

ARTICLE

# Competition in Marketing: A Deep Dive into Advertising Rivalries

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## Abstract

Competition in marketing, particularly through advertising rivalries, is a dynamic and pivotal aspect of business strategy. This deep dive explores how companies use advertising to differentiate themselves and capture market share in highly competitive environments. Advertising rivalries often involve creative campaigns, aggressive pricing strategies, and innovative use of media to attract and retain customers. The study examines notable cases of advertising wars, where companies have engaged in direct and indirect confrontations through their marketing efforts. These rivalries not only influence consumer perceptions and brand loyalty but also drive industry innovation and set new standards for marketing practices. The impact of digital media and social platforms on advertising competition is also analyzed, highlighting how real-time feedback and viral content have transformed traditional marketing strategies. By understanding the mechanisms and outcomes of advertising rivalries, businesses can better navigate the competitive landscape, optimize their marketing tactics, and achieve sustainable growth. This exploration underscores the importance of creativity, strategic planning, and adaptability in maintaining a competitive edge in the ever-evolving world of marketing.

**Keywords:** Advertising wars; Brand loyalty; Competitive strategy; Consumer perception; Digital media; Marketing innovation

**Abbreviations:** RevPAR: Revenue per available room, SVoD: Subscription video on demand

## 1. Introduction

In today's market economy, competition in marketing is a driving force that shapes consumer choices, pricing strategies, and overall brand positioning. Companies engage in fierce advertising rivalries, leveraging tactics like comparative advertising and content marketing to highlight their strengths and weaknesses against competitors [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]. These battles often involve industry giants like Coca-Cola and Pepsi, McDonald's and Burger King, or Nike and Adidas, vying for market share through social media marketing and strategic consolidation moves. This takes a deep dive into the world of advertising rivalries, exploring the psychological underpinnings, legal implications, and potential backlash of comparative advertising campaigns. It delves into high-profile cases where brands have gone head-to-head, dissecting the strategies employed and analyzing the outcomes through the lens of competitor analysis and consumer behavior (Fig. 1) [6, 7, 8, 9].

## 2. Coca-Cola vs. Pepsi

The Coca-Cola and Pepsi rivalry is one of the most enduring consumer brand rivalries, dating back to the 20th century, and has played a pivotal role in shaping modern advertising. Coke has traditionally

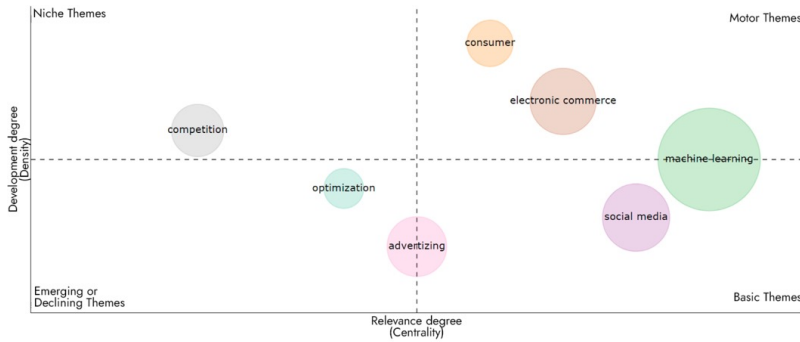


Figure 1. Thematic Evolution.

been the market leader, with a much larger marketing budget than Pepsi in the early years, while Pepsi has positioned itself as the 'challenger' brand, often using more innovative and disruptive marketing tactics as given in Table 1 [10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17].

- Pepsi introduced a popular radio jingle in the late 1930s that revolutionized radio advertising.
- Pepsi's 'Pepsi Generation' campaign in the 1960s targeted the rebellious youth culture.
- Coke's iconic 'Hilltop' ad in 1971 appealed to a younger, more global consumer base.
- Pepsi's 'Pepsi Challenge' blind taste tests in the 1970s challenged Coke's dominance.
- Coke's disastrous 'New Coke' product launch in 1985 showed the importance of brand loyalty beyond just taste.

Table 1. Coca-Cola vs. Pepsi

Coca-Cola	Pepsi
Established earlier, larger marketing budget	Positioned as the 'challenger' brand
Iconic 'Hilltop' ad targeted global youth	'Pepsi Generation' campaign targeted rebellious youth
Brand loyalty beyond taste ('New Coke' fiasco)	'Pepsi Challenge' blind taste tests challenged dominance

In recent years, both brands have had to adapt to changing consumer preferences and media consumption habits, experimenting with new digital and experiential marketing tactics. As sustainability becomes a bigger concern, the brands may need to cooperate more rather than compete to address issues like plastic waste [18, 19, 20].

### 3. McDonald's vs. Burger King

The rivalry between McDonald's and Burger King has been a defining force in the fast food industry, shaping marketing strategies and consumer preferences for decades. Despite McDonald's dominance, with about twice as many restaurants, five times the ad budget, and 10 times the revenue of Burger King, the latter has driven a lot of innovation in marketing, developing tactics that have persisted throughout the industry as given in Table 2 [21, 22, 23].

