly, it can unfold in the way that the commentator does not believe that there are any racist elements in the advertisement, and secondly, commentators might disregard the discourse by maintaining that people's articulation of "unnecessary" issues are getting in the way of (to them) more important matters. Another facet that revealed in the analysis is that PC opponents, medium, do not automatically disregard the need for racial equality, however they see limits to when

to claim that something is racial inequality and white supremacy. Thus, PC opponents, medium, might as PC advocates have great interests in issues over inclusion and multiculturalism. Moreover, adding to this subcategory is the fact that black people proved not only to belong to the category of PC advocates, but instead they might also fall under this subcategory. Therefore, being part of the ethnicity censured by the advertisement does not automatically mean that these people feel offended by it, but they can in fact instead be ironic towards those who do.

Lastly, another element that was revealed in the analysis that has to be added to the subcategory of PC opponents, medium, is that these comments can express a gratitude of contents still being produced that are a bit controversial, which they see as a sign that PC not yet have become the established norm for all to adhere by.

6.2.3 PC opponents: low relevance

Initially, we proposed that PC opponents, low, were commentators that would use the platform to address other matters than that of potential racism in the given advertisement. We also suggested that these attitudes can express to find the advertisement in question entertaining and that the comments often include humour, this way indirectly disregarding the relevance of a racism discourse. Having examined the selected comments, additional factors surfaced that can help describe these types of comments even more into detail. First of all, what distinguishes PC opponents, low, from medium, is that comments within this subcategory (low) generally include attitudes that are not affected by the advertisement nor the ongoing discussion on the given social media platform. Thus, in comparison to a PC opponent, medium, most comments within this subcategory do not take a position on whether the content of the advertisement is potentially racist or not and do not relate to the remarks of those people feeling offended by the advertisement. Yet, the examination did also prove that people somehow can relate to the issue of potential racism, however doing so only in order to get a joke across.

The analysis corroborates the suggestion that these comments primarily find the advertisement funny or feature humour and joking. Adding a new facet to PC opponents, low, we found that these comments may also simply be random, which turned out to be a common characteristic among the majority of these comments. While the 'PC opponents, medium'-subcategory is found to feature feelings of incomprehension and annoyance, PC opponents, low, showed to first and foremost express feelings of amusement and relaxation, as well as self-irony. These more relaxed attitudes might also

help explain why the comments within this subcategory seem very random, as having a relaxed and unconflicted attitude, one's statements are not likely to include any particular position and will instead appear to be somehow shallow.

While our initially proposed theoretical PC concept suggested that this subcategory includes comments that indirectly disregard the racism discourse, in the analysis we found evidence that the disregard can in fact not only be indirect but also can be direct. If comments include content that regards other subjects than the advertisement, it is an indirect disregard, but if the commentators are commenting on the advertisement or discussion (without seeing the issues as one being occupied with ethnicities), it is a direct disregard. In similar vein, comments showed also to sometimes feature support for the given company, however doing so without touching upon the issue of potential racism surrounding the advertisements.

Although, as mentioned previously, PC opponents, high, and PC opponents, low, turned out to have humour as a common feature, the difference between them is that comments that fall under this subcategory is not crude or hostile in its wording like the wording in comments within PC opponents, high.

Summing up: from PC opponents, high to low

Having accounted for an in-depth description of the subcategories, PC opponents, high, medium and low, we can now clearly see what distinguishes them from each other, and one element we deem interesting is the subcategories' different ways of viewing ethnicities. PC opponents, high, regard people in terms of races and creates a distinction between them, while PC opponents, medium, acknowledges that there are different ethnicities and have no issues with any of them, wishing that we could get over the point where we think extensively about how to label or talk about certain minorities. More, medium attitudes think that the differences between people are beneficial if it contributes to for example getting a message across. Lastly, attitudes belonging to PC opponents, low, do not articulate the idea of different ethnicities, indicating that they see no need to do so. If comparing PC opponents, low, to an 'PC advocate'-attitude, advocates want racial equality why they articulate the problematics about unequal relations between races, while a PC opponent, low, does not refer to the issue of racial equality at all.

The below scheme sums up the characteristics that each subcategory may possess. Once again, comments do not necessarily contain all the elements of their particular subcategory.

PC subcategory	Characteristics
PC opponents, high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expression of hatred Against multiculturalism and racial equality Intense dislike of other ethnicities Reactions might be elaborative or short Argumentation can be to the point or exhaustive Strong degrees of negative stereotyping Might feature humour in a hostile way Not blind towards otherness
PC opponents, medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have no issues with other races Believe in freedom of expression Believe that people are too sensitive Disregard of racism discourse in advertisement (not disregard of a potential racism discourse in society) Expression of incomprehension (why is the advertisement a problem) Expression of annoyance (fears that trivialities get in the way of more important issues) Argue why they see no racism in the advertisement Flatly refuse the existence of racist elements in the advertisement PC practices are not dispensable, important to address (means for fighting PC) Value controversial content
PC opponents, low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take no direct position, but may relate to topic to get a joke across Relate to other topics than what is in focus Find the advertisement entertaining Use humour to indirectly disregard racism discourse Not affected by advertisement Comment is random Relaxed or self-ironic attitude or express a feeling of amusement Show support for company without referring to the discussed issue

Table 6: Overview of characteristics within PC advocates subcategories

6.3 Cross-categorical results

While the qualitative analysis of the comments belonging to the six proposed subcategories evidently contributes to the establishment of distinctive dividing lines between them, it also brings about reflections pertinent to the subcategories cross-categorically.

To begin with, considering that both camps have been structured around three subcategories each, distributed on a continuum from high to low relevance, this division was reflected in the qualitative analysis. As evident, the subcategories that somehow displayed a blunt communicative engagement in intergroup competition was those of high relevance, who seemed to be the ones most single-mindedly pointing out those violating what they consider PC norms. While the high subcategories are single-minded, the medium subcategories does also engage in intergroup competition, however with a tone of incomprehension. Yet, the low subcategories very little to none behaviour indicative of intergroup competition. In this connection, it is also possible to draw some parallels between the subcategories found within the camps with basis in the analysis. To some degree, it is possible to find similarities between PC advocates, high, and PC opponents, high, because comments within these subcategories seem to share the same extreme emotions, which is a common feature that contributes to them being the extreme versions found within each camp. Also, among all subcategories, the ‘high relevance’-attitudes are the only ones articulating PC as an ideology that ingroup as well as outgroup members must adhere to, declaring their viewpoints as the single truth. Along this line, it is also to some extent a possibility to suggest that parallels can be drawn between PC advocates, medium, and PC opponents, medium, seeing that both subcategories possess the same degree of incomprehension in their attitudes; a PC advocate, medium, does not understand why companies would produce advertisements with the potential of causing offence and a PC opponent, medium, does not understand why some people have such heatedly reactions (cf. section 5.2.2, H&M: PC opponent medium, comment no. 18 and Qiaobi: PC advocates, medium, comment no. 42). Thus, these two subcategories have a common feature that may play a factor in making them the moderate version of each camp, which is also supported by the fact that comments belonging to these subcategories are the ones to engage the most in communicative actions, attempting to argue for their point of views.

Furthermore, it became noticeable how the attitudes to the advertisements and potentially the companies responsible for them do not seem to be fixed. That is, as shown, just because a commentator has an initial attitude to or opinion of an advertisement, this attitude may possibly change through interaction with others, where others can be commentators as well as the companies

accused of potential causing offence. Thus, it can be argued that the situation or context one finds oneself in might prove to affect this person's interpretation, behaviour, communication and attitude. In this connection, it is possible to suggest that the dividing lines between the 'PC advocates'-subcategories are more flexible, with greater probability of people's attitudes moving between the three subcategories (cf. section 5.1.3, H&M: PC advocates, low, comment no. 57). Contrary, it can be assumed that the dividing lines between the 'PC opponents'-subcategories are more fixed, seeing that it would require a larger attitudinal change to go from low to high or just medium to high, simply because the attitudes found within these subcategories differ to a greater extent than those found within the 'PC advocates'-subcategories.

