What is truly Scandinavian? The concepts of nationalism, globalisation, and culture in consumers' responses to SAS' controversial ad.

Master's thesis

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Abstract

In February 2020, the Scandinavian flagship airline, SAS, posted an advertisement on YouTube. The ad posed the question "What is truly Scandinavian?", and explained that nothing is, as a lot of the products considered Scandinavian actually come from other countries. This was met with a great amount of dissatisfaction and aggression on social media in Scandinavia, as well as abroad. In thousands of comments during the outrage, a lot of the discussions focused on culture, globalisation, and nationalism. Viewers could be seen having different opinions on what those concepts meant in the context of the ad. In order to contribute to the understanding of the different interpretations of the ad among viewers and the reasons for outrage, this thesis examines the responses to the ad with the purpose of investigating the perceptions of the audience of topics of nationalism, globalisation and culture as seen in the context of the ad. The thesis discusses theoretical viewpoints on online advertising, offensive advertising and reactions to it, the concepts of nationalism, globalisation and culture, expressions of nationalism and national identity, as well as global and local approaches in advertising.

This thesis is written in the interpretivist paradigm and designed as an exploratory research and uses a netnographic method for data collection and analysis. Data was collected from posts on four different websites, which include a news outlet, two social media websites and a discussion website. The findings show that the viewers saw globalisation in the ad as characterised by lack of unique cultures and unified nations, as well as mix of different cultures in one. Nationalism was interpreted by viewers to be portrayed as opposing globalisation and as something negative. The viewers also seemed to perceive the message as criticising of nationalism and attacking the national identity of Scandinavians. The concept of culture in the ad was perceived to be tied to the origins of inventions or products, while others perceived it to be about behaviours. Some viewers also perceived culture to be portrayed as something that can be influenced by other cultures. Others interpreted the message in the ad to be implying that culture can be changed through travel, and that culture is something exclusive to minority communities.

Keywords: SAS, culture, nationalism, globalisation, advertising.

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Introduction

Scandinavian Airlines Systems, also known as SAS, is the flag carrier airline for Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. On the 11th of February 2020, they uploaded a new advertising video to their YouTube channel. In a short amount of time, the new ad received so many "dislikes" and negative reactions all over the internet that just over a day later, it was removed again. The ad starts out with a question "What is truly Scandinavian?" and goes on to say "Absolutely nothing. Everything is copied". It then explains the thought further by tracing the sources of the things commonly associated with Denmark, Sweden, and Norway to other countries. The Danish rye bread actually comes from Turkey, and so do the Swedish meatballs (Nikel, 2020), parental leave is from Switzerland, the Christiania bicycle, loved in Denmark, was actually invented by Germans, and so on (Schlappig, 2020).

This ad was labelled as provocative (Finn, 2020) and has caused an outrage online among Scandinavians, with politicians from Sweden and Denmark accusing the ad to be promotion of self-hatred and promising never to fly with the airline again (Associated Press, 2020). Commentators on YouTube could be seen asking the question "why is this an ad?" over and over again (Nexus, 2020). The hashtag "BoycottSAS" started trending on Twitter (Finn, 2020). Søren Espersen, a senior member of the populist Danish People's Party, said the ad is "spitting on all that is truly Norwegian, truly Swedish, and truly Danish" (Farber, 2020). "SAS denies Scandinavian culture", said Emil Moghaddam from the Swedish Christian Democrat Party (Sputnik News, 2020).

The public also accused the ad to be pushing on globalist views and ignoring Scandinavian cultures (Farber, 2020). The comments discussing the video included statements like:

> This was disgusting and so insulting to the great people of Scandinavia (Nexus, 2020),

> this ad is erasing a culture; this is political propaganda (Schlappig, 2020),

> I rarely ever use the term offended, but this commercial is straight up offensive. All the history, all of the culture, everything that we so proudly celebrate on the 17th of May....is nothing? (Warhammer, 2020).

The commentators were both Scandinavian and non-Scandinavian, with the latter group noting that, according to the ad, it seems there is no reason for them to fly with SAS and visit Scandinavian countries, as there is no culture there (Warhammer, 2020).

Two days after publishing the ad, the creative agency behind it received a hoax bomb threat at their office in Copenhagen (Ritzau/The Local, 2020).

The video has collected so much hate that, in their statement, SAS expressed that they believe it was an online attack (SAS, 2020). This caused more criticism, as the response from SAS was seen as bad damage control (Neuding, 2020).

> SAS' mode of crisis management might only add to the offense, as the company now is portraying perfectly reasonable people in one of the world's most tolerant and multi-cultural regions as irrational and hateful (Neuding, 2020, para. 11).

Some IT-experts claimed that there was no sign of a cyber-attack in the patterns of responses to the ad online (Persson, 2020), however, SAS never presented any further details or explanation about the statement.

The video was removed, but later re-uploaded by SAS in a shorter version, where the words "absolutely nothing" were cut out, but the image of a child shrugging in response to the question stayed in. SAS has expressed that they still stand behind the original message,

which is that travel enriches people and cultures (SAS, 2020). This meaning, however, seemed to get lost in the thousands of comments of people discussing the disrespect to their culture that they saw in the ad. This move from SAS was seen as uncommon, in the sense that airlines often use the opposite approach, namely focusing on or highlighting the country's achievements and national pride to advertise their services (Finn, 2020). Finn (2020, "Scandinavian Airlines Or Social Media To Blame?", para. 1) states in his article that with this message, SAS risks "excluding itself from the minds of some travelers".

Because of its influential nature, advertising has been involved in controversies from the very beginning of its existence (Andersson & Pettersson, 2004; Christy, 2003). Advertising is believed by some to be unethical, and many consumers are irritated by its persuasive approach. As a result, consumers are constantly becoming more perceptive and intelligent in their use and evaluation of advertisement, which leads to higher expectations and "consumer scrutiny and cynicism" (Christy, 2003, p. 1). For this reason, marketers often use controversial advertising as a way to attract attention (Morgan & Pritchard, 2001). The "What is truly Scandinavian?" ad was repeatedly classified as controversial and provocative by the online news outlets and users (Schlappig, 2020; Finn, 2020; Holroyd, 2020).

Some products and topics are considered controversial or offensive by default. Those usually include products like underwear, contraception, feminine hygiene items, but also advertisement topics that are culturally sensitive or political (Waller, 2004). Controversial ads are "deliberately designed to shock, scandalize, surprise or offend an audience" (Huhmann & Mott-Stenerson, 2008, p. 294) in order to better relay the message in an environment where consumers are not motivated to process the message, or where there is a lot of advertisement clutter. Controversial campaigns can result in complaints, negative publicity, drop in sales, and so on (Waller, 2004). SAS was reported to drop on the stock exchange, and some believe that the ad could have contributed to the losses (Sputnik News, 2020).

In a social media environment, outrages like this can happen very quickly and reach and involve millions of users from different parts of the world. This poses a significant challenge for the marketers in preventing and managing such occurrences (Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014). A common reason for unsuccessful marketing campaigns is the lack of common cultural understanding with the consumers, which can lead to misinterpretation of the message in the ad (Hung, Li, & Belk, 2007). This could explain the SAS controversy, in which the viewers disagreed with the way the ad portrayed their culture, as seen above.

There are many examples of controversial campaigns in the airline industry. Airline companies are particularly susceptible to backlash towards their marketing campaigns, as they face the challenge of staying relatable and appealing to consumers from vastly different segments, with different views and opinions (Driver, 1999). It is an impossible task to appeal to everybody with the same positive responses, while keeping the content of the advertising engaging and interesting to the consumers (Morgan & Pritchard, 2001), and it is a balance that airlines are struggling to maintain (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007).

In the case with SAS, the issues raised in the outrage were about national pride and cultural identity, as the viewers were offended by the ad for disregarding their culture. However, they did not always agree on what culture is and how it is portrayed in the ad. Some viewers also claimed the ad was promoting globalisation, while others agreed with the message in the ad and accused the offended of being nationalistic (Schlappig, 2020; u/kyllingefilet, 2020). Thus, the viewers interpreted the ad's message in different ways. In order to provide some insight into these interpretations and contribute to the understanding of the perceptions of the ad and the reasons for the outrage, this thesis investigates the responses to the SAS ad

and analyses them in the context of the raised topics of nationalism, globalisation and culture.

Thus, the research question that this thesis poses is:

How are topics of nationalism, globalisation, and culture in the context of the SAS ad perceived by the viewers?

Theory and literature review

This chapter provides a literature review of relevant topics and theoretical considerations used in this research. These topics were chosen by relevance to the research question. First, in order to provide understanding of the environment of online advertising, where the SAS ad controversy took place, this chapter elaborates on concepts of online advertising, which includes video and viral advertising, as well as advertising in the tourism and airline industry. Then, the "Consumers' reactions to advertising" section provides insight into how outrages happen online and why certain ads can be considered offensive by viewers, which is helpful in understanding how the SAS outrage developed and how social media influences the perceptions of viewers.

The three concepts that are the main focus of the research question, namely nationalism, globalisation, and culture, are also discussed in this chapter in order to provide a theoretical background for the data collected in this research. Then the chapter goes on to discuss the expressions of nationalism and national identity online, which is useful to be able to identify the implicit perceptions of nationalism among viewers.

Finally, "Global vs. local advertising" section explains the challenges of advertising for global-scale companies like airlines and discusses the way national meanings are used in advertising and their influence of viewers' perceptions and understanding of national identity.

Online advertising

As many other industries nowadays, the tourism industry relies a lot on online advertising (Saß, 2011). Online advertising allows brands and companies to effectively communicate with consumers (Kim, Chiang, & Tang, 2018). Louisa Ha (2008, p. 31) defines online advertising as "deliberate messages placed on third-party web sites including search engines and directories available through Internet access". Speaking more broadly, online advertising is "any kind of selling messages on the World Wide Web" (Chung & Zhao, 2004). There are many types of online advertising, such as, for example, e-mail advertising, pop-up advertising, social media and blog advertising and search engine advertising (Boone, Secci, & Gallant, 2007). Newer inventions in the field also include approaches such as advergames, mobile advertisement and retargeted advertisement (Liu-Thompkins, 2019). Online advertising allows marketers to reach target segments in a new way, and it can provide consumers with accurate information quickly (Becker-Olsen, 2003, cited in Tutaj & Reijmersdal, 2012).

Moreover, advertising on social media plays an increasingly important role, because of its global reach and personalisation – the ability for individuals to participate in production and distribution of content (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Consumers rely on word-of-mouth and customer reviews online in their purchasing decisions, and marketers turn to social media to

advertise and generate word-of-mouth (Sheth, 2018). Advertising on social media is becoming a significant part of advertising budget for brands, and it has created an entirely new marketing approach, called social media marketing (Sharma & Verma, 2018).

There are also other issues for online advertising that arise from having this huge interactive space. Since consumers play a more engaged role online, as they become not only promoters of the message by forwarding it to others, but also co-creators of it (Blichfeldt & Smed, 2015), original messages in the ads become distorted and can create rumours and false information about the brand or the product (Boone, Secci, & Gallant, 2007).

Tourism and airline advertising

Tourism advertising is challenging and especially necessary, because of the nature of the tourism industry. Tourism product is complex and intangible; it usually consists of a bundle of services and activities, which make up the whole tourist experience (Smith, 1994). This means that advertising tourism is considerably more challenging than advertising other products. The consumer has no way to try out the "product", which means that it is up to the marketers to present and explain it in its entirety. "Promotion *is* the product as far as the potential tourist or leisure consumer is concerned" (Morgan & Pritchard, 2001, p. 10, emphasis in original). This also means that there is an element of risk for customer (Holloway, 2004), as they are relying solely on the advertisement to make their decision. Thus, advertising is a crucial part of tourism marketing mix, as it serves to construct expectations and an image of the experience, based on which the customer makes a purchasing decision (Morgan & Pritchard, 2001).

Most people, however, put significantly more effort and consideration into purchases related to tourism and leisure than they do with other everyday consumer goods (ibid.), which means that they may pay more attention to tourism advertising than that for other products.