6.4 Racism against racism and censure of whites

While the comments characterised as 'racism against racism' and 'censure of whites' (cf. section 5.3 A triangulation?) play part in displaying the uniqueness of the Qiaobi case, which builds on the entire idea of a triangulation, it might also convey something in relation to the theoretical PC concept deducted. They can indicate that some comments seemingly cannot be characterised according to the proposed theoretical PC concept, because the attitudes found within these special comments do not seem to relate to the issue of PC on equal terms as the rest of the comments. That is, they do not resemble a PC advocate nor opponent completely, because these comments neither convey a belief in freedom of expression or a search for racial equality, instead it can be argued that this category is a meeting point for extra extreme versions of PC advocates and opponents, high.

With this, we proceed with the quantitative analysis, having finalised the qualitative research wherein we have reached elaborative definitions of the PC response types evident in the data.

7. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The second analysis part begins with a short illustration of the coding process applying the deduced theoretical PC concept, followed by an overview of the quantitative results hereof.

7.1 The derived theoretical PC concept in use

Before deriving quantitative results based on the qualitative data and accounting for these, an illustration of the categorisation process is given in short, with the purpose of demonstrating how the cleansed data has been classified according to the deduced theoretical PC concept. Examples are shown for each subcategory as well as an example of the category of ‘r-a-r’.

PC advocates, high: H&M comment no. 3



Comment no.	PC advocate			PC opponent		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
3	X					

Example 1: Comment and coding

In H&M comment no. 3, the commentator express anger and has no tolerance towards H&M and its advertisement, which is seen by the comment stating that H&M is racist, not giving the company the benefit of the doubt or taking into account other interpretations of the advertisement. Thus, this comment is categorised as a PC advocate, high.

PC advocates, medium: Dove comment no. 2

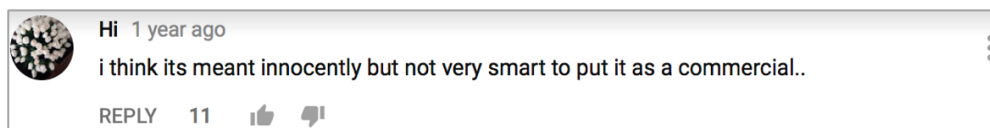


Comment no.	PC advocate			PC opponent		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
2		X				

Example 2: Comment and coding

The above comment falls under the subcategory PC advocates, medium, because it does not express that Dove is racist, however it does show serious dissatisfaction with the advertisement, showing incomprehension and asking how it was possible for it to be launched, which is a typical characteristic of PC advocates, medium, seeking equality.

PC advocates, low: Qiaobi comment no. 39

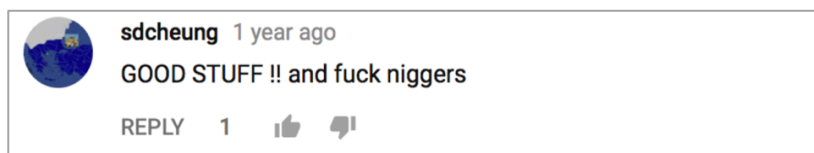


Comment no.	PC advocate			PC opponent		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
39			X			

Example 3: Comment and coding

In Qiaobi comment no. 39, the commentator gives Qiaobi the benefit of the doubt, hence expressing some degree of forgiveness. Yet, the commentator still finds the advertisement controversial and would want it executed differently, why it belongs to the PC advocates, low, subcategory.

PC opponents, high: Qiaobi comment no. 17



Comment no.	PC advocate			PC opponent		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
17				X		

Example 4: Comment and coding

In this comment, the commentator is concise, expressing hatred towards blacks (“fuck niggers”) and an approval of the advertisement and its execution, clearly having no need for explaining himself/herself, why it falls under the subcategory of PC opponents, high.

PC opponents, medium: H&M comment no. 41



Comment no.	PC advocate			PC opponent		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
41					X	

Example 5: Comment and coding

The above comment is a PC opponent, medium, because it disregards the racism discourse, as well as expresses that the commentator believes that people are generally overreacting today. The commentator wants people to stop ‘taking everything so seriously’, alluding that she wishes we could be more free in our expressions without being labelled racists.

PC opponents, low: Dove comment no. 63




Comment no.	PC advocate			PC opponent		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
63						X

Example 6: Comment and coding

In Dove comment no. 63, the commentator shows her support for the company, showing no need for defending her own opinion or defending Dove’s actions, why this comment falls under the subcategory, PC opponents, low. The following example shows the special r-a-r-category.

R-a-r: Qiaobi comment no. 9





machax002 1 year ago (edited)

common girl you had a chance to fuck a real thing and blew it up for a small dicked mongoloid instead? fucking retard.

REPLY

4





Comment no.	PC advocate			PC opponent		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
8					X	
9	Racism against racism					

Example 7: Comment and coding

In Qiaobi comment no. 9, the commentator shows to be offended by Qiaobi's advertisement, thus alluding to finding it to include elements of racism. However, this person in turn responds with equally offensive and racist remarks, why it falls under the category called r-a-r (racism against racism), where they show signs of being against Asians or people who historically have been oppressing certain ethnicities while making remarks opposing the idea of racial equality

7.2 Results from quantitative analysis

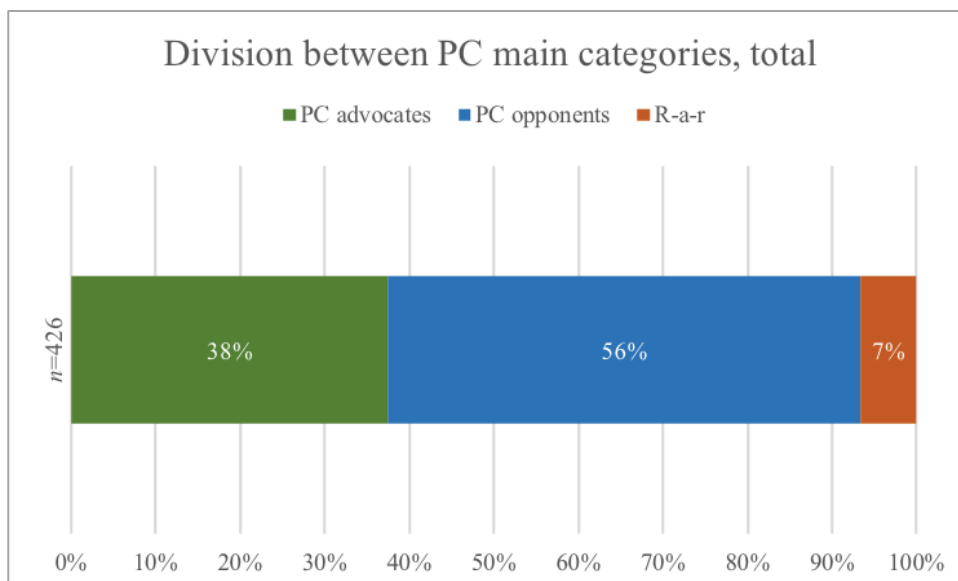
After categorising each comment forming part of the cleansed data, a frequency table and graphs presenting the dispersion of the different PC response types have been drawn up. In Appendices 7, 8 and 9, coding schedules can be found that display how the processes of applying the deduced theoretical PC concept to each comment have been effectuated, and in this section, an account of the most distinctive quantitative results emanating from the coding processes is given.