Airline advertising is different now than it was a few years ago: instead of high production tv commercials, airlines opt for short-term tactical messages. Online advertising is also very common (Shaw, 2016). Moreover, while before business travel market was considered to be dominated by men, in the recent years, airlines have been increasingly targeting women with their advertising (Camilleri, 2018).

Airline advertising is not the same as advertising a tourism product in this sense, as the product they are selling is more tangible, but there are other challenges in advertising airline companies. As per Driver (1999), due to many shared characteristics of different airlines – same product, same types of airplanes, similar airports and so on – it is a challenging task to differentiate one brand from others in order to appeal to a certain group. This makes the airline industry a highly competitive one (Camilleri, 2018). Therefore, advertising for airlines serves as a tool to express their brand identity (Driver, 1999). Different airlines approach advertising differently, where some are merely emphasising the benefits of air travel, and some try to find an advantage they may have over the other brands, such as better service or better aircrafts – though often those are overexaggerated, because of the shared features of all airlines (Kraft, 1965).

Apart from that, for globally operating airlines, whose customers represent very different marketing segments, the challenge is to appeal with advertising to the different groups, whose interests may be conflicting, while trying to keep it interesting. Blandness in advertising, which can be a result of trying to appeal to everyone at once, may lead to the message being lost in the advertising clutter (Driver, 1999). As a solution to this, Shaw

(2016) suggests for airlines to have one main advertising agency in their most important local market, and sub-agencies in foreign markets. These sub-agencies can then adjust the material they get from the main agency, in order to relate it more to their base markets.

Another challenge for airlines is that since they are considered high profile by the media, the effects of both bad reviews and good reviews are strengthened. Bad news about the airline can have a highly damaging effect, especially if they are consistent over long term, and positive stories can strengthen the brand's position, so strong relations with the media are especially important for airline brands (Shaw, 2016). This means that in the case of a failed advertising campaign, airlines are especially susceptible to backlash, which gets emphasised by the media.

The technological advances and the increasing use of the internet provides new opportunities for the airline industry. It allows the airlines to contact the customers directly, without the use of intermediaries, such as travel agents, which can bring additional costs (Camilleri, 2018). Moreover, the internet presents a variety of new methods for advertising, where social media advertising and viral advertising are now commonly used to promote products and services (Gotter, 2020; Eckler & Bolls, 2011).

Viral advertising

With the amount of information users are presented daily with online, avoidance of advertisement has become very common and poses a challenge for the marketers (Teixeira, Wedel, & Pieters, 2012; Eckler & Bolls, 2011). Consumers are becoming more and more skilled at recognising advertisements and avoiding them. This means that marketers constantly have to come up with new ways to reach consumers, and one of the modern ways is viral advertising. Viral advertising is a combination of traditional advertising and the electronic word-of-mouth (Hayes & King, 2014). The idea behind viral advertising is that the receiver of the message actively participates in its exposure to more people by sharing it (Ketelaar, et al., 2016). The message can then reach millions of people worldwide. Viral advertising is often used by multinational companies, as it allows them to reach their customers in different parts of the world (Sharma & Kaur, 2018). The SAS ad went viral, as it was shared by many users to many parts of the internet (Finn, 2020).

Social media websites are an ideal environment for viral advertising, thanks to their structure, where users can easily and quickly share information with the contacts in their social network. Receiving an advertising message from a friend can make consumers more receptive to the message, than in the case of seeing it through commercial channels (Noort, Antheunis, & Reijmersdal, 2012). It will also increase the chances of the message being passed on (Ketelaar, et al., 2016). Moreover, people are more easily persuaded by the advertisement, if it comes from closer friends, rather than distant ones, as that normally affects the level of credibility (Noort, Antheunis, & Reijmersdal, 2012).

Making use of viral advertising has its potential risks. With this type of advertising, the brands have less control over the result of the campaign, as a lot relies on external and unpredictable factors. Viral advertising can often backfire, and the damage from that can be long-term (Crawford, Brennan, & Parker, 2017). The virality of the message may prompt some users to share their negative experiences with the brand, which may then turn into a backlash and negative word-of-mouth instead of positive, creating a social media firestorm (Insureon Staff, 2014; Woerndl, Papagiannidis, Bourlakis, & Li, 2008). This is discussed in more detail in the next subchapter.

When joining in a popular topic discussion on social media as a way to become more visible as a brand, advertisers need to clearly understand the connection between the topic in question and their brand values, as well as the relevance of the discussion for their brand. In other words, while a trending topic can be a great opportunity for promotion, it still needs to be aligned with the brand's values in order to contribute to its reputation. Thus, in order to eliminate the risk of being misunderstood, it is important for brands to research the popular topics and strategize their advertising campaign accordingly (Crawford, Brennan, & Parker, 2017).

Another potential risk is advertising to the wrong community. Not all popular subjects on social media can be useful for a campaign, as some of them involve communities that are irrelevant to the brand (ibid.).

Viral advertising can also bring legal issues, for example, in cases when the content of the ad reflects badly on the competitor of the brand, in which case, it may be accused of slander. Other legal issues could include copyright infringement and misappropriation. Thus, it is important to consult a lawyer and test out a marketing campaign meant to go viral before publishing it (Insureon Staff, 2014).

Moreover, viral advertising raises some ethical questions. Often, viral advertising utilizes shocking or controversial content. According to Sabri (2017), viral advertising contributes to normalizing controversial or taboo ads, which can negatively impact perception of social norms. Seeing a controversial message forwarded from friends can influence the perception of its controversial content, as users may think that because the ad was shared, the people in their social network approve of the message. The results of the study by Sabri (2017) indicate that using controversial topics may be counter-productive, as they do not influence the attitudes towards the brand and the intention to purchase their products, and they trivialize controversial and taboo imagery.

Viral advertising includes a variety of content formats, such as e-mail messages, pictures, videos and more (Udegbe, 2017). Video advertising seems to be a very common approach to viral advertising (Eckler & Bolls, 2011). Viral video advertising is creation of video ads that are meant to become popular online by being forwarded further and further. YouTube is commonly used as a platform to introduce video ads (Grant, Botha, & Kietzmann, 2015). With over 2 billion monthly active users (YouTube, 2020), YouTube is the second most popular social media in the world (Clement, 2020; Stout, 2020), and the world's second most popular website (Armstrong, 2019). This makes video advertising on YouTube and other social media particularly attractive.

Video advertising

SAS ad was presented in the form of a video. Since there is a lot of content online, there needs to be certain creativity or uniqueness in video ads (Grant, Botha, & Kietzmann, 2015). Just as with all viral advertising, video advertisers often rely on shocking or scary content of the ads in order to motivate users to forward them. However, as found by Eckler and Bolls (2011), videos that have a more positive emotional tone tend to be forwarded more than those with a negative emotional tone. Moreover, Teixera et al. (2012) found that positive emotions, such as joy and surprise, contribute to viewer retention – meaning that positively emotional videos tend to catch and retain viewer's attention for longer, whereas negative emotions contribute to more avoidance and rejection. Pirouz et al. (2015) make an important distinction, however, saying that all emotionally surprising, new or shocking content generates viewer engagement, meaning that these types of videos gain a lot of views and

discussion, but videos that are negatively surprising seem to generate negative attitudes, while positive ones do not.

Huang et al. (2013) highlight the challenges and potential risks involved in viral video advertising. They found that when watching video advertising, consumers tend to view it as entertaining content and focus more on the story rather than the persuasive message of the ad or the product description. They also note that while provocative content in viral video ads may improve sharing intentions among consumers, if it contains negative messages, it may decrease the purchasing intention of customers. This means that the advertisers need to carefully consider the benefits of wide reach of the ad versus the potential costs. Apart from that, attitude towards brand will also affect the sharing intention of consumers. This attitude can be formed or changed through the content of the video, by the end of which the consumer makes a decision to forward it or not (Huang, Su, Zhou, & Liu, 2013).

The number of shares or likes, however, do not necessarily signify success for video ads. Online ads often become popular because of how poorly they are made, or because the message in the ad is not taken well (Grant, Botha, & Kietzmann, 2015). The latter was the case for SAS, as the ad went viral for being perceived as offensive by the viewers (Nikel, 2020).

Consumers' reactions to advertising

Advertising online inevitably creates discussion and consumer reactions, which can sometimes have negative consequences. Consumer reactions, therefore, have been a subject of great interest for marketers (Tutaj & Reijmersdal, 2012). For this reason, multiple tools have been created over the years to help analyse consumer feedback online (Close, 2012). As per Dahlén, Murray and Nordenstam (2004), attitude towards the brands will affect how consumers respond to the advertisement. A positive disposition towards the brand will lead to more attention and a more positive evaluation of the advertisement. Similarly, Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell (2000) also found that corporate credibility affects consumers' attitude towards ads.

Social media firestorms

To understand the online environment, in which the responses to the SAS ad occurred, this section looks into the characteristics of the negative online reaction through the concept of a social media firestorm.

As stated by Hansen, Kupfer and Henning-Thurau (2018, p. 558), social media "has shifted power from organizations to consumers", so the consumers play a significant role in a brand crisis. In a fast-paced environment of social media, negative opinions about brands can be formed within hours. When a brand goes viral for the wrong reason, it can get caught in a social media firestorm. Pfeffer, Zorbach and Carley (2014, p. 118) define a social media firestorm as "sudden discharge of large quantities of messages containing negative WOM (word-of-mouth) and complaint behaviour against a person, company, or group in social media networks". The messages shared in a social media firestorm are often opinions of those involved in discussion, and not facts. While it often starts out with a genuine criticism of the brand's actions, in the later stages of the firestorm, the communication becomes aggressive and lacking actual arguments. Social media firestorm can have a huge negative

impact on companies involved in them, bringing undesirable reputation and financial losses (Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014).

In a firestorm, brands are forced to reply to negative feedback under the eyes of consumers, where their response is scrutinised, and where one wrong reaction can lead to disastrous consequences (Creelman, 2015). This can be seen in the SAS ad controversy, where SAS was criticised for their response to the outrage (Neuding, 2020). This puts pressure on the company representatives that are responsible not only for the outcome of the present exchange, but also for the brand identity, reputation, and customer relations (ibid.). A brand's recovery needs to ensure the restoration of customer relationship with the complaining customer and prevent the negative word-of-mouth from spreading further (Herhausen, Ludwig, Grewal, Wulf, & Schoegel, 2019).

Detecting, preventing, and mitigating social media firestorms is a significant part of managerial responsibilities (Hewett, Rand, Rust, & Heerde, 2016). Marketers often engage in "social media listening" (Tuten & Solomon, 2018, p. 319), which is a practice that involves "listening" to customers on social media, in order to gain insight into their experiences with the brand (Creelman, 2015) and potentially catch a social media firestorm early.

Every negative post from a customer has the potential to develop into a firestorm, however, not all do. It can be prevented, if the brand reacts quickly to the initial post; sometimes it is necessary to respond several times to the same negative electronic word-of-mouth in order to resolve it (Herhausen, Ludwig, Grewal, Wulf, & Schoegel, 2019).

Pfeffer et al. (2014) describe seven factors characterising the dynamic of online firestorms. They are presented in Table 1.

Speed and volume	There is a constant flow of communication on social media, which means that many people can be reached at the same time, and certain topics can temporarily become the focus of discussions. With social media firestorms, companies need to be able to react quickly, in a span of hours, sometimes minutes.
Binary choices	Messages shared on social media tend to be short, and it is very easy to react to message with likes/dislikes, or retweets and reposts, instead of actual words. This is known as binary choices (Schelling, 1973, cited in Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014).
Network clusters	There are local clusters in social media, which makes information come to a user's social network from different directions, which creates an impression of everyone discussing the same topic or having the same opinions.
Unrestrained information flow	Some people on social media have a large number of followers. It can be thousands of people, which creates a lot of communication and amplifies information on social media.

Lack of diversity	The information presented to a user on social media is limited and heavily biased, because it is based on the user's interests or their network's interests. This means that the user is presented with similar messages.
Cross-media dynamics	Traditional media sources such as print media or online news sources often pick up on stories from social media. When they gain exposure from those outlets, the stories become even larger on different channels of social media. This, in turn, results in even more coverage by traditional media.
Network-triggered decision processes	The way people adopt opinions and beliefs is different on social media, where the knowledge that is available to the user is limited, but there are a lot of the same opinions, which stabilizes the opinions the person makes. Social media creates an illusion of a lot of people having the same opinion.

Table 1. Factors characterising social media firestorms (adapted from Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014).

As can be seen from these factors, social media enables online firestorms. On social media, there is a potential for an unlimited audience, and misinterpretations are more likely, because of limited discourse possibilities and lack of non-verbal cues. Apart from that, social media makes it easy for a user to disappear after they have spoken out (Rost, Stahel, & Frey, 2016).

Pfeffer, Zorbach and Carley (2014) present guidelines for action in case of a social media firestorm, which can be useful for marketers. For example, they suggest that a company involved in a social media firestorm should keep their composure and continue to interact with the consumers. Similarly, Herhausen et al. (2019) state that avoidance and nonresponse is the least helpful approach for regulating a social media firestorm. Remaining calm shows confidence and can, in some cases, strengthen the brand's position (Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014). To prevent an online firestorm, Pfeffer, Zorbach and Carley (2014) suggest that brands increase their presence in social media, as this establishes diverse support groups for the brands, and increases the number of direct channels for communicating with customers.

Hansen, Kupfer and Henning-Thurau (2018) investigated the negative effect of a social media firestorm on consumer's brand perspective. The results show that online firestorms with a significant number of messages can negatively influence consumer's brand perception, not only short-term, but also two years later. Firestorms that occurred because of faulty products or services tend to have a stronger impact than those that occurred because of inappropriate communication strategies. The most harmful firestorms are described in the table below.

Ranking of potentially most harmful firestorms.

	Short-term brand perceptions			Long-term brand perceptions	
	Strength	Vividness	Reason	Strength	Reason
1.	High	Video	Product or service failure	High	Product or service failure
2.	High	Picture	Product or service failure	High	Social failure
3.	Medium	Video	Product or service failure	High	Communication failure
4.	High	Video	Social failure	Medium	Product or service failure
5.	High	Only text	Product or service failure	Medium	Social failure

Table 2. Most harmful online firestorms for short- and long-term brand perceptions, taken from Hansen, Kupfer, & Hennig-Thurau, 2018, p. 570.

Social failure here refers to companies violating values or social norms (Pullig, Netemeyer, & Biswas, 2006; Hansen, Kupfer, & Hennig-Thurau, 2018). As can be seen from the results of the study, social failure firestorms are rather harmful for long-term brand perceptions.

Rost, Stahel and Frey (2016) suggest that social media firestorms may act as social norm enforcement: users react to the public actor's perceived violation of norms and behaviours. Here social norms are enforced through users' disapproval, with the aim of achieving honesty from public actors, for example, or other social goods. Social media firestorms can then be a type of a low-cost protest. Research on social media firestorms often suggests that user anonymity enables more aggressive actions and responses online. However, if the online firestorm is viewed as a social norm enforcement, users express aggression in order to criticise behaviour of public actors. In this case, users perceive their actions as driven by high morals, so they do not feel the need to hide their identity (Rost, Stahel, & Frey, 2016).

Offensive advertisement

Offensive advertisement, also discussed here as provocative or controversial advertisement, is used by advertisers to stand out from the masses of information presented to consumers. Advertisement that is provocative is likely to stay in consumer's mind longer, thus creating long-term advertising memories, which contribute to customers' engagement with a brand, when they are making purchasing decisions (Morgan & Pritchard, 2001).

The use of offensive advertisement has created discussions about the ethics of the technique, as many consider it insulting and socially irresponsible (Andersson & Pettersson, 2004). Consumer reactions to offensive advertising depend on many factors, some of which are related to the advertisement itself: the product or service advertised, the style in which the ad is created, the mediums through which the advertisement is presented to the consumers, and so on. However, other factors, as said by Christy (2003), may be most useful for understanding the reactions to advertisement, and those are factors related to the actual consumer, such as individual experiences, culture, social environment, etc. As he states in his study, personal values always contribute to an individual feeling offended by an advertisement (ibid.).

Barnes and Dotson (1990) propose two separate dimensions for the concept of offensive advertisement. The first dimension consists of products that are offensive by their nature; those are personal or sensitive products (e.g. personal hygiene, underwear, condoms) (Waller, 2004). The second dimension is the execution of the advertisement that consumers find offensive. While in the first one, the ad may be perceived as offensive by default, simply because it features an offensive product, the execution of the ad (second dimension) is something that is controlled by brands and thus, the idea is that the degree of offensiveness can be manipulated by them. However, the results of their study also indicate that consumers tend to understand the challenge of making an appropriate advertisement for a

product that is considered offensive by default, even if they do not agree with the solution chosen by the advertisers. Barnes and Dotson (1990) also suggested the existence of a "ripple effect": when a brand releases an ad that is perceived as offensive, the negative attitude transfers to other ads of the same brand, especially if the brand is easily identifiable. This, however, was not investigated in their study.

Christy (2003), who found the work of Barnes and Dotson (1990) rather limited, added two other dimensions to those, suggesting total of four elements of offensive advertising, developed from past research: the product, the ad execution style, the channels used for distribution and the audience. He suggests that the medium used for distribution can have an effect on how offensive the consumers will find the ad. In his study, this suggestion is confirmed, with, for example, television being a significant contributor to the offensiveness of the ads. Lastly, the audience itself is a factor in how the ad may be perceived. Christy (2003) found that an individual's values influence the likelihood of them getting offended by an ad.

In his study of offensive advertisement, Waller (2004) found that women tend to be more offended by advertisements than men. Age did not seem to determine the level of offensiveness. However, as per Christy (2003), it is not the demography alone that influences the level of offensiveness, but rather the values shared between individuals of the same social status or demographic characteristics. Moreover, Waller (2004) also found that the most negative reactions are expressed towards ads with indecent language, nudity, sexism, women's underwear and subjects that are deemed too personal. Therefore, he suggested that companies need to be aware of the issues that are more likely to offend their customers and manipulate the ad execution accordingly.

Generally, advertisement that is considered provocative, is characterised by these three components: distinctiveness, ambiguity and transgression of norms and taboos (Vézina & Paul, 1997).

Distinctiveness is an essential part of provocative advertising strategy. Several ads that are similar to each other may lose some of their individual provocation potential. Other advertisers imitating a provocative ad will also decrease its effect of provocation (ibid.).

Furthermore, provocative ads tend to be ambiguous, and this can be in terms of the content or in terms of the intentions of the advertisers. A clear provocative message may get dismissed, while an ambiguous message leaves room for discussion and speculation. This is often the basis of provocative advertisement (Vézina & Paul, 1997).

Finally, transgression of norms and taboos is perhaps the most crucial element, it is what makes the advertisement provocative and offensive. Advertisement that refers to taboo topics or breaks social norms is more likely to be considered offensive (ibid.).

In their study of provocative advertisement, Isaksson, Herrmann and Pohl (2017) found that provocative ads were most commonly described not only as "offensive", "shocking" and "degrading", but also "funny", "appealing" and "creative", which shows that controversial ads are perceived in various ways. They also suggest that the effects of provocative advertisement on brand image can depend on the industry the brand operates in, as there may be "a different level of acceptance amongst consumers" in different industries (Isaksson, Herrmann, & Pohl, 2017, "Conclusion", para. 6).

Chan et al. (2007, p. 610) note that "cultural values will influence the consumers' response to advertising executions in general and offensive executions in specific". They researched differences in attitudes towards potentially offensive ads between Germans and Chinese. The results indicated differences between the evaluation of Germans and Chinese. German

consumers were more likely to appreciate the creative and clever elements of offensive ads, while Chinese were more likely to appreciate the informative elements. The findings suggested that the more informative the ad was perceived, the more it mitigated the negative effects of advertisement for the Chinese consumer, but not necessarily for the Germans. Chinese respondents also had a significantly higher tendency to reject the brand and products represented in offensive advertisement (Chan, Li, Diehl, & Terlutter, 2007).

As society changes, however, certain topics may become less or more offensive, and it is up to the advertisers to make sure they stay on top of the discussions in society in order to be aware of what issues are seen as sensitive (Andersson & Pettersson, 2004).

Nationalism, globalisation, and culture

The simultaneous rise of nationalism and globalisation is seen as one of the main paradoxes of the modern age. As the world is becoming more integrated and international, the globalising tendencies that threaten the local identities and cultures are facing a counter-reaction in the form of nationalistic resistance (Sabanadze, 2010). As stated by Delanty and Kumar (2006, p. 2), nationalism is "both a reaction and a product of globalization". In order to understand the way the viewers of the SAS ad perceive the concepts of nationalism, globalisation, and culture, it is first important to look into those concepts to understand what they are based on theoretically.

Nationalism and national identity

There are different aspects and definitions of nationalism. However, at the core of nationalism is the concept of a nation. Drawing upon the work of Kelman (1997), nation is a group that shares a territory and certain cultural elements: common language, history, traditions, religion, way of life, memories and aspirations. Apart from that, members of a nation share a national consciousness, in other words, they are aware of their belonging to the nation.

Nationalists believe and relate strongly to this concept – that people of one nation are different from people from another nation. They also believe that people belonging to a nation have their obligation towards other members of the same nation. Nationalists argue for a political independence of a nation as that is seen as they only way the nation can develop and flourish in its own way, defined by its unique character (Miller, 2008). Nationalism is "driven by the relentless concern with meaning and identity" (Delanty & Kumar, 2006, p. 2).

Nationalism is defined by Smith (2010, cited in Adriani, 2019, p. 5) as "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential nation". An important element of nationalism is the wish for homogeneity and the fear of a threat to the identity of a country (Adriani, 2019).

Many researchers identify political and cultural nationalism. Political nationalism is concerned with the idea of political independence of a nation and the assertion of its rights against other nations (Miller, 2008). Cultural nationalism promotes the development and protection of the nation's language, literature, art, and education (Hutchinson, 2013). As per Hutchinson (2013), the difference between cultural and political nationalism lies in the

primary concern for each: for cultural nationalism it is establishing a strong community as the basis of the nation, and for political nationalism it is establishing a strong territorial state. As Breton (1964) notes, these types of nationalism coexist and reinforce each other.

Sabanadze (Sabanadze, 2010, pp. 25-26) further states that contemporary nationalism is primarily cultural nationalism, and that it is a "form of expressing the social discontent in the context of globalization". It challenges the existing international order. The need to defend one's identity and culture arises from the perceived injustices of globalisation.

As Kacowicz (1999) explains, nationalism can be expressed in different ways, such as for example, a desire to receive more awards at the Olympics than other countries, a desire to get more territory from other nations or a desire of the members of the nation to control the territory of that nation. Nationalism can be extremely powerful, because it is able to "create an identity based on emotion and the irrational" (Langman, 2006, p. 66). It allows governments to mobilise nations and send them to defend the countries against threats that they do not understand and even convince them to sacrifice themselves for such causes (ibid.).

As per Hofstede, Minkov, and Hofstede (2010), identity answers the question "to which group do I belong?". Identity is visible to the holders of it and to the outside environment that does not share the identity. National identity is defined by Keane (1994, cited in Hjerm, 1998) as "an awareness of affiliation with the nation that gives people a sense of who they are in relation to others or infuses them with a sense of purpose that makes them feel at home". National identity is based on similarity with some people and difference from other, however, people identify with their country in different ways. Similarly, they also take pride in different things related to it, be it sport-related victories or social security system. However, despite those individual differences, what unites people is the similar ways of thinking when it comes to being a member of a nation (Hjerm, 1998).