Frequency table showing PC attitudes among social media users				
	Percentage %			
PC category	H&M	Dove	Qiaobi	Overall
PC advocates H	22.9	21.7	15.1	19.7
PC advocates M	18.3	11.4	14.5	14.5
PC advocates L	1.5	7.7	0.7	3.3
PC opponents H	1.5	0.7	7.9	3.5
PC opponents M	36.6	53.8	28.9	39.7
PC opponents L	19.1	4.9	14.5	12.7
R-a-r	0	0	18.4	6.6
Total	100 (n=131)	100 (n=123)	100 (n=152)	100 (n=426)

Table 7: Frequency table of PC response types

Whereas the above frequency table shows the results in hard numbers, below these results are illustrated by graphs; first the results in relation to the main camps and then the subcategories.

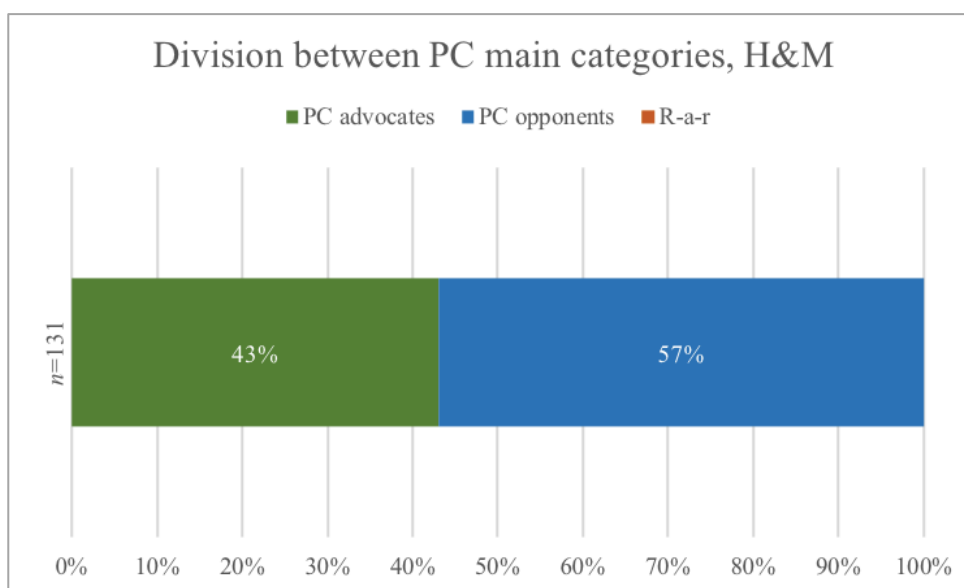
Division between PC main categories, total



Graph 1: Division between PC main categories, total

In an overall perspective, PC camp-wise, the percentage of comments categorised as PC opponents precedes the comments conveying an attitude representing that of PC advocates. PC opponents constitute 55.9 per cent of the comments and PC advocates 37.5 per cent, and with the remaining 6.6 per cent of the comments being coded as belonging to the categories 'racism against racism', which do not fall in line with our deduced theoretical PC concept.

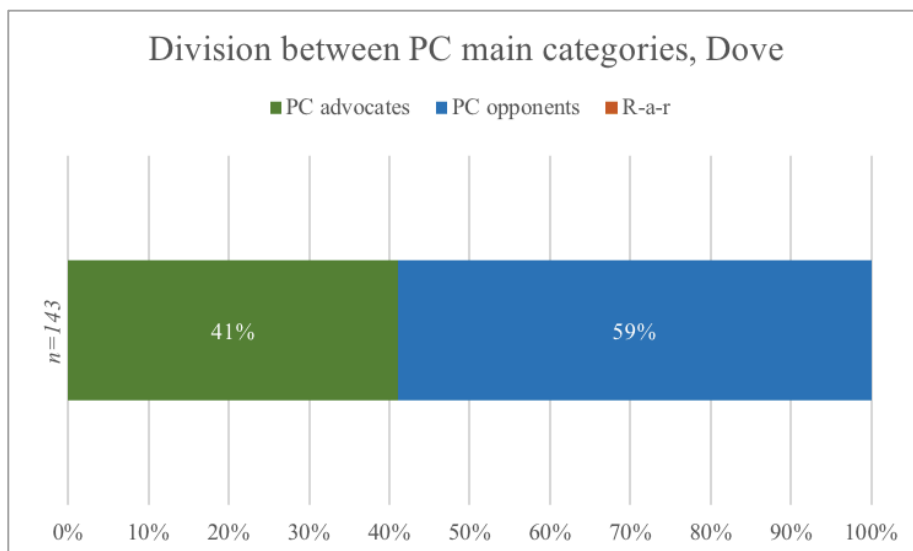
Division between PC main categories, H&M



Graph 2: Division between PC main categories, H&M

In the H&M case, 57 per cent of the comments are categorised as PC opponents and 43 per cent as PC advocates. Therefore, the PC opponents dominate the attitudes held among the commentators belonging to this case.

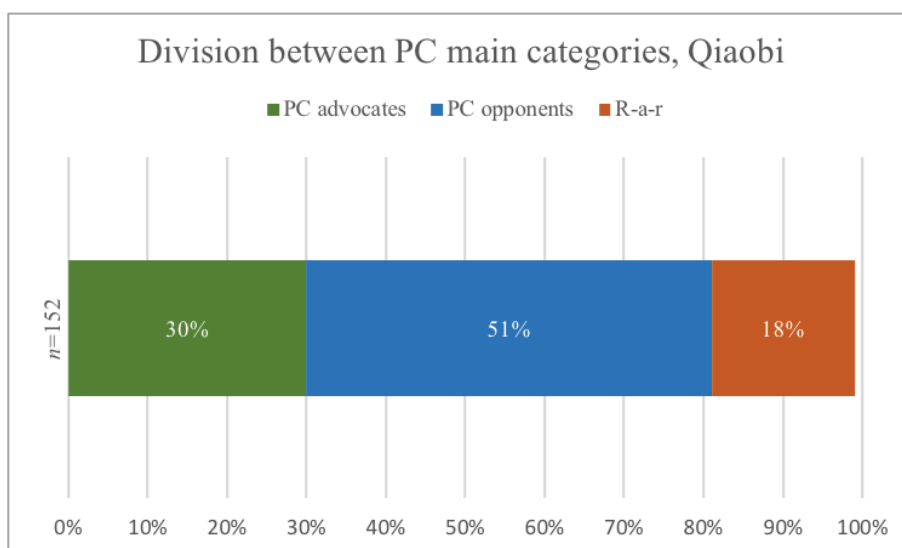
Division between PC main categories, Dove



Graph 3: Division between PC main categories, Dove

The attitudes within the comments belonging to Dove are divided into 59 per cent PC opponents and 41 per cent PC advocates. Like the above graph illustrating the results for H&M, the PC opponents constitute the majority of attitudes within the Dove case as well.

Division between PC main categories, Qiaobi



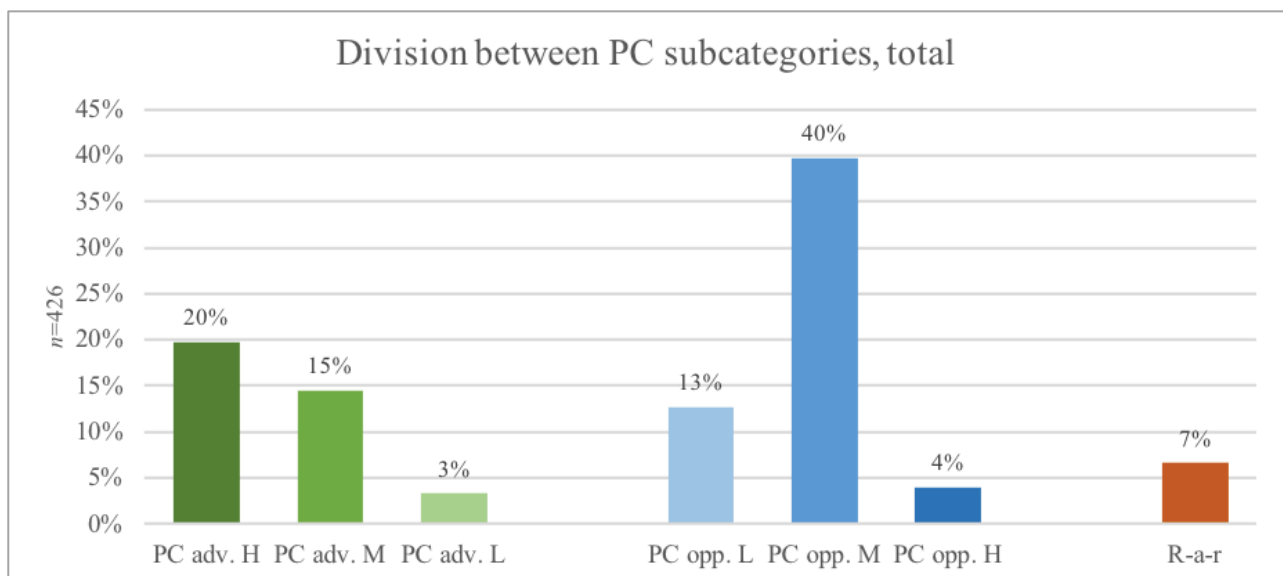
Graph 4: Division between PC main categories, Qiaobi