Because of this shared social environment of nation's members, national loyalty can be particularly strong. It is constantly reinforced by social institutions that make an effort to build a strong sense of connectedness between the individual and nation. This binds human satisfaction to national welfare, promoting national loyalty (Grodzins, 1956, cited in Connor, 2007). Similarly, national pride is an important element of national identity. As per Evans and Kelley (2002, p. 303), "national pride involves both admiration and stake holding – the feeling that one has some kind of share in the achievement or an admirable quality".

Thus, national identity is a complex collective phenomenon that varies according to time and circumstances. It becomes a part of a personal identity through processes of social influence, and it contains beliefs and values that are based on the group's historical experiences and reflected in their documents and traditions. These beliefs and values dictate the way individuals view the world and their place in it, and the way they navigate their relationship with the environment (Kelman, 1997).

Globalisation and culture

When talking about globalisation, Kacowicz (1999) suggests that it is more than a geographical expansion of a range of phenomena and issues, and that this term describes a number of changes: economic, ideological, technological and cultural. Economic changes include the expansion of production worldwide, transnational corporations and increased economic independence. Ideological changes refer to privatisation and political democracy, as well as deregulation. Technological changes include the development of information and

communication systems worldwide, and cultural changes refer to a shift towards the standardisation of tastes and a universal culture. All these changes characterise globalisation. In a more broad and concise definition:

> Globalization means greater global closeness, both real and perceived, resulting from the intensification and extension of international interaction (Sabanadze, 2010, p. 16).

Globalisation and globalism are two terms that are sometimes used interchangeably and that create confusion (Das, 2011). Therefore, it is important to make a distinction here. Globalism refers to the networks of connections across the world that draws the different part of it closer economically, socially, culturally, and informationally. Globalisation is then seen as the processes that promote this connectedness and progressively increase globalism (ibid.).

Many see globalisation as modernisation of the world. It is viewed as an inevitable and desirable result of the market tendencies. Yet for many critics of globalisation, it is seen as an ideology that threatens the societies' traditional values and structures, and thus, poses a challenge for nationalism. With increased internationalisation, the relevance of a community is expected to decrease, and communities become more open to external influences that may affect the traditions and norms within those communities (Sabanadze, 2010).

Sabanadze (2010) challenges the view of nationalism and globalisation as two clashing and opposing forces, noting that nationalism relies a lot on the globalisation because of the existing international system, which grants it the power through the notion of national independence, which is the only form of political recognition in a globalised environment. This explains why the coexistence of nationalism and globalisation is not paradoxical but understandable, and why nationalism does not only resist and criticise globalisation, but also promotes it.

Moreover, as argued by Sofield (2001), the idea that globalisation will eventually result in a homogenous global culture does not reflect reality. Instead, it seems as though globalisation provides the environment for global differences, where the clash of cultures is even stronger (Featherstone, 1995, cited in Sofield, 2001). This can be seen, for example, in the indigenous and ethnic minorities demanding more recognition for their cultural identities and autonomy (Smolicz & Secombe, 2005).

Koechler (2018) states, however, that in the process of globalisation, cultures inevitably adopt trends that include features of the lifestyle of the community that is at the time seen as most powerful – economically, technologically, or politically. This can be seen in "Westernization" of the world, where many elements of pop culture are influenced by America, and where English has become increasingly common. This is known as "hybrid cultures".

The term "culture" has been a topic of discussion for many years. Some researchers even state that it is better to abandon the concept completely, as it is now too "baggage-laden" (James, 2006, p. 20). Most people view culture as something abstract and intangible (Mooij, 2018). Tomlinson (2013, "The Cultural Dimension", para. 4) calls it a "complex and elusive idea", but he identifies some features that help identify culture and separate it from other dimensions of life. According to him, culture has to do with meaning. It is about the way human beings construct meanings through symbolic representation and communication. In a similar fashion, Mooij (2018, "Culture Defined", para. 2) states that "culture is the glue that binds groups together", noting that all definitions of culture have a common denominator of sharedness, that culture implies collectivity. Moreover, she states that the term culture can apply to ethnic or national groups, as well as groups within society, such as, for example, a country, an age group, a profession, or a social class. Cultural signification and interpretation

guides people towards certain actions (Tomlinson, 2013). The socio-cultural environment influences personalities and affects the way people act (Mooij, 2018).

Culture manifests itself in different ways. Hofstede, Minkov, and Hofstede (2010) grouped all culture manifestations into symbols, heroes, rituals and values. Symbols include words, pictures, gestures, or objects that carry meanings, which can be recognised only by those in the same culture. These include, for example, flags, hairstyles, ways of dressing or certain words in a language. Symbols are often copied by other cultures. Heroes are people that have characteristics that are valued in a culture, and thus they are looked at as models for behaviour. Rituals are activities that are considered socially essential in a culture, like, for example, ways of greeting or social and religious ceremonies. Symbols, heroes and rituals are practices – they are manifestations of culture that are visible to the outside observer, but their cultural meaning is invisible and exists only in the way the members of culture interpret these practices (Hofstede, Minkov, & Hofstede, 2010).

Values are the core of culture. Values are "broad tendencies to prefer certain states or affairs over others" (Hofstede, Minkov, & Hofstede, 2010, p. 9) that are acquired early in people's lives. Values vary across cultures and possess a characteristic of stability, meaning they are not likely to change (Mooij, 2018).

National cultures have strong emotional connotations for the members of those cultures. These connotations are one of the influences defining people's identities (ibid.) Despite changes occurring continuously, the distinctive cultures of societies are preserved through generations (Hofstede, Minkov, & Hofstede, 2010).

Expressions of nationalism and national identity online

Nationalism can be expressed in subtle ways in everyday life. It can be seen in the habits of speech, the reminiscence of a nation's supposedly "better" past, and in the display of symbols, such as a sticker on a car. Sometimes such expressions occur subconsciously (Baruh & Popescu, 2008). Nationalism can be seen through celebrations of identity, political actions, speeches, literature, etc. It can also be seen in the way the nation lives their daily lives. Expressions of nationalism are often motivated by a desire to reinforce feelings of belonging (Gill, n. d.). Nationalism often emerges when national identity is threatened (Kecmanovic, 1996).

Nationalism is formed and developed through socialisation. Political conversation offline and online is one of the main ways in which people develop, confirm and adjust nationalistic beliefs (Hyun & Kim, 2015). Nationalistic conversations have a unique characteristic of always evoking emotional reactions in the speaker and the audience (Baruh & Popescu, 2008).

Print and electronic media play a significant role in the formation, expression and confirmation or attenuation of national identity. In addition, cyberspace is sociologically important, because "it provides new terms and conditions for membership and belonging" (Diamandaki, 2003).

Nationalism expressed online is referred to as "cybernationalism" (Diamandaki, 2003; Wu, 2008). The internet serves as an information centre, where people can collect and spread nationalism-related information. It also serves as an organisational platform for nationalistic movements to exist and survive. It allows nationalists to form virtual communities and

provides them with a platform to coordinate plans and seek public support (Wu, 2008). But the internet also challenges nationalism, by bringing together people of different ethnicities, race, or communities (Diamandaki, 2003).

National identities can be identified everywhere on the internet, this could be, for example, the country's domain at the end of a website: .uk, .dk, etc. Users may also express their national belonging through the way they portray their profiles, for example, by having their nationality or country's signifiers as part of their username. There are also online pages created specifically for certain national communities, which serve as an online expansion of their offline community (ibid.).

As per Diamandaki (2003), however, while the internet provides new stage for manifestation of national belonging, it happens through the same processes as it does in the offline world. The same old discussions, issues and conflicts are happening in a new environment. The internet changes the way people form and express our identities. It does not only help reconfirm identities, but also challenges them and allows people to think reflectively about their identities.

Global vs. local advertising

In the age of globalisation, advertisers struggle to balance the global vs. local influences in cultures (Arnett, 2002, cited in Zhou, Poon, & Wang, 2015). According to Parray (2013, p. 229), advertising "functions instrumentally in evolving and adopting a global concept of world", so it is one of the more influential tools for communicating a globalised view. The opposite is also true; advertising is often used by politicians and governments to portray national identities and nationalistic views (Prideaux, 2009). This is emphasised by Kaptan (2010, p. 18), who states that the media plays a contradictory role in the relationship between nationalism and globalisation: while the increased flow of information and the accessibility of the resources create a global culture and "increase the intensity of the mobility and exchanges of national and global forms of culture and technology", communication and media technologies also have a great influence on the formation of national identities and cultures. As expressed by Codeluppi (2001, cited in Ouedraogo, 2020), because of this influence, advertising becomes a social and cultural guide.

Global/international vs. local/national marketing is one of the heavy discussions in the field. The idea of global marketing is that in a world that is becoming more globalised, the desires and interests of consumers are becoming more alike, so it makes sense to advertise to all consumers from everywhere in the world. Local marketing, however, recognizes cultural differences, such as values, beliefs, language, etc. Those on the side of local marketing note that people in different cultures have different ways of living, different needs and, therefore, require different approaches in terms of advertising. Thus, any advertisement that does not recognize these differences cannot be successful (Zhou, Poon, & Wang, 2015). As per Hung et al. (2007), even in a globalised world, consumers view brands and products in their cultural context. Moreover, globalisation, in fact, means an even stronger expression of local and traditional culture as an attempt to retain the countries' cultural values and identities (ibid.). As noted by Mooij (2018), the more people learn about other cultures, the more they are aware of their own cultural identity. This can be seen in advertising: as Europe became unionised, more nationalistic and symbolic images started appearing in advertising (ibid.). Moreover, globalisation often acts as an identity resource, which companies use to portray themselves and their customers as "global players" (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007, p. 308).

Brands that have specific ties to the culture, history or geography of the place, cannot escape the sensitivity of consumers' in terms of local values (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006).

> Central to the communication process (between brands and consumer) is a body of shared cultural conventions and common experiences that the author uses to craft the ads and the reader uses to understand and interpret the images (Hung, Li, & Belk, 2007, p. 1037).

This leads to challenges for advertising, because if the advertisement does not have a common cultural understanding with the consumer, the way the consumer interprets the ad can be very different from what the company intended to portray (Hung, Li, & Belk, 2007).

Moreover, as Morgan and Pritchard (2001) state, international ads that try to appeal to everyone tend to be superficial: they are not offensive to anyone, however, they also avoid any cultural or local content, and therefore, are not as popular or engaging to the consumers. However, the paradox is that in marketing structures, consistency is viewed as crucial, so the messages in advertising have to be homogeneous, while it is impossible for the same message to be received equally well or to have the same appeal in different regions of the world (ibid.).

National meanings in advertising

Advertising has a role as a representation system that can be used to negotiate identity, which is why a community's representation in advertising can be meaningful in terms of consumers' identity construction and maintenance (Tsai, 2012). Moreover, Swann Jr. (1983, cited in Cowan & Spielmann, 2018) notes that consumers' behaviour is largely dependent on their self-perception, in a way that the choices they make are identity-confirming. Thus, advertising (tourism or other kind) not in line with the consumer's identity seems undesirable and even threatening. A consumer's identity can be viewed in terms of individual identity and social identity. Social identity is formed by individual's connection to culture and nation of their country, and it affects their behaviour and choices, which can be seen in brand preferences (Cowan & Spielmann, 2018).

> In fact, the cultural identity of a specific society means that it identifies itself with a cultural community and thereby intends to defend its affiliations: language, traditions, values, interests of a specific community (Galisson, 1991, as cited in Ouedraogo, 2020).

Social identity can also instruct decisions in relation to tourism, like travelling domestically or internationally, which can be affected by nationalistic views and confirmation of one's identity. Consumers' traveling decisions, thus, are motivated by desire of self-confirmation (Cowan & Spielmann, 2018).

Because of the identity-confirming choices, companies that target national audience try to relate themselves to the localised identities, which is especially seen with nationalism (Prideaux, 2009). The use of national meanings in advertising and marketing has the power to confirm, strengthen and reconstruct national consciousness (Kobayashi, 2011).