Yet again, the PC camp constituting the largest part of the comments for the Qiaobi case are PC opponents with 51 per cent vs. 30 per cent PC advocates. The remaining 18 per cent of comments belong to the ‘racism-against-racism’-category, which were only possible to locate in the Qiaobi case.

To sum up, in relation to the three cases among, it is likewise the case that the largest percentage of the comments is found on the ‘PC opponents’-side, with more than 50 per cent in each case.

Now, moving on to the results for the different subcategories.

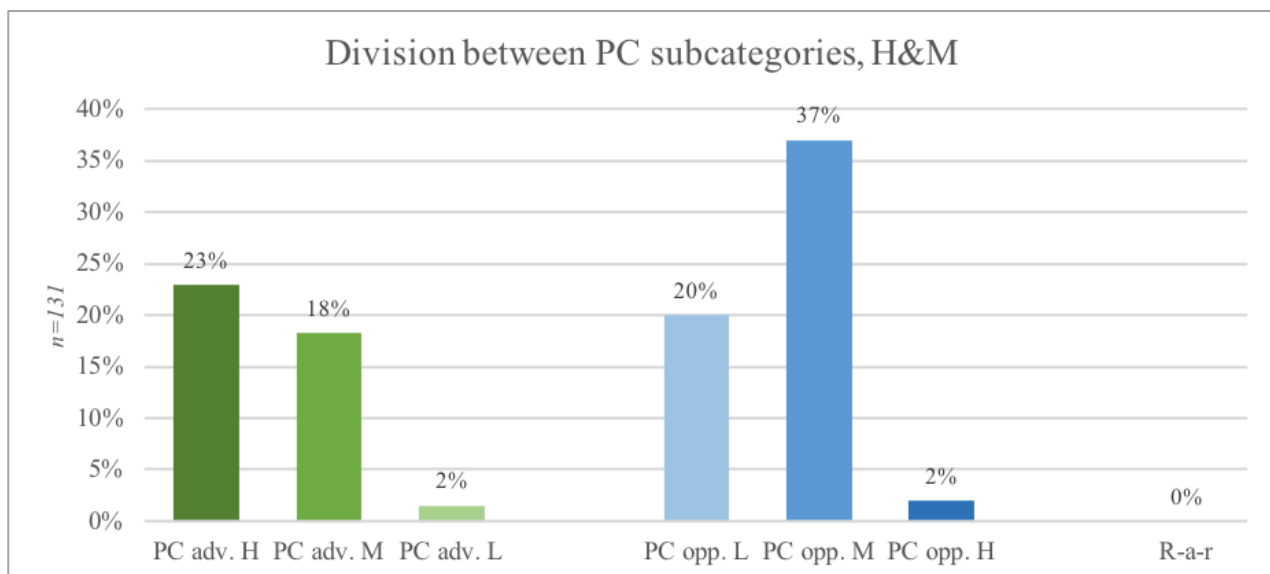
Division between PC subcategories, total



Graph 5: Division between PC subcategories, total

In total, if looking at the division of PC subcategories, PC opponents, medium, is the one subcategory dominating the PC opponents camp, whereas PC advocates, high, is the one dominating the PC advocates camp. On the other hand, the least prevalent subcategory for PC opponents is PC opponents, high, and for PC advocates it is PC advocates, low. Notably, the r-a-r category constitutes a larger part of the comments than the subcategories that are least prevalent within the two main camps.

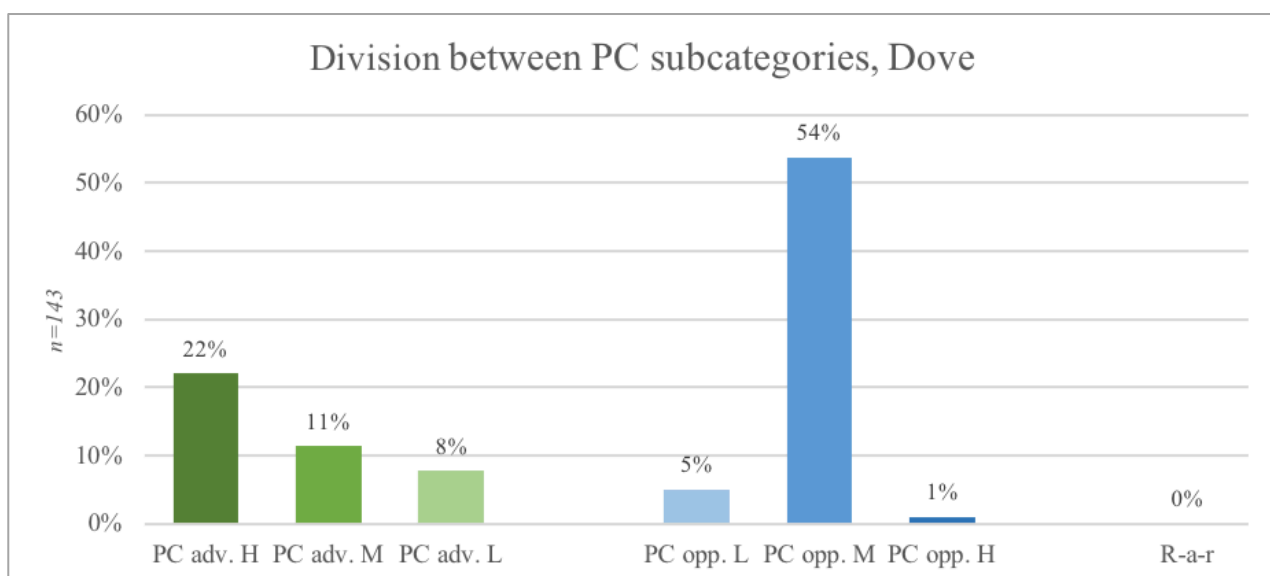
Division between PC subcategories, H&M



Graph 6: Division between PC subcategories, H&M

The pattern revealed in the previous graph (PC subcategories, total) is reflected in the case with H&M, yet again with the most PC opponents, medium, and PC advocates, high and the least PC opponents, high, and PC advocates, low.