In the case of Cola Turka, investigated by Özkan and Foster (2005), the product ads were meant to express "positive nationalism", which, explained by the ad agency, meant that the idea was to turn away from the blind nationalism, in which the nation isolates itself and makes other nations into enemies. "We feel we are citizens of the world", explained the creative director behind the ad for the new soft drink brand (Özkan & Foster, 2005, "Launching Cola Turka", para. 8). Thus, the ad used national and traditional Turkish images

while trying to make a point about globalisation. The product launched during the time of strong anti-American views in Turkey, and so instead the ad became a symbol of anti-American position. The ad agency admitted that the meaning became much more than what they created it to be, with a very different interpretation of the message (Özkan & Foster, 2005).

The challenge for airline industry

SAS' controversy is not new. One similar case is the re-branding of British Airways in 1997. The new branding, titled World Images, involved replacing the colours of the national flag on their airplanes with a new design, featuring colours and patterns representing different parts of the world (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007).

> It was meant to indicate an appreciation of different people's views, needs and expectations, recognising and respecting differences, above all understanding people and reflecting that in the service offered (Jarvis, 2015, para. 6).

With the new look, the company hoped to appear "global and caring". However, this move was heavily criticised in the media. Many political profiles, including the prime minister at the time, Margaret Thatcher, disapproved of the new strategy. The prime minister described it as unpatriotic and foolish. Many customers, UK ones in particular, viewed the national British airline as exactly that – quintessentially British and traditional, and therefore, the opinions of the public on the new campaign were divided (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007). This resulted in major financial losses for British Airways, and with no success for the new strategy, four years later, the project was abandoned (London Air Travel, 2019). London Air Travel (2019) called it an "unfairly maligned and misunderstood marketing campaign that was way ahead of its time".

The question of global vs. local is a significant struggle for the airline industry, as companies try to balance "servicing national identity and maintaining global appeal" (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007, p. 307). As Thurlow and Aiello (2007) note, national symbols and stereotypes can become such a firmly established part of the brand that they become essential in achieving global image and reputation; in the case of British Airways it was the British flag design on their planes. One way airlines keep the balance is by creating a careful interplay of local and global in their brand's design, for example on the tailfins. In fact, Thurlow and Aiello (2007) state that the signs and meanings in the brand's portrayal of themselves, whether it's visual or textual, play a crucial role in bringing a local brand to an international (global) market. As per Morgan and Pritchard (2001), nature and receptiveness of the target audience is also a key factor in accepting the message in the advertisement.

This can be seen in the SAS controversy, where the Scandinavian Airlines company was compared a lot to Norwegian airline, which has famous Scandinavians on the tailfins of their planes (Sputnik News, 2020).

Theoretical conclusions

This theory chapter provided several important points that contribute to this research. First, globally-operating airlines like SAS are met with challenges in relation to advertising, as they struggle to appeal to consumers in different parts of the world, who have different values and cultural understandings, while trying to keep the advertising interesting and relevant.

Because of this, companies often employ advertising strategies that involve risks, such as viral advertising and controversial advertising. The SAS ad is considered controversial, and while it is unknown whether that was the intention behind it, the ad went viral "for the wrong reasons" and caused a social media firestorm, which illustrates the risks involved in this type of advertising. Such firestorms can have long-term negative consequences for brands (Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014).

This chapter also defined the concepts of nationalism, globalisation, and culture, as well as discussed the relationship between those. In a way, nationalism exists because of globalisation, as globalisation provides the environment in which it can exist and develop, which is why the coexistence of those two is not necessarily paradoxical (Sabanadze, 2010). For culture, globalisation means global trends, which result in "hybrid cultures", but also a stronger expression of existing cultures (Koechler, 2018; Sofield, 2001). This also explains one of the big debates in the academia about advertising: the global vs. local approach, where some marketers believe advertising should appeal to global trends, while others suggest that local values should be used in advertising. The challenge for airline flagship airlines like SAS is that the ties they have with the place they represent mean that their customers are more sensitive to the portrayal of local values (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). Thus, airlines have to carefully balance the global and local elements in their advertising (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007).

Methodology

This chapter outlines methodological considerations that guided the research in this thesis. The chapter provides an overview of the research paradigm that guided the considerations and the research design used in the thesis, as well as introduces a method of netnography and describes the research process and the process of data collection.

Research paradigm

The paradigm informs the choices for conducting the research. That is because one's perception of reality influences how knowledge is gained (Mason, 2014). This thesis is written within the interpretivism paradigm.

Interpretivist assumptions are that reality is socially constructed (Willis, 2007), and some state that there are potentially multiple social realities, in which the researcher is an interpreter (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Each individual's perception of the world is based on their personal experiences (Weber, 2004), thus, the world is built on subjective meanings (Goldkuhl, 2012), which means that different respondents may describe the same event or subject differently, as they each have their own perception (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Interpretive research looks into these subjective meanings (Goldkuhl, 2012). This research paradigm recognizes that any research conducted is affected by the researcher and their perception of the world (Weber, 2004).

Willis (2007) also notes that making meaning is a social process, and through it, individuals are able to share their understanding with other members of the same social group. This means that a research is better understood by people who are in the same group as the researcher.

Interpretivism focuses on meaning-making, attempting to understand how people make sense of their worlds (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Interpretive research provides understanding about multiple perspectives on the situation (Willis, 2007), which is what this thesis aims to achieve with the perspectives on the topics of nationalism, globalisation, and culture in the context of the SAS ad.

> In interpretive methodology, the ambiguity and plasticity of meaning-making and of the systems of symbols (e.g., language, visual images, etc.) used to express and communicate meaning to oneself and to others are understood as creating the possibility for multiple interpretations of acts, events, settings, and so forth (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 46).

Thus, texts, conversations of different kind and other forms of communication can have multiple interpretations.

Because of this, interpretivist researchers often look into the way people use language to construct their world. Since there are multiple meanings, context is important in interpretive research. Interpretive research design normally takes into consideration the flexible and adaptive nature of this type of research: it is constantly changing and evolving, sometimes in unsuspected directions (ibid.).

Interpretive researchers tend to use qualitative methods, because they allow them to better understand how others interpret the world. However, for interpretivists, there is no one right way to conduct a research, and no research can be truly objective. This means that it is acceptable to interpretivists to use data sources that other researchers may consider subjective (Willis, 2007).

Research design

Research design informs choices of methods, as well as provides explanation for the selection of those methods. It serves as a plan for carrying out the research (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

This thesis aims to study the way online users perceive topics of nationalism, globalisation, and culture in the context of the SAS ad. The contribution of this research will be a better understanding of the interpretations of the ad by the audience, and thus, the causes for the public outrage in connection with the SAS ad. This "search for ideas, insights and clarification" is characteristic to the exploratory research type (Silver, Stevens, Wrenn, & Loudon, 2013, p. 55). Exploratory research is useful, when the researcher aims to improve understanding of an issue, define an ambiguous problem, explain a phenomenon, or provide insights and so on (ibid.). In this study, exploratory research is used to explain the perceptions of the audience about the topics of culture, nationalism, and globalisation in the context of the SAS ad.

Exploratory research is characterised by its flexibility, compared to other research types. It allows the researcher to follow leads that were not pre-defined, but that might provide valuable information. In that sense, the researcher goes where the findings take them (Silver, Stevens, Wrenn, & Loudon, 2013).

The hermeneutic circle was thus also deemed to be relevant to apply as a concept in this project. As stated by Paterson and Higgs (2005, p. 342), "hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation". Hermeneutic circle is a qualitative research approach that involves repeatedly and cyclically moving between examining the different parts of the phenomenon,

and the whole of the phenomenon in order to gain an understanding of the phenomenon. In the hermeneutic circle, the different parts help define the whole, while the whole provides context for its parts. Some researchers believe that the circle is always ongoing, and the process of understanding does not have an end (Paterson & Higgs, 2005).

In this study, qualitative approach is taken. It is particularly suitable for exploratory research, as qualitative approach provides understanding of "small group interactions and the shifting social processes that shape actors' interpretations of themselves and others" (Stablein & Anthony, 2017, "Exploratory Research and Qualitative Interviewing", para. 2). In addition, qualitative approach is used to study the meanings that people prescribe to events, culture, advertising and marketing (Silver, Stevens, Wrenn, & Loudon, 2013), which is particularly relevant to this research.

Qualitative research includes a variety of methods, which include in-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnography, case studies and more (ibid.). The chosen method for this study is netnography, which studies consumer behaviour online (Silver, Stevens, Wrenn, & Loudon, 2013).

Research method: netnography

Online-based research methods are considered time- and cost-efficient, and they allow the researcher to easily select a segment of population they wish to study, also allowing it to be diverse thanks to the wide reach of internet. Moreover, the interactive nature of the web means that there is a lot of rich communication exchanges online. Online research is particularly beneficial for sensitive topics, as people tend to be more prepared to discuss them online and are more honest (Hewson, 2017).

One concern that is often raised in relation to online research, is the bias of internet users, as this affects the generalisability of the results. There is also a risk of misunderstandings and general ambiguity online, especially with methods without researcher participation. However, despite those concerns, online research can provide just as valid and reliable data as offline research (ibid.).

Netnography is a method that allows the researcher to study online communication between consumers and consumers' reviews of their experiences through observing interactions on publicly accessed sites (Thanh & Kirova, 2018; Mkono & Markwell, 2014). There is a massive amount of data on the internet, and netnography presents a systematic tool for collecting and analysing that data (Mkono & Markwell, 2014). Just like with traditional ethnography, netnography helps getting "insider's understanding of the community's culture" (Weijo, Hietanen, & Mattila, 2014, p. 2073). However, as the online scene develops, the communities within it become interconnected and thus, it becomes more difficult to define the field of research (Weijo, Hietanen, & Mattila, 2014).

Netnography is an appropriate method for this thesis study, as it allows to uncover the different ways in which the users perceive the topics of nationalism, globalisation, and culture in the context of the SAS ad. The topics of nationalism and culture could be considered sensitive. Netnography allows to unobtrusively observe the discussions posted online about the ad, while providing anonymity to the authors of the opinions being studied (Kozinets & Handelman, 1998).

Netnography can be used to study several online communities, such as groups of interest on different social media, or focus on a single one, such as a website or a topic in a forum. The data gathered with netnographic method is usually in the form of text, however, some researchers also use profile descriptions, images, videos, blog pages and more. It is possible for the researcher to be an active participant, when using netnography. This involves integrating into and interacting with the online community. However, many netnographic studies take a passive approach, and it is also possible to incorporate both approaches, depending on the type of the study (Costello, McDermott, & Wallace, 2017). In this thesis, a passive approach to netnography is taken, as researcher's participation is not necessary for the purposes of the thesis.

The benefits of netnography are that it is cost-effective and relatively fast. It also allows the researcher to gather honest opinions on a sensitive matter, while easily keeping anonymity of those observed (Costello, McDermott, & Wallace, 2017). However, as noted by Mkono and Markwell (2014), researchers using netnography method rely on search engines in order to identify relevant data. Therefore, the results depend on the researcher's ability to find and formulate relevant keywords. Kozinets et al. (2014) suggest semantic search engines, which look for mentions of the keywords across internet and present evaluations about those keywords: whether the context is positive or negative, what words they are used with, and more. This serves as a useful tool for netnography researchers to discover data sources online.

In tourism, netnography is often used to gather data about travellers' experiences with tourism products and services (Mkono & Markwell, 2014), which shows consumer preferences and any potential flaws in these products. However, as noted by Mkono and Markwell (2014), this method is still not as widely used as other qualitative research methods.

Netnographic analysis

There are different ways to approach the analysis of netnographic data. The choice of method depends on the amount of data, the scope of the project and the resources available.

Kozinets et al. (2014) recommend focusing on a single data source first (e.g. one website) in order to get a sense of that specific community or space, before extending the scope further. They also suggest that online communications should be viewed and analysed as they are, without the help of language processors or other compressive tools, at least initially. This is done in order to experience the communications exactly the way that the members of the community experience them. This is taken into the consideration in this thesis, and all the data is analysed manually, without the use of software or other tools.