Division between PC subcategories, Dove

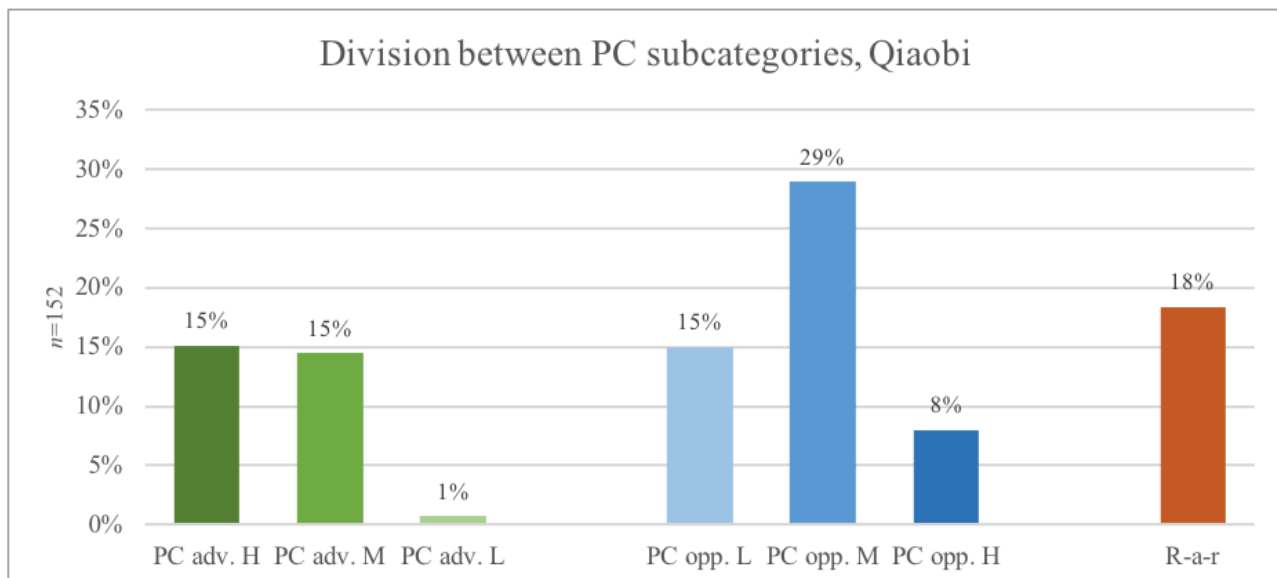


Graph 7: Division between PC subcategories, Dove

As found overall and in the H&M case, the division repeats itself in the Dove case. However, an apparent difference is that the difference in percentage points from the 'PC advocates, medium' -

subcategory to the ‘PC advocates, low’-subcategory is much smaller, meaning that the imbalance between these two subcategories is smaller compared to the other cases. In same vein, the balance between the subcategories, PC opponents, low, and PC opponents, medium, is greater when compared to the other cases.

Division between PC subcategories, Qiaobi



Graph 8: Division between PC subcategories, Qiaobi

The Qiaobi case is the only one of the three to include comments categorised as r-a-r. Despite this, the pattern revealed within Qiaobi’s comments highly similar to the above patterns, with a domination of PC opponents, medium. Similar to H&M the attitudes of PC advocates, low, are almost non-existent within Qiaobi’s comments. Contrary to the other cases, in this case, there is an equal amount of PC advocates, high, and PC opponents, low.

While drawing up quantitative results based on the coding process, the following chapter precedes with an interpretation of these results in relation to the research question guiding the overall aim of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 4

8. REFLECTIONS ON PC DISCOURSE

Chapter 4 builds on the quantitative results, interpreting and discussing the findings. The chapter consist of two parts: one making sense of the quantitative findings, the other discussing particular elements derived in qualitative analysis; both in relation to the problem statement, considering whether one PC attitude dominates the PC discourse in our data and if the nature of an advertisement and its context affects public reactions.

8.1 Making sense of the distribution of PC attitudes

Having outlined the most distinctive quantitative results, this section goes into detail with these, drawing on the obtained knowledge about the PC discourse, throwing these into relief drawing on the issues addressed within the problem statement.

As specified above when accounting for the quantitative results, the division of PC attitudes proved to be unequally distributed between the two camps. Evidently, most comments are found within the opponents-camp, which make up 55.9 per cent of the entire poll of cleansed data, while the advocates camp constitutes 37.5 per cent, a difference of 18.4 percentage points (the remaining 6.6 per cent are comments categorised as r-a-r that were not possible to locate within the two main camps). The commentators constituting this majority are those who are more tolerant and believe in people's right to express themselves more freely, and with the majority of social media users being characterised along these lines, something suggests that we today could be moving towards a tendency where people not necessarily are offended by controversial content and hence allow for companies to be more creative with their marketing and to think and express themselves more or less like they desire. This representation of the division between PC advocates and opponents might indicate that the PC discourse on social media platforms is becoming less centred around appearing politically correct, perhaps alluding to a sort of break with this pressure. This can somehow be argued to be supported by events that have taken place the past two-three years, showing a tendency towards a less politically correct society. One of these events is of course the (to some unexpected) election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States, whom argues that politically correct behaviour is not a means for recognising injustices, it is instead sugarcoating of basic truths. (Shafer 2017, 2) As Trump says, *"I can be the most politically correct person with you. Here's the problem with political*

correctness, it takes too long. We don't have time. We don't have time" (Trump 2016). Emerging as a "brash straight-shooter" and a "neoliberal truth teller", Trump managed to overcome much of the criticism against him and convince enough Americans to support him, hence people dismissing the idea of political correctness, believing that they are speaking the objective truths about societal issues (Shafer 2017, 1-2). It is suggested that with Trump as President, people have become more willing to express controversial views on issues like immigration, however that the election of Trump has not increased the opinions on anti-immigration, instead it has made people who are already prone to restrictionism feel less of a need to conceal their somewhat controversial opinions. (Willick 2017) This notion can be argued to apply to the general election in Denmark in 2015 as well, where the Danish People's Party (DF/Dansk Folkeparti), known for inter alia its strict immigration policy (Dansk Folkeparti 2018), had a historically large increase in voter support and became Denmark's second largest party with of 21.1 per cent of the voters (who got 12.3 per cent during the election in 2011). (Thomsen 2015) Also, the EU referendum in England can be regarded as a potential break with political correctness, as the British went against the academics that some argue have always presented the European Union as something beneficial to all (Hansen 2016). Thus, as several major happenings have already taken place, breaking to some degree with PC, it can be suggested that it has become easier to express controversial attitudes and to go against minorities, without a feeling of being condemned by social betters (Willick 2017), with Trump, Brexit and the Danish general election in 2015 possibly being considered as loosening limitations on what makes up acceptable discourse.

Something from the quantitative results potentially supporting the tendency towards a less politically correct society is that if looking across all subcategories and cases, PC opponents, medium, is the subcategory with the highest percentage of comments, which conveys that a large part of the commentators are of the belief that people taking offence are too sensitive and ought not to be too concerned with trivialities. However, if exploring the 'PC advocates'-camp, the subcategory PC advocates, high, is the one with the highest percentage of comments, which gives expression to that those comments that are most prevalently found within the advocates camp are those who eagerly strive for what is considered politically correct practices. Thus, even though the PC opponents, and more specifically the medium subcategory, are the ones with the highest representation in the three examined cases, the PC advocates in general and the high subcategory more exactly do still make up a significant percentage of the commentators, why it can be argued that politically correct issues should not be ignored since offence will still be felt and potentially create controversies. Therefore,

the fact that PC opponents make up the largest percentage of the commentators is not necessarily decisive for how companies should act and express themselves, but it is merely an expression of how the PC discourse unfolds for the present time, which still raise important questions for companies to consider and discuss. So, if drawing on the wonder put forward in our problem statement, it seems on the basis of the quantitative results one PC attitude actually dominates at this point in time.