Coding or dividing the data into categories was found to be the most common initial step of the analysis across several netnographic studies (Misopoulos, Mitic, Kapoulas, & Karapiperis, 2014; McMillen, 2013; Kozinets, Dolbec, & Earley, 2014). Kozinets et al. (2014) also write about open coding, where the researchers labels the data and organizes it into categories which then can be grouped into other categories. At this stage, more data can be collected according to the categories. Afterwards, it is possible to make comparisons or generalisations from the data, in order to explain the patterns in the data. For large amounts of data, there are software tools that help code, classify, and organise the data.

Word clouds represent another way to analyse netnographic data (Kozinets, Dolbec, & Earley, 2014). Word cloud is an image formed out of different-sized words from the input source, for example, an article. Words that are used most often appear the biggest in the image, and the least used words are the smallest (Boost Labs, 2014). The output can then be analysed, although given that it is so superficial, this is more of an illustrative addition to the more extensive analysis (Kozinets, Dolbec, & Earley, 2014).

Finally, another way to approach analysis is textual analysis. It "provides interpretations of texts based on cultural and social contexts" (McMillen, 2013, p. 37), and helps understand the way people make sense of the world (McKee, 2003).

Ethical considerations

There are some ethical issues to be considered when working with netnography. The criteria for "private" and "public" is blurred, when it comes to social media and the internet in general (Hewson, 2017). As per Kozinets, Dolbec and Earley (2014), even though each user is responsible for what they post publicly online, it is important to consider the consequences that may come from including people's real usernames in academic work. They suggest treating online identities as legal identities by protecting them, when including those in research. Another consideration is copyright issues when using content, published online, such as pictures or videos (ibid.).

In order to follow ethical standards, all the data collected in the process of this study is anonymous, so no usernames are included in the analysis, and they are also edited out of the screenshots provided in the appendices. The sources referenced link only to the post or article, not to the comment directly.

Data collection

In online research, the researcher has access to a broad and diverse population of participants. It allows for larger sample sizes than would otherwise be possible. Sampling in this type of research usually involves locating online data sources (Hewson, 2017).

The areas for data collection in this thesis were defined by searching for relevant areas with the help of a search engine. Keywords, such as "SAS ad controversy" and "What is truly Scandinavian" were used in order to find relevant news articles and other online sources with discussions about the ad. The data collected is in the form of text, which consists of comments and interactions showing the users' perceptions on the ad.

The final sample featured data from one news article, two Facebook posts featuring the ad and six YouTube videos. Apart from that, during the search, nine posts concerning the ad were found on a discussion website called Reddit. The posts were taken from different communities within the website, such as a community for people from Denmark, people from Sweden, and a community for Scandinavian countries. The comments from those posts were also used in this project. The sample included 87 screenshots of comments in total.

All of the data sources are presented in the table below.

Online news articles	*The Controversial Ad That Scandinavian Airlines Pulled After A Day* (Schlappig, 2020)

Facebook	SAS Facebook post: *SAS – What is truly Scandinavian?* (SAS - Scandinavian Airlines, 2020a)
	&Co. Facebook post: *Travelers bring home great ideas* (&Co., 2020)
YouTube	*The WORST Commercial of ALL TIME! What is truly Scandinavian?* (Warhammer, 2020)
	"Nothing is Truly Scandinavian" - Historian Reacts to Scandinavian Airlines Commercial (Bull-Hansen, 2020)
	SAS - What is truly Scandinavian - P4 Syd gæster William Atak om SAS shitstormen (ATAK A/S, 2020)
	Corporations and wokeness / SAS' "What is truly Scandinavian?" ad - JF Gariépy TPS #669 (Based and beautiful, 2020)
	That CONTROVERSIAL SAS Scandinavian Airlines advert, "What is truly Scandinavian?" (BeingSwenglish, 2020)
	What is truly Scandinavian? Nothing! according to SAS Airlines latest ad. (Nexus, 2020)
Reddit	*SAS – What is truly Scandinavian?* (u/kyllingefilet, 2020)
	SAS - What is truly Scandinavian? (ad denying anything is scandinavian, therefore we should fly with them to the places everthing comes from) (u/ExperimentalFailures, 2020)
	SAS - What is truly Scandinavian? (u/TransHelvede, 2020)
	You have no culture. Consoom airplane tickets and go somewhere that does. (u/Stinor1, 2020)
	Make sure to dislike this absolutely awful globalist propaganda by Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) (u/Milkpowder44, 2020)
	SAS(Scandinavian Airlines) decides to shit all over their costumers in an attempt to do worse than Gillette - What is truly Scandinavian? (u/DwwwD, 2020)
	Apparently Scandinavians have no culture or history of their own...SAS Commercial (u/boni1984, 2020)
	"What is Truly Scandinavian?" Scandinavian Airlines encourages people to abandon their cultural identity (u/StinkFunkly, 2020)
	SAS - What is truly Scandinavian? (u/Zabuza_87, 2020)

This research is limited by time constraints and the scope of the project. Other conditions may have allowed a more extensive collection of data, which could potentially affect the results of the research, and would have provided a more detailed examination of the SAS ad viewers' perceptions of the investigated topics. Moreover, the current study features sources from four different websites, as they hosted the most extensive discussions on the topic. This can, however, be seen as a limitation, as a more diverse collection of sources would have allowed for more different viewpoints on the topics.

Another limitation is that of language and translation. Some news articles and comments used in this thesis have originally been written in Danish, Swedish and Norwegian languages. They have been translated for the purposes of this research. As this is a qualitative study, the meanings are central, and it is acknowledged that the meanings may have been hindered in the process of translation (Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010). However, the interpretive approach taken in this study means that the way it is carried out is in any case affected by the researcher's interpretation.

Analysis

This chapter will discuss and analyse the data gathered from the above-mentioned sources.

The data was manually looked through and coded thematically, according to the research question and the theoretical considerations in this study. Comments mentioning culture were grouped together, as were comments mentioning nationalism and then comments mentioning globalisation. This resulted in three groups of data, which also informed the structure of this analysis. Each group was then examined for links among the data itself, as well as links to the theory. Those links are explained in this analysis.

This chapter will first describe the advertisement itself in detail. Then the main complaints of the viewers about the ad are presented, in order to give background for the discussions that occurred in the comments. After that, the findings are separated into the three topics mentioned above: globalisation, nationalism, and culture.

All of the comments are included with the original spelling, punctuation, and emphasis on certain words, apart from those that had to have been translated into English.

The ad

As mentioned in the introduction, the ad was posted on YouTube on 11th of February 2020. The ad was created by an advertising bureau &Co., based in Copenhagen. This bureau has created many award-winning commercials for a range of companies (Bureaubiz, 2017).

The ad features what appears to be national symbols of Scandinavian countries. It begins with images, associated with Swedish culture: braids in blond hair and a Swedish birthday cake with national flags. The narrator asks, "What is truly Scandinavian?". In a short moment, the answer follows: "Absolutely nothing". The word "nothing" is then repeated in

several other languages, as more Scandinavian images are shown. The narrator continues, "Everything is copied".

From here, the ad lists things that are commonly considered Scandinavian, while tracing their origins to other countries. Democracy – Greece, parental leave – Switzerland, windmills – Persia, Christiania bikes – Germany, rye bread – Turkey, liquorice – China, the midsummer maypole – Germany, meatballs – Turkey, the Danish (pastry) – Austria, paper clip – America, women's rights movement – also America. Then, an African American man is seen saying "We are no better than our Viking ancestors". The narrator then explains this, "We take everything we like on our trips abroad, adjust it a little bit, and voila… It's a unique Scandinavian thing".

The narrator then continues by saying that travelling inspires people, and adds colour to life, as they take "the best of everywhere and add it to here". "In a way, Scandinavia was brought here. Piece by piece. By everyday people, who found the best of our home... away from home". The ad ends with the message of looking forward to all the things the travellers will bring home next (SAS - Scandinavian Airlines, 2020b).

Main complaints

The ad quickly caused many negative reactions and responses, which created a social media firestorm, as per the definition of Pffefer, Zorbach, and Carley (2014). The ad was considered offensive, and for many viewers it was because of the way the ad was executed:

> I get the message, but the execution was horrendous (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

> I do think [SAS] made a big mistake with the way they conveyed their message (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

This resonates with Barnes and Dotson's (1990) dimensions of offensive advertisement, one of which is the execution. The execution of the ad is something that is seen as being controlled by brands, and thus, something that can be adjusted, which is why it is often criticised by the public in this manner.

One of the heavily discussed topics in the comment sections of videos and posts about the ad was the topic of culture. Most of the discussion focused on the way users understood the message in the ad regarding Scandinavian culture, and their explanation for why the ad is perceived as offensive.

Comments showed users saying that the ad was phrased in a harsh manner, and it felt as if their culture was dismissed or even attacked:

> This ad is erasing a culture (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

> The ad is . . . trying to erase or downplay a culture in 2020 (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

> [SAS] spat on our culture, on our ancestors and our history (Bull-Hansen, 2020, Appendix 4)

As per Swann Jr. (1983, cited in Cowan & Spielmann, 2018), advertising that is not in line with consumers' identity, can seem undesirable and threatening, which could explain the response to the ad. Many of the viewers identified themselves as Scandinavian, which could be seen in comments talking about Scandinavia while using the pronoun "we" and "our", which is a sign of national consciousness (Kelman, 1997; Diamandaki, 2003): "We are a little area in the world that has always travelled, explored, optimised and integrated technology,

traditions and methods" (u/kyllingefilet, 2020, Appendix 10). Thus, since the ad was perceived to be belittling Scandinavian culture, it might have felt threatening for the viewers as it did not resonate with their social identity (Cowan & Spielmann, 2018) as Scandinavian and prompted the negative reaction.

This can then be seen as an example of social failure, which is one of the causes for social media firestorms, and which refers to companies violating values or social norms, which is what the viewers perceived the ad to be doing by supposedly attacking their cultures. Social failure firestorms can be especially harmful for brands (Hansen, Kupfer, & Hennig-Thurau, 2018).

Moreover, part of the discontent was viewers wondering why an airline based in Scandinavia was being what they thought was dismissive towards its own culture:

> "Nothing is Scandinavian. Not even us." – the SAS (Warhammer, 2020, Appendix 2, quotation marks in original).

This is also why many of the comments labelled the ad as "self-hatred" (u/kyllingefilet, 2020, Appendix 10; Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1). This relates to the discussion by Kjeldgaard and Askegaard (2006), who state that brands that are tied to a certain place geographically or culturally are more susceptible to criticism from customers, when it comes to disregarding local values. This provides some insight into the reasons behind the outrage, as SAS as a Scandinavian flagship airline was perceived to be attacking the local values of Scandinavia, as seen from the examples above. "They don't even deserve to live in our beautiful part of the world", wrote one viewer about SAS (Bull-Hansen, 2020, Appendix 4). This demonstrates that because national associations can become such a significant part of a brand, airlines have a challenging task of carefully combining the local and the global in their brand's portrayal (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007).

Moreover, as per Driver (1999), airlines use advertising as a tool for expressing their brand identity. Applied to this case it would mean that since the viewers saw the ad as suggesting that nothing was Scandinavian, and that included the airline, the Scandinavian part was separated from the brand identity in the viewers' perceptions, as also seen here:

> Breaking News: Scandinavian airlines changes name to nothing airline (Warhammer, 2020, Appendix 2).

Some other viewers with a different opinion on the ad suggested that the offended were nationalistic:

> I think the massive downvoting can be equally well explained by how the ad pushes a lot of ethno-nationalist buttons (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

Thus, the content of the ad was perceived by some as offensive for those with nationalistic views. As stated by Adriani (2019), the fear of a threat to the identity of a country is an important element of nationalism. This fear could be seen in the viewers' comments like this one:

> Obviously just an attempt to break down the national identity and promote mass immigration (u/TransHelvede, 2020, Appendix 12).

Thus, because of the way the ad supposedly dismissed the cultures, the viewers felt like the Scandinavian identities were being threatened. This is further emphasised in this comment, which highlights the denying of culture uniqueness in the ad as understood by this user, who wrote their interpretation of the ad's message:

"We have airplanes. They go to a place on the map that is just like the place you left from. It's completely the same. ABSOLUTELY NOTHING there that isn't from somewhere else. It won't be interesting" (Warhammer, 2020, Appendix 2, quotation marks in original).

Here it can be seen how the ad is interpreted as portraying all of the countries being the same or very similar, which would mean that the Scandinavian culture does not have anything unique or worth seeing. For many, this was a sign of the ad being about globalisation and globalism:

Globalism at its worst (ATAK A/S, 2020, Appendix 5).

This is not an ad. Its political propaganda. Just like a regular Coca Cola ad. Disgusting (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

The latter comment compares the SAS ad to Coca-Cola ads, and, as explained by Özkan and Foster (2005), Coca-Cola is a symbol of Westernisation, and, to a degree, standardisation of the world, and therefore it is often criticised and protested. This comment also shows a negative perception of it and indicates that in the opinion of this viewer, the SAS ad might have similar implications in terms of globalisation or Westernisation.

More examples indicate how some viewers believed the ad to be about globalisation, like this comment, saying "This was done on purpose. It's part of the Globalist plan (…)" (BeingSwenglish, 2020, Appendix 7). This comment got a few replies, one of which agrees: "It's absolutely part of the globalist agenda" (ibid.).

Globalisation in the context of the ad

Thus, many of the viewers agreed on the ad being about promoting globalisation. As stated by Parray (2013, p. 229), advertising "functions instrumentally in evolving and adopting a global concept of world", which can make it an effective tool for communicating a globalised view. This provides a theoretical background for the speculation in the comments about the SAS ad promoting globalisation.

As per Thurlow and Aiello (2007, p. 308), globalisation acts as an identity resource, which companies can use to portray themselves and their customers as "global players". This comment shows a similar thought in relation to the SAS ad:

The airline's intention is to portray us as the world's citizens (u/kyllingefilet, 2020, Appendix 10).

One view on globalisation that emerged from the data is countries losing their cultural individuality, as demonstrated here:

Globalist shilling like in this ad is absolutely ridiculous. . . . At least with Denmark (and partly Norway) there is a little bit of hope left to maintain the individual superior cultural traits that have emerged over thousands of years (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

As seen here, the viewer refers to the ad as being "globalist". This comment further indicates that globalisation does not have place for "individual superior cultural traits", according to this user's point of view. This resonates with the understanding of globalisation as standardisation of tastes and a universal culture, which is considered a cultural dimension of globalisation, as per Kacowicz (1999).

> I'm from Denmark and I love this commercial. . . . We all really need to accept we live in a global society where very little is truly our own culture anymore (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

This user agrees with the message in the ad, which is perceived to be about global society that is characterised by having almost no completely individual cultures.

As per Sofield (2001), while this is a common view on globalisation, it has not proven to be accurate in reality, as the process of globalisation creates an environment, where the global differences and cultural clashes become more pronounced (Featherstone, 1995, cited in Sofield, 2001). Hung et al. (2007) have a similar view, stating that expressions of culture increase with globalisation. This is also seen in this outrage, caused by the ad, as while the ad is interpreted by some as promoting globalisation, it caused viewers to express their national belonging and bring their culture to light, and to express their understanding of it, like here:

> Scandinavian means making things work. It is to be pragmatic but compassionate. To work hard – but only as hard as you can. To allow yourself to be inspired by others and not feel superior (the law of Jante). To be accepting – in some cases too accepting – towards other people (u/kyllingefilet, 2020, Appendix 10).

In other words, the ad caused a lot of responses, where the viewers were clarifying their understanding of their culture and trying to make it more distinct, which, according to Sofield (2001) and Featherstone (1995, cited in Sofield, 2001), is an effect of globalisation. Moreover, as per Hung et al. (2007), this expression of culture is an attempt to retain the cultural values and identities of the country. However, as per Koechler (2018), globalisation does influence the development of "hybrid cultures", where certain tendencies or lifestyle trends become adapted all over the world. This is partially in line with the viewers' perception of globalisation as a standardisation of cultures, because, even though cultures may not become fully the same, as per Koechler (2018), globalisation does result in elements that may become shared by many different cultures.

For others, globalisation and globalism, which this ad presumably calls for, meant more multiculturalism, the weakening of national associations and being open and tolerant towards foreigners. Here, again, a user is interpreting the message from SAS while pretending to be speaking from their side:

> Scandinavians have not yet learned to be multicultural. We here in SAS have to be the driving force in the eradication of strong and unified nation states and identities (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

The fears that the viewers associated with a more global and multicultural society are lost heritage, mix of different cultures in one and no unified nations. Moreover, some viewers associated globalism with inability of being proud of their identity, as can be seen in this statement:

> Politically-correct grandstanding is precisely why globalism should rightfully fail. Everybody has the right to be proud of who they are (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

As stated by Sabanadze (2010), globalisation is normally feared and criticised for threatening the values and structures of societies. She also mentions that in the process of globalisation, communities become more open to external influences. The comments presented above resonate with this, as the viewers associate globalisation with either homogenisation of different countries or their complete eradication, as well as global inclusion. These perceived threats of globalisation push the viewers to defend their culture and the nation, which is seen in the examples further below. Moreover, the above comments

about globalisation show viewers associating the concept of globalisation in the context of the ad with a multicultural society, as well as the weakening of national associations and national pride.

Many of the users use the term "globalism" and not "globalisation". Since globalism is defined as the connectedness of the world, and globalisation is the process that boosts this connectedness (Das, 2011), it can be said that these comments can be applied to both concepts: if globalism is seen as an undesirable outcome because of the above-mentioned perceived threats to society, then globalisation would also be undesirable, since it increases globalism. Moreover, as stated by Das (2011), these two terms are very often confused, so it is possible that they are also confused here.

Nationalism in the context of the ad

As mentioned previously, some users thought that the video offended people with nationalistic views:

> I understand some hard-core nationalists might down vote this video, presumably perceiving it as an attack on their national pride (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

This means that the message in the ad was perceived to be in some way going against nationalism, and this makes sense considering the way viewers perceived the concept of globalisation. As seen above, many users seemed to see the ad as being about globalisation, which they associated with weakening of national identity and inability to be proud of your roots and heritage. From a theoretical point of view, nationalism is concerned with promoting and maintaining national identity (Smith, 2010, cited in Adriani, 2019), as well as protection of the nation's language, art and education (Hutchinson, 2013). Nationalists feel the need to defend the culture and identity of their country in the face of globalisation (Sabanadze, 2010). Thus, globalisation, and therefore, the ad itself, was seen by some viewers as opposing or challenging nationalism. As per Sabanadze (2010), contemporary nationalism expresses discontent in the context of globalisation, which is what is seen in these discussions between users.

Moreover, national pride is an important element of the national identity (Evans & Kelley, 2002). This ad was said by some viewers to be "attacking" national pride of Scandinavians, and thus, attacking the national identity. As per Kecmanovic (1996), when national identity is threatened, nationalism often emerges, which is what can be seen in some comments celebrating the Scandinavian identities and expressing their pride for the Scandinavian countries and their people:

> The message in this film is that Sweden has no **identity**, no **culture** and no **heritage** and then there is nothing to protect. I hope this movie upsets many. Sweden is an amazing country, and more people need to realise this (u/Zabuza_87, 2020, Appendix 14, emphasis in original).

> I am proud of all the Scandinavians who are proud of Scandinavia and who speak out in different ways [in the comment section] against this madness from SAS (SAS - Scandinavian Airlines, 2020a, Appendix 9).

Some users could be seen urging others to dislike the video (u/Milkpowder44, 2020) and some comments even showed viewers calling for Scandinavians to push back and defend their cultures:

> Fight for your culture, fight to preserve it, dont let this progressive garbage ruin your nation! (Warhammer, 2020, Appendix 2).

> It gives me hope to see so many Scandinavians against this. Hopefully they may also start taking back their countries (Warhammer, 2020, Appendix 2).

Here viewers expressed nationalism by urging for unity in the nations against the perceived threat to their culture and nation. Discussions related to nationalism can often become heated, which is explained by the identity that nationalism creates, one that is based on the emotions and "the irrational", as per Langman " (2006, p. 66). Thus, nationalistic conversations often cause emotional reactions (Baruh & Popescu, 2008). Moreover, the heated discussions can also be explained by national loyalty, which can be particularly strong, as it is constantly reinforced by social institutions to build a sense of connectedness between the individual and the nation (Grodzins, 1956, cited in Connor, 2007).

The ad was also said to belittle Scandinavian achievements. This is demonstrated by a comment from a user who listed the famous geniuses of Scandinavia, such as writers and philosophers:

> Alfred Nobel? Nothing. Niels Bohr? Nothing. Karen Blixen? Nothing. . . . Scandinavian culture? Nothing (&Co., 2020, Appendix 8).

Same user then followed up with another comment, saying "We are proud of our Scandinavian heritage, which amounts to absolutely nothing. So we're proud of absolutely nothing".

This shows how the interpretation of the ad for users made them feel as if the pride they feel for their nation's achievements was irrelevant. To some of the commentators, the message "nothing is really Scandinavian" meant that there was nothing to be proud of. Coming back to Evans and Kelley's (2002) definition of national pride, which states that people feel like they have a share in the national achievements, it can then be said that the commentators may have felt personally offended by the message they interpreted from the ad, because if there are no achievements, it also means their individual share in those is denied. This also further emphasises the point about the perception of the ad as challenging nationalistic views.

Moreover, this comment shows a viewer stating that while promoting globalisation, the ad criticises nationalism and national identity:

> [SAS] also want to anchor their narrative in the modern tendencies. The result is trying to portray the audience as a part of a global society instead of just Danish. This has been seen before. Unfortunately, nowadays the tendency is to critique nationalism and not to praise globalisation, so it all ends up with them making a commercial that criticises the Danish identity instead of promoting the globalisation thing. …And people hate when their identities are criticised (u/kyllingefilet, 2020, Appendix 10).

This indicates that, for the author of this comment, national identity and nationalism are associated with the nation's cultural achievements, since those are perceived to be belittled in the ad. This comes close to the theoretical view on cultural nationalism used in this project, which states that nationalism promotes development and protection of the nation's culture and education (Hutchinson, 2013). Moreover, by the definition of Keane (1994, cited in Hjerm, 1998), national identity provides a sense of purpose to the people associating themselves with a certain nation. This provides a perspective on why "people hate when their identities are criticised" in this context, as criticising the national identity would then also affect this sense of purpose.

Some viewers felt like, in its attempt to be modern, the ad portrayed a negative view on nationalism which was, in their opinion, typical for some of the Scandinavian countries:

> Basically, this behaviour comes from a very strong desire to be modern and progressive, combined with a view of patriotism and nationalism as something primitive and evil. . . . there is, very clearly below the surface, a view of us Swedes as better than those people who are still patriotic and nationalistic (u/Zabuza_87, 2020, Appendix 14).

This was this user's way of explaining why the SAS ad seemed to be supposedly dismissive of their own countries' achievements. Thus, the ad was perceived to reinforce a message that some viewers believed to already be existing in Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, that nationalism is primitive and it is something that makes countries inferior to those that do not display nationalism on the same level.

This perceived point about nationalism in the ad prompted some viewers to explain their view on nationalism:

> Nationalism is nothing evil or to be ashamed of in my eyes. There's nothing wrong with loving where you come from or ended up (Based and beautiful, 2020, Appendix 6).

This comment indicates associations of nationalism with love for one's place of birth or place of residence. Thus, nationalism was perceived by viewers as a way to be proud of one's roots or the nation that one finds themselves in, even if it is not their birthland. This was contrasted to the message about nationalism in the ad, which, as viewers interpreted, was implicitly opposing or criticising nationalism.

Another viewer explains their understanding of a nation in this comment:

> A nation without its own culture can't be a nation. It's good ti have an open view of the world, but we must always [be] capable to answer question: Who i am? Who we are? (SAS - Scandinavian Airlines, 2020a, Appendix 9).