While the quantitative results show a similar dispersion of the response types the three cases among (see graphs in section 7.2 Results from quantitative analysis), few differences are possible to detect. Considering that the basis for this study is taken in three different advertisements, one potentially more offensive than the other, one of the reflections causing a wonder is whether the comments convey something about the degree of perceived offensiveness caused by the advertisements. Interestingly, out of the three advertisements, Qiaobi is the one advertisement that on the face of it appears to differ the most from the other two, giving the impression of being more controversial in its content. Even so, based on the quantitative results, this advertisement is the one with the lowest percentage of PC advocates (people deeming what is portrayed as wrong), with around 10 percentage points less 'PC advocates'-comments than H&M and Dove, which seemingly indicates that this advertisement is the one people dislike the least and believe is least controversial. Thus, Qiaobi's advertisement might prove not to be judged as the most controversial or crude in the eyes of the commentators, although it might seem more overtly offensive. The quantitative results suggest that H&M's and Dove's advertisements are judged as the ones causing most offence and not Qiaobi's advertisement despite its potentially more exaggerated nature. As a result, something points to the possibility that people take offence in everything no matter the content and exact portrayal of minorities. Additionally, when examining the quantitative results derived from the Dove and Qiaobi cases, an element supports this notion. Both advertisements feature a clean/dirty distinction (shower gel vs. detergent), with Dove doing so implicitly (it takes a lot to discern it) and Qiaobi very explicitly. Yet, the results show that, if looking at PC advocates, high and medium, for the two, they only differentiate by 3.5 per cent. Therefore, it seems like even though something is portrayed overtly controversial while other executions seem harmless and inoffensive, people seem to judge it equally. While the Qiaobi case might have less 'PC advocates'-comments, something could point to people believing that Dove's and H&M's advertisements are judged too harshly or wrongfully, as the largest percentages of PC opponents, medium, namely are found within these two cases. This could especially be the situation surrounding Dove's case if regarding the probability that many only have

seen a cut of the advertisement and have not in its entirety inasmuch, as this is how the advertisement mostly has been presented by news media.

All things equal, by looking at the percentages the cases among, they can be indicative of different conclusions. As mentioned previously, it can be argued that people to some extent today take offence in everything, no matter the degree of (in this case) portrayed racism, seeing that Qiaobi's advertisement is seen as the least controversial although apparently being so explicitly controversial. This conclusion can be drawn if taking into account that H&M has the highest percentage of 'PC advocates, high'-commentators (22.9 per cent) and Qiaobi the lowest (15.1 per cent). In reality, then it seems as if H&M's advertisement is the one most commentators are against and with Qiaobi's being the one the least commentators are against. However, it might also be possible to draw other conclusions. Based on the percentages of PC opponents, medium, even despite of the before signs of Qiaobi being the least offensive, these results could indicate that Qiaobi's advertisement is the one the commentators in some way or another assess as being the most offensive. This can be interpreted from the view that Qiaobi has the least 'PC opponents, medium'-commentators, who think that others should move on and not be too concerned with trivialities, then comes H&M and with Dove being the advertisement with the highest percentage of these commentators. Consequently, it somehow proves difficult to definitively infer which advertisement the commentators deem as being more or less offensive in their ways of portraying potential racism, seeing that opposing impressions emerges.

Yet, what could then possibly help explain the difference that the least commentators find Qiaobi's advertisement as offensive (having the smallest percentage of PC advocates compared to the other cases)? At first glance, the difference might be elucidated if taking the 'racism against racism'-category (r-a-r) into account. As the attitudes of PC advocates, comments belonging to this subcategory also express a strong dissatisfaction with the way in which Qiaobi represents minorities, why one might believe that 'r-a-r'-comments would belong to the 'PC advocates, high'-subcategory. Thereby, the percentage of offended commentators from the Qiaobi case would precede both H&M and Dove. Despite that, merging 'r-a-r'-attitudes with 'PC advocates'-attitudes would be misleading, because commentators from r-a-r cannot be considered "true" advocates as they respond to racism by using racist and degrading remarks themselves. By that, statements within these comments do not represent the general belief in racial equality and politically correct language and behaviour, exactly why they do not qualify as what we refer to as "true" PC advocates. To 'r-a-r'-attitudes, it is not about being politically correct by portraying and treating people and different ethnic groups equally, but on

the other hand, they seem upset about the representation of blacks and the way Qiaobi is using a black man for stereotyping, however attacking Asians and whites for Qiaobi's action. In that way, they give the expression of being against the people who have portrayed blacks (to them) wrongfully, searching for incidents to interpret as attacks on blacks and expressing a contempt with the specific ethnic group they determine as being wrongdoers. Consequently, the discourse found within 'r-a-r'-comments does not feature the core of politically correct reasoning maintaining that people should be treated equally.

An explanation why PC advocates might be less prevalent in the Qiaobi case, compared to the H&M and Dove cases, could instead be that some might perceive the advertisement as being so blatantly controversial that it might come across as being a humorous contribution that, due to the nature of its design, should not be taken seriously and as an offence. Thus, some might think that there is no reason to get agitated, because although the company did portray a black man to be potentially racist, it simply used the demographic differences of ethnicities to get a message across in a comic way, and it might simply be seen as a way of gaining more publicity. However, another quantitative result might stand in contrast to this notion. Some could indeed find the advertisement humoristic, but since Qiaobi in fact does have the largest percentage of PC opponents, high, apparently a number of commentators approve of the representation of blacks within it. Some might believe that Qiaobi's intention was to be racist, why people possibly use the advertisement as a platform to declare their perceived common racist attitude, seeing that Qiaobi as a company can be regarded as an influential player, making it acceptable to hold an opinion different from the norm, one that might be controversial. Is this then an indication that Qiaobi's advertisement is cruder than the other two? Possibly. At least in percentage points, there is a significant difference between Qiaobi and the other two cases, and therefore, by having more PC opponents, high (commentators holding racist attitudes), these commentators might feel that Qiaobi's advertisement is a more legitimised platform on which they can express their supposedly racist attitudes. It must be assumed that people holding racist attitudes are more likely to express their views in places where issues are dealt with in a racist way and where they themselves identify it as being racism, whereas they probably would not make their opinions known on a discussion forum for something like greenery.

More, Qiaobi's advertisement might also have less advocates commenting on the post, because some people from this main category might become confused when another ethnic group (the Chinese) attacks their individuality than the one that historically have been blamed for attacking (whites). It can be argued that the racism discourse itself to some extent is stereotyped in terms of the black/white

distinction, and here (in the Qiaobi case), an Asian/black distinction appears. Thus, it might somehow be difficult for the PC advocates to assess the situation, because basically they are merely following the scheme of having to fight white supremacy, where whites are oppressing other races (black and Asians), and suddenly the Asians becomes racist, which consequently can be interpreted as an occurrence of a shift in the roles of the oppressor. With the allied against whites now turning into the enemy, it can cause a sort of confusion for PC advocates who might not know whether to create a new enemy stereotype or how this fits into the traditional overall scheme of white imperialism.

These two interpretative facets might help explain why Qiaobi is judged as it is, having less PC advocates, however this is not the only interesting notion. A further difference possibly emanating from basing our study on three advertisements with varying degrees of potential racism, is that the commentators do not seem to be as harsh in their assessments of Dove's advertisement. This is evident in Dove having the highest percentage of PC opponents, medium, and the highest percentage of PC advocates, low, compared to the other cases. This means that those commentators Dove percentage wise and cross-case wise has many of are not directly against Dove, with PC opponents, medium, being those supporting what Dove has done in some way or another and being open to more controversial and creative advertising, while PC advocates, low, are those unsupportive of what is portrayed in the advertisement, but they do not necessarily believe that the company is racist inclined. What has just been emphasised might seem inconsistent with the fact that the H&M and Dove cases in some ways give the impression of being similar in their degrees of potentially portrayed racism, and this inconsistency is also somehow reflected in some of the quantitative results, seeing that H&M's and Dove's percentages for total PC opponents and PC advocates are not far from each other. However, if taking the qualitative analysis of a 'PC advocates, low'-comment from the Dove case (cf. section 5.1.3, Dove: PC advocates, low, comment no. 4) into account, it can be postulated whether people's relationship to the companies might influence their assessment of the advertisements and the companies' intentions. More specifically, it can be suggested that if a company has a positive brand value, prior relational reputation, history and values in the eyes of people assessing the advertisement, the company is not solely judged on the basis of the advertisement but possibly also in light of its previous perceived image or people's relationship to it. This might contribute to Dove not being judged just as unfavourably as H&M, seeing that Dove previously have had a great focus on stressing that beauty comes in different shapes and colours through campaigns attempting to appeal to all people, primarily women, through its marketing. More, Dove is also the company of the three that has the lowest percentage of PC opponents, low, which as well might be explained by the

commentator's positive evaluations of the company. In this connection, the 'PC opponents'-commentators seemingly find it more pressing to defend the company against critics than to just leave a random comment, because to them, on the basis of their knowledge about the company, the way people assess and treat the Dove is not fair or righteous. Against the previous arguments, it can be proposed that consumers' positive assessments might contribute favourably in such situations where companies are under scrutiny. In this connection, it can be asserted that the reason why the 'PC advocates, low'-subcategory is the one with the lowest percentage (3.3%) of comments might be that H&M and Qiaobi have not been capable of positioning themselves and their brand positively, like Dove, making consumers remember the company's positive actions and initiatives, and with Qiaobi it might be a question of Western consumers not knowing of the company. Therefore, this might provide an indication of how much the case and its context influence people's position in relation to the case and thus the public discourse.