Thus, culture is seen as an essential part of a nation for some viewers, which is also reflected in the theory: as per Kelman (1997), nation is defined as a group sharing territory and cultural elements like language, traditions or history. In the context of the ad, this means that by "dismissing" Scandinavian culture, it was also dismissing the nations of Scandinavia in the perception of the viewers.

Moreover, the questions in this comment tie in with the theoretical perspective on consumer's identity, which is viewed in terms of individual identity (who am I?) and social identity (who are we?) (Cowan & Spielmann, 2018). This also resonates with the theoretical view of national identity, in which it answers the question "to which group do I belong?", as per Hofstede, Minkov, and Hofstede (2010).

As per Diamandaki (2003), internet plays a significant role in formation, confirmation or development of national identity, and it provides a new environment for the sense of belonging that is associated with national identity and nationalism. In discussions like the above, users confirm and express their identity, and through challenging of the views, that identity can be transformed. The SAS ad prompted many such discussions, which reflects the point by Tsai (2012), who states that the way a community is represented in advertising can have a significant influence on consumers' identity construction.

Culture in the context of the ad

As the ad was perceived to be "dismissing" Scandinavian culture, a lot of the discussion in the comments focused on culture. Many users disagreed on the meaning of culture that they interpreted in the ad's message.

> "Scandinavian culture does not mean it should be invented in Scandinavia or by a Scandinavian, just that at this moment it is a big part of our culture in comparison to the other cultures. . . . why does SAS try to say that a culture doesn't exist just because many of the cultural things may have come from somewhere else?" (u/kyllingefilet, 2020, Appendix 10).

This thought was repeated throughout many comments, with users saying that the idea of culture in the ad is incorrect, as it implies that in order to be part of Scandinavian culture, an invention had to have its origins in Scandinavia. Instead, users seemed to think that having a product or an invention as part of culture simply meant that the product was especially favoured and popular in that culture.

Another example shows a viewer agreeing with the ad's message, because they see it as portraying culture not in terms of products, but behaviours related to the product:

> [Our culture] IS actually uniquely Scandinavian, but not because of what we have, but because of what we do. So rye bread is not Danish. The fact that we eat rye bread in the amounts that we do, is. I see that as the point [of the video] (u/kyllingefilet, 2020, Appendix 10).

Here the author of the comment stated once again that having the product itself does not necessarily mean it is a part of culture; it is the actions taken with that product that define a culture. This indicates an understanding of culture as something intangible and as a process rather than a product. This is how most people view the concept of culture, as per Mooij (2018); it is something abstract and intangible.

Hofstede, Minkov and Hofstede (2010) write that culture manifests itself in symbols, heroes, rituals and values. Symbols can be certain objects or things, which means that rye bread or a windmill can be perceived as a cultural symbol, and thus, be a manifestation of one's culture. However, symbols carry meaning that is shared between members of the same culture (ibid.). The above comments about culture can then be viewed in a different light, as it is this meaning they ascribe to, for example, rye bread, that makes them see it as part of their culture, rather than the rye bread itself.

Moreover, cultural symbols are often copied by other cultures (Hofstede, Minkov, & Hofstede, 2010). This provides perspective on the ad, which states that certain things or concepts that could be seen as symbols of Scandinavian cultures have been copied from other countries. For some viewers, this point made sense:

> They are technically right. We take the best from all over the world and make it our culture. That is how culture works (u/kyllingefilet, 2020, Appendix 10).

This means that some viewers perceived culture in the ad to be portrayed as something that can be built with pieces that may come from other parts of the world, but that all together make a culture. This is further emphasised in the comment that states "Basically they're saying that all culture today is a sort of mash up" (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

In some other comments, it can also be seen that viewers believe that the ad portrays the way those influences from other cultures come together as a big part of what defines culture:

> The point the video is trying to make is that no place (including Scandinavia) developed in a vacuum, and that the way a culture assembles influences from abroad is largely what makes the culture (u/ExperimentalFailures, 2020, Appendix 11).

Similarly, this comment talks about how cultures adopt ideas:

> Yes, ideas have always been borrowed from other cultures, but you take those ideas and make it your own. Culture is made up of values, beliefs, underlying assumptions, attitudes and behaviours shared by a group of people (Schlappig, 2020, Appendix 1).

This comment is also one of the few that mention an important element of culture, which is sharedness: as per Mooij (2018), culture implies collectivity, and that is one element that all definitions of culture have in common.

Moreover, all the elements of culture that this comment mentions are intangible, which once again defines culture itself as something intangible. While symbols are a part of culture, at the core of culture are values, which are intangible (Hofstede, Minkov, & Hofstede, 2010) and only exist in the minds of the members of the culture. This point is reflected in this comment:

> Cultures overlap and they only really exist in our minds. Where does one culture end and another start? Certainly not at geographical borders. In fact, cultures evolve and change all the time and have done so for millenia by interacting with eachother, copying and emulating indiscriminately (u/ExperimentalFailures, 2020, Appendix 11).

The author of this comment also notes that cultures constantly evolve and change, however, as stated by Hofstede, Minkov, and Hofstede (2010), despite the changes, the distinctive cultures of societies are preserved through generations.

This comment also expresses an idea of culture as a concept not being tied to geographical borders. As per Mooij (2018), culture can apply to different social groups, which are not necessarily defined geographically, such as, for example, age groups or social classes.

Thus, some of the viewers see culture as an intangible concept, which has to do with behaviours and meanings, and which cannot be seen easily. They do not see objects themselves as defining of a culture. As per Tomlinson (2013), culture is about meaning and the way people construct meaning through symbolic representation and communication. Thus, theoretically, culture itself is intangible, but it can be expressed using tangible objects which become symbols for this culture and are visible to the outsiders, while their meaning is only understood by the members of the culture (Hofstede, Minkov, & Hofstede, 2010).

This viewer shows another opinion on the way culture was portrayed in the ad:

> Of course in their minds the only people who have "culture" are indigenous people from the amazonas or some africans in mud huts (u/DwwwD, 2020, Apendix 15).

> Having a and celbrating your culture is good only if you're a minority (u/Stinor1, 2020, Appendix 13).

Here, culture is almost seen as an exclusive term, which is only applicable to minorities, such as indigenous people.

Moreover, some viewers disagreed with the idea of being able to trace the origins of cultures, as culture is something that can be shared across different countries:

> Culture isn't exclusive to a country. We share ideologies and beliefs and add our own spin on it that's how we evolve as a society (Nexus, 2020, Appendix 3).

This, again, ties with the above-mentioned point by Mooij (2018) about culture being applied to different kinds of social groups.

For some viewers, the ad also portrayed travel as playing a significant role in the development of a culture:

> SAS had an intention, a message. "Travelling broadens your horizon, and travelling made the Scandinavia we are so proud of" (u/DwwwD, 2020, Appendix 15).

Travelling being used as a tool for development of culture reflects the idea of culture consisting of different foreign influences that has also been expressed by some other viewers above.

As can be seen from examples, viewers had a lot of discussion on what defines culture and which elements it includes. The amount of different opinions on the definition reflects the academic discussion on the term culture, where no definition is agreed upon. (Tomlinson, 2013; James, 2006). Moreover, all of the different ways in which the viewers interpreted the message in the ad illustrates the point by Boone, Secci, and Gallant (2007), who state that original messages in the ads can be interpreted in different ways, and they can become distorted through discussions, like the ones about the SAS ad.

Conclusion

This study set out to find how topics of nationalism, globalisation, and culture in the context of the SAS ad are perceived by the viewers. For the sake of structural consistency, this conclusion will be presented in three different parts, namely globalisation, nationalism, and culture. The findings show the way viewers perceive these concepts in the context of the ad and also outside of it. In other words, the findings include not only the way viewers understood the portrayal of concepts in the ad, but also the way they themselves understand those concepts.

Globalisation

The findings indicated that most of viewers, whose comments were examined in this project, believed the ad to be about globalisation. According to the viewers, globalisation in the ad was portrayed as a global society with no truly individual cultures and characterised by multiculturality and the lack of unified nations. This is in line with some of the theoretical views on globalisation. Kacowicz (1999) states that globalisation is characterised by economic, ideological, technological and cultural changes. The viewers' perception of globalisation in the ad is tied to the cultural changes, which refer to a shift towards the standardisation of tastes and a universal culture. Moreover, as per Sabanadze (2010), globalisation is characterised by an "intensification and extension of international interaction" (p.16) and by an expected decreased relevance of a community. This links to the viewers' perception of globalisation in the ad as multiculturality and lack of unified nations.

However, according to Sofield (2001), globalisation results in a stronger expression of individual culture, and this point does not seem to be part of the viewers' perceptions.

Outside of the context of the ad, globalisation was associated for many viewers with inability to feel or express national pride. This is tied to the common view of globalisation where it challenges nationalism, as per Sabanadze (2010). She explains, however, that nationalism and globalisation coexist and promote one another because of the environment that the globalisation creates for nationalism.

Nationalism

According to the findings, some viewers believed that the ad was mostly regarded as offensive by those with nationalistic views. The message in the ad then seemed to criticise nationalism and portray it in a negative light, and as an opposite of globalisation. The message was also perceived to be attacking the national identity of Scandinavians and disregarding the national pride that viewers felt for the achievements of their countries.

This once again reflects the point by Sabanadze (2010) about nationalism and globalisation being viewed as opposing forces.

Viewers' own understanding of nationalism was tied to the country's achievements and the feeling of pride for their nation, as well as the protection of the nation from perceived threats. As per Kecmanovic (1996), this is a characteristic of nationalism, as it often acts as a defence mechanism in situations where the national identity is threatened. Furthermore, national pride is seen theoretically as an important element of the national identity, as per (Evans & Kelley, 2002).

Culture

The most extensive discussions occurred about the meanings of culture and the perception of it by the viewers of the ad. There were many different interpretations of culture from the ad's message. The way many viewers perceived the concept of culture in the ad was that elements of culture originate in the country, to which it belongs. For other viewers, however, culture in the ad was portrayed as something intangible, and something that may have come from different parts of the world to make a whole, or simply as something that can be influenced by foreign countries. As per Koechler (2018), cultures are inevitably influenced by other cultures, especially in the process of globalisation, to form what is known as "hybrid cultures". Moreover, as per Hofstede, Minkov, and Hofstede (2010), cultural symbols are often copied by other countries. This is similar to the viewers' perception of culture mentioned above. Some viewers also perceived culture in the ad as something that can be developed or changed through travel.

Another point of view on culture that viewers saw in the ad was that culture is about the way people act, and not just about the products that are supposedly a part of a culture, which is in line with the discussion of culture by Hofstede, Minkov, and Hofstede (2010), who state that culture is seen in the meanings that people ascribe to objects, and not just the objects themselves.

Some viewers also felt that culture in the ad was portrayed as something exclusive to minority communities.

In their own understanding, viewers perceived culture as something intangible and invisible, which is reflected in the theory by Mooij (2018), who states that it is a common view on culture. Moreover, viewers seemed to believe that culture has the ability to change and

evolve constantly, which is also stated by Hofstede, Minkov, and Hofstede (2010), however, they also note that despite the changes, distinctive cultures are preserved through generations.

Viewers also understood culture as something that does not necessarily have roots in one place, but that can be identified as being popular or meaningful in that place. This is also partially reflected in the literature, as culture is associated with meaning that people find through symbolic representation and communication (Tomlinson, 2013). Moreover, Mooij (2018) states that culture is always shared, and that was also reflected in some viewers' perceptions.

Implications

The implications of this study are twofold. First, this study sheds some light on the controversy of the SAS "What is truly Scandinavian?" ad in the way the controversy has developed and the discussions that occurred during the outrage by providing different perspectives on the message in the ad.

Secondly, for the global vs. local debate, this thesis contributes with understanding of the way consumers can react to advertising, when it comes to their cultural values and the topics of nationalism and globalisation. It also illustrates in practice the challenge for advertising for the airline industries, who operate globally but are scrutinised through the perceptions of local values.

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