Additional aspects to append to the influence of the context on the public discourse is firstly that it was only possible to categorise one comment from the Qiaobi case as a PC advocate, low. When taking into consideration that Qiaobi is not a company found in the West, it might be presumed that the reason behind this is that people do not have any knowledge of the company. Would people who do not have a positive prior relational reputation of the company want to defend it or judge otherwise from what they observe? Secondly and also interestingly, there is actually a higher percentage that is racist against Asians and whites than against blacks (17.1 per cent against 7.9 per cent, respectively), which evidently displays the triangulation issue resulting from the Qiaobi case. This might be explained with people potentially being more hostile towards people they are not as familiar with culturally and close to distance wise. While these factors convey that the context of a case could play part in people's interpretation of content, these factors could also be a signal of the special character of Qiaobi.

Because of the apparent diverging nature of the three advertisements, we expected these perceived differences to be reflected in the quantitative results, nevertheless more similarities than differences were actually revealed. So how can this preponderance of similarities be explained? An explanation might be that the PC discourse itself to some degree is stereotyped. It appears to be a rather closed and self-referential discourse, where the aim is to defend the position of the camp people belong to and thus they do not move beyond own beliefs. The PC advocates camp identifies something potentially offensive, no matter the degree of perceived potential racism, which in turn, turns on the machinery, where PC advocates and opponents make their usual claims from each of their

perspectives. Therefore, the only thing the camps need is for the discourse to be induced by the outside, triggering the vehicle, and the starting point or what was actually the case does not necessarily matter much. Thus, this might also help explain why it appears that people react rather similarly to the three different advertisement although investigating the PC discourse through three diverging cases, executed differently and with different messages, and therefore expecting more differences.

8.2 Reflecting on the deduced theoretical PC concept

While the above section provide interpretations of the derived quantitative results, few findings in relation to the theoretical PC concept arose through the qualitative analysis. Notably, it became clear that commentators' positions within the PC subcategories are not necessarily fixed but instead might change when a commentator interacts with other commentators and people in general or when the company under scrutiny responds to the accusations (see section 5.1.3, H&M: PC advocates, low, comment no. 57, for a more elaborate explanation). Thus, we recognise that the quantitative results we are left with are alterable, as people might change attitudes when interacting with others. Therefore, it might prove complex to definitively categorise the attitude of a commentator, as this categorisation might simply be a snapshot of an individual's PC attitude in that context at a specific time, which is why this individual in different situations can be located within other subcategories. In the same vein, when people through interaction possibly contribute to affecting each other's PC attitudes, the entire PC discourse can be argued to always be in the process of change, also why the derived quantitative results simply can be a snapshot of the cases investigated at the point in time they occur.

Adding to the proposed more fluent relationship among PC attitudes is that people's pre-understandings of allegedly sensitive subjects might differ according to the background and worldview they interpret them on the basis of. More specifically, the use of 'monkey' and a clean/dirty distinction in the advertisements are possibly interpreted differently depending on what connotations people connect to features as these. Related to the categorisation of the comments, some 'PC advocates'-comments seemed to indicate that just because a person by definition shares the same history with those who are portrayed in a potentially disparaging manner in the selected advertisements, he/she does not have to feel offended by the advertisement (sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, Dove comments nos. 27 and 20). Thus, people do not inevitably have to feel disadvantaged in their present-day lives because of the history of their ancestors, believing that they themselves create their

own conditions, possibly making way for more creativity and free rein. Once again, this aspect could indicate that the PC discourse has a tendency of moving in the direction of a less politically correct way, because the basic idea behind the attitude of a PC advocate potentially is undermined when even those who are supposed to benefit from PC prescriptions do not think themselves that they are disadvantaged. Consequently, it becomes more complicated to presuppose who belongs to which main camp, because it appears that nothing is predetermined.

In relation to the different PC attitudes and the way they unfold discursively, if regarding the PC discourse and how it is shaped through the comments of social media users, it could be assumed that commentators within the PC subcategories engage in the PC discourse differently, i.e. some might be responsive, others not, and some might be open to the perspectives of others, while others not. Then, when looking at the data, which commentators are the ones most open to other perspectives and thus contributes to the quality of the discourse (which is achieved when people seem to acknowledge other opinions and not solely approach the subject from one immovable perspective)? Seeing that the medium subcategories from both camps appear to be the ones most moderate in their expressions and having the ethically “best” attitudes (leaving room for other perspectives and acknowledging these with the same legitimacy) and because the high and low subcategories (for both camps as well) can be argued to be the opposite poles, either joking or not taking anything serious or being extremists that display intolerance, it could be presupposed that the medium subcategories would be the ones contributing to the highest quality discourse. Yet, it could also be argued that PC advocates, low, might possess this quality as they regard the situation from the oppressed and the company, however in aiming at ending a potential conflict instead of pursuing an agreement and common ground, this does not seem to be the case. However, our data only corroborates the assumption that the ‘PC medium’-subcategories are the ones contributing to the highest quality of discourse to a certain degree considering that comments portraying a sort of openness to other perspectives only occurred in limited instances - and with even less advocates than opponents (Appendix 5.3, opponents, medium: Qiaobi comments nos. 47 and 61, Appendix 5.2 Dove comments nos. 66, 88 and 135; advocates, medium: Appendix 5.1 H&M comment no. 51). It is possible that more of these response types could appear in discussions taking place in discussions below the original comment (as already mentioned, due to the scope of this thesis, we have only regarded the comments of original commentators). Insofar we find comments in our dataset that display this higher quality discourse, it can be propounded that if any of the six subcategories do, it is the medium ones. Had these comments been more prevalent in our data, it could have signified a strong and more constructive discourse that could

lead to the establishment of a common ground within PC, where people are able to take each other's perspectives into account. Yet, another comment sharing similarities with the previously mentioned comments from the medium subcategories was also found (cf. section 5.1.3, H&M: PC advocates, low, comment no. 57). However, this comment seems to take the whole idea of being open to other perspectives to another level and does to some degree change standpoint, moving from PC opponents, medium, to PC advocates, low. This is the only example displaying a movement from one subcategory to another, evident of the establishment of a common norm of PC. In that there is really no sufficient evidence of movement between the subcategories, this does not contribute to heighten the quality of the PC discourse, and thus it seems that even though being exposed to opposite views, most commentators are stuck in their initial categories and do not cross the lines between the camps and their subcategories.

While not displaying a capability of reaching a normative establishment of PC, the commentators seem to be exercising a sort of power struggle within the PC discourse. Opposite to the above-mentioned PC opponents and advocates, medium, most commentators seem to possess a one-track mind where no particular communicative quality is displayed. They evidently stick to their own views as the single truths and are not affected by the opinions of other speakers. The power struggle especially manifests itself within the comments by 'PC advocates, high'-attitudes who seem to discursively establish PC norms as an ideology, claiming that both ingroup and outgroup members ought to act politically correct attending to racial issues with great sensitivity. By that, it can be argued that they are making attempts at reasserting their power, seeking to make their perspective on PC dominant. Hence, seeing that the comments contribute to shaping the PC discourse somewhat as a power struggle, attempting to maintain definite lines between the perspectives of the two main camps, it can be argued with basis in our data that the PC discourse appear to be similar to the way in which it is portrayed in the literature; people are still divided into different camps, holding clear and opposing perspectives. Thus, the two camps have not yet reached a common understanding by interacting communicatively in a constructive manner that can heighten the quality of the PC discourse.

CHAPTER 5

9. CONCLUSION

With the interconnectivity of consumers being an outcome of Web 2.0 technologies, online firestorms have become a reality and a threat facing many companies that as a consequence easily fail to consider the many needs of consumers, and as a result, fall through in addressing sensitive issues in a (to some) appropriate and acceptable manner. Thereby, companies can come across as insensitive to societal topics, which brings the idea of PC into play, avoiding to cause offence to anybody. As mentioned, according to the PC literature, people generally position themselves along two PC camps, either as PC advocates or PC opponents, with one side believing that people should avoid using offensive terminology and with the other side finding it problematic that people should be restrained in their expressions. Thus, *considering people's mixed beliefs about what is appropriate and allowed, has there been developed a PC attitude dominating the PC discourse among social media users or do these attitudes differ from context to context?* Through this problem statement, we explored the PC discourse based on three different companies and their advertisements, which have met great criticism for appearing politically incorrect, with one advertisement giving the impression of being more offensive than the other. The three perceived differing degrees of potential racism allowed us to scrutinise whether different content and contexts influence social media users' attitudes towards PC.

By means of a qualitative analysis, with the purpose of mapping the different PC response types, we identified six different PC subcategories based on the PC literature and our data, which constitute the deduced theoretical PC concept, consisting of the two main PC camps, with three subcategories belonging to each, ranging from low to high (cf. section 6. Deduced of theoretical PC concept). From the qualitative analysis it also became clear that the racism-against-racism category, derived through an inductive orientation, evidently could be distinguished from the attitudes found within the deduced theoretical PC concept, contributing to the uniqueness of the Qiaobi case. While deducing the varying perspectives on PC in the qualitative analysis, we applied this concept to the collected data, using it as a coding guide for the quantitative analysis, making us capable of attaining an empirically based overview of how the PC discourse unfolds on the social media platforms investigated.

The quantification of the data based on the different attitudes unveiled some noteworthy results. Overall, it became clear that the majority of the data consists of comments belonging to the 'PC opponents'-camp, which among others could be an indication that the society is moving towards being less politically correct. While the majority might be PC opponents, it can be misleading to

conclude that the PC discourse is dominated completely by the perspective of this group, since the 'PC advocates'-camp still makes up a considerable portion of the comments (PC opponents 55.9 vs. PC advocates 37.5, with the remaining 6.6 per cent being r-a-r-comments). Case wise, by using three varying advertisements as the basis, we expected to find more differences than similarities between them. Yet, we found more similarities of significant character than differences, which could be due to the PC discourse itself being stereotyped to some extent. From the comments, it appears that the discourse is self-referential, where people, no matter the content and degree of potential discrimination, identify it as being politically incorrect, which in turn starts the machinery with PC opponents and PC advocates making their usual claims. However, one of the notable differences occurring between the three cases is that the advertisement that on the surface appears most controversial (Qiaobi), having the least amount of PC advocates, in fact turned out to be the one the commentators judged less harshly. Thus, we are left with the impression that people get just as offended and judge advertisements equally despite the degree of controversial content. However, this difference can also be an expression of people thinking that Qiaobi simply portrayed a black man potentially racist using the demographic difference between ethnicities to get a message across in a comic way, and hence people did not find it necessary to take offence, which also implies that people allow for such content. Another explanation can also be that the racism discourse somehow is stereotyped, with advocates not knowing how to react to attacks from a group that has not historically been attacking blacks, now with the allied somehow becoming the enemy. An additional and significant difference from the quantitative results is that the Dove case provides an indication of prior relational reputations playing an important part in the commentators' assessments of the advertisements' execution. Therefore, it is demonstrated that the context of cases can be influential when people take a position on an advertisement build upon potentially controversial content.

These quantitative results in combination with the qualitative analysis caused reflections in relation to the quality of the PC discourse within our data, finding that the quality is relatively low, even between the medium subcategories from both camps, who otherwise have displayed some quality in few comments by acknowledging the perspective of the opposite camp. This, and as most comments reveal that the commentators hold the belief that their own perspective on PC is the valid attitude, show signs of a tendency that in the collected data the PC discourse unfolds as a power struggle between the PC camps rather than by normative establishments. Thus, it is unveiled that people have not yet found common ground, demonstrating an understanding for each other's viewpoints. Also, in

the data, the high-subcategories from both camps seemed to be the ones having an ideological understanding of PC, attempting to influence others with their “single-minded” ideological lenses.

However, these result might merely be a snapshot of the investigated cases at the point in time they occur, because it might as well be argued that the PC discourse to some extent always is in the process of change when people interact, but perhaps being less changeable due to this power struggle dominating. While being changeable, the PC camps are not prescriptive, as we found that there seemingly is no correlation between peoples’ ethnic origin and the stances they take.

Conclusively, one PC attitude is dominating the PC discourse among the examined comments by social media users, showing a tendency towards confronting PC norms. While the ‘PC opponents’-attitude dominates this PC discourse, by finding more similarities than differences, our results indicate that the PC attitudes do not differ from case to case (or context to context), despite the different degrees of potential offensiveness featured. A pattern is revealed, where people seemingly display similar reactions no matter the starting point; when people interpret something as being politically incorrect, they press the button and on turns the machinery once again. By that, the two perspectives continue to clash, whereby the power struggle still goes strong and persist in characterising how the PC discourse unfolds.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In that our quantitative results indicate that we are moving towards a less politically correct society, it might have implications for different practices. First of all, when considering that not as high a percentage of the commentators have shown to be adherent of what is seen as politically correct practices, to what extent should organisations then bear in mind sensitive groups and aspects of 'marketing correct' and 'politically correct brands'? Do organisations still benefit the most from maintaining sensitive towards minorities or is it possible that a more creative and potentially controversial approach to advertising can prove to be more beneficial? Besides, do the same apply to politicians and public figures? Second of all, our results might also pave the way for discussions about diversity. Is it really necessary always to take into account the distribution of ethnicities and genders in all regards? Do people in fact demand organisations to employ a certain number of for instance women and Hispanics, or do people merely want to be justly assessed on the basis of their qualifications? Will organisations not benefit the most from hiring the people most suitable for the job? Because, for whom does the organisation do it? Third of all, these derived results might in fact differentiate depending on the countries within which the PC discourse is explored and also the origin of the people whose attitudes are scrutinised. Thus, is it possible that the PC discourse varies cross-nationally?

All these aspects are fields where it today potentially can be relevant to explore the PC discourse, possibly using our theoretical PC concept for mapping PC attitudes.

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OVERVIEW OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Apologetic statements from H&M, Dove and Qiaobi

Appendix 2 – Overview of deselected comments

Appendix 3 – 1. Raw data

- Appendix 3.1 – H&M
- Appendix 3.2 – Dove
- Appendix 3.3 – Qiaobi

Appendix 4 – 2. Reduced data

- Appendix 4.1 – H&M
- Appendix 4.2 – Dove
- Appendix 4.3 – Qiaobi
- Appendix 4.4 – Deselection process

Appendix 5 – 3. Cleansed data

- Appendix 5.1 – H&M
- Appendix 5.2 – Dove
- Appendix 5.3 – Qiaobi

Appendix 6 – Selected comments for qualitative analysis

Appendix 7 – H&M coding schedule

Appendix 8 – Dove coding schedule

Appendix 9 – Qiaobi coding schedule