Burger King has often taken a more irreverent and competitive approach in its marketing, poking

fun at McDonald’s, while McDonald’s has maintained a more stable, leader-like brand image. Key marketing campaigns and events include:

- Burger King’s ’Have it your way’ slogan and jingle in the 1970s, offering customizable burgers.
- McDonald’s successful ’I’m lovin’ it’ campaign and focus on celebrity partnerships.

**Table 2.** McDonald’s vs. Burger King

McDonald’s	Burger King
Positive marketing tactics	Irreverent, competitive approach
’I’m lovin’ it’ campaign	’Have it your way’ slogan
Celebrity partnerships	Poked fun at McDonald’s

In recent years, both brands have worked with independent creative agencies, a significant shift in their marketing strategies. Burger King is focused on driving relevancy and authenticity in culture, while McDonald’s continues to leverage its strong brand equity and nostalgia.

The brands have also introduced new premium and healthier menu items over time to cater to changing consumer tastes. In the early years, McDonald’s offered a limited selection of products, while Burger King differentiated itself by offering customizable burgers through its ’Have it Your Way’ slogan [24, 25].

#### 4. Nike vs. Adidas

Nike and Adidas are the two leading brands in the sneaker and sportswear market, engaged in a silent but intense rivalry. Adidas was founded in 1924 by the Dassler brothers in Germany, while Nike was founded in 1964 in the US by Bill Bowerman and Phil Knight. The rivalry between the two brands intensified as they both sought to capture a larger share of the lucrative North American market, where Nike dominates as given in Table 3.

In terms of financials, Nike is the clear leader with significantly higher revenues and spending power for marketing, sponsorships, and celebrity endorsements. Both brands have invested heavily in technological innovations and collaborations with designers to create iconic shoe models and stay ahead of the competition. The rivalry intensified when Kanye West, who was previously associated with Nike, moved to Adidas in 2014 and launched his successful Yeezy line [26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31].

**Table 3.** Nike Vs Adidas

Nike	Adidas
Bold, heroic personality	Lifestyle brand
’Just Do It’ campaign cemented position	Focus on sustainability and environmental responsibility
Purpose-driven advertising like Colin Kaepernick	Celebrity/artist collaborations
Emotional connections, celebrity endorsements	Creative marketing tactics, event sponsorships
Strong digital marketing presence	Global athlete/team sponsorships

During the COVID-19 pandemic, both brands responded with their own protective equipment offerings, such as face masks and face shields. Nike positions itself as a brand with a bold, heroic

personality, challenging the status quo, while Adidas is seen more as a lifestyle brand. Nike's iconic 'Just Do It' campaign in the 1980s helped cement its position, and the brand has continued to use bold, purpose-driven advertising like the Colin Kaepernick campaign. Adidas has focused on sustainability and environmental responsibility as part of its brand identity [32].

Both brands leverage celebrity and athlete endorsements, as well as high-profile collaborations, to drive cultural relevance. The rivalry continues to evolve, with both brands exploring opportunities in the metaverse and digital/NFT spaces.

- The Nike logo is a simple checkmark shape called the 'Swoosh', while the Adidas logo is the iconic three-stripe mark representing diversity and the three continents where their shoes were sold.
- Nike's famous tagline is 'Just Do It', which is meant to inspire and motivate consumers. Adidas has used taglines like 'Impossible is Nothing' and 'All In' to convey their brand values.
- Nike focuses on emotional connections with consumers, using celebrity endorsements and high-profile sponsorships extensively. They also have a strong digital marketing presence.
- Adidas uses creative marketing tactics like collaborations with celebrities and artists. They also advertise heavily during major sporting events and sponsor athletes/teams globally.

According to Statista, Nike has higher global revenue than Adidas and Puma combined, indicating Nike's dominance in the industry. The Nike vs. Adidas rivalry has spanned six decades, influencing sports marketing and culture, and who dominates in the future may depend on innovation and acting on sustainability pledges [33].

## 5. Apple vs. Samsung

Apple and Samsung are the two dominant smartphone brands, often competing head-to-head in the market. Apple was first to market with the original iPhone in 2007, while Samsung's first smartphone came in 2009. However, Samsung has since made significant progress and now has a larger market share than Apple as given in Table 4 [34, 35, 36].

The two companies have very different marketing strategies:

- **Apple** focuses on consistency in branding and packaging design, as well as clearly defined brand values like quality and reliability.
- **Samsung** has a stronger social media presence and often aims to create marketing 'sensations' through celebrity endorsements and ambush marketing tactics.

Examples of Samsung and Apple engaging in ambush marketing:

- When Samsung referenced Steve Jobs' comments about larger phones to promote the Galaxy Note 4.
- When Apple created an ad referencing the patent disputes and Samsung allegedly copying their ideas.

While Samsung may be more aggressive in its marketing, Apple's stronger brand image and more consistent messaging have helped it maintain a higher brand value and revenue compared to Samsung.

**Table 4.** Apple Vs Samsung

<b>Apple</b>	<b>Samsung</b>
Focus on design, user experience, and continuous innovation	Operates across wide range of industries with vertical integration
Outsources hardware manufacturing to keep R&D costs low	Spends heavily on R&D and CapEx for production capabilities
Tightly integrated products make switching difficult	Vertically integrated supply chain for control and logistics
Known for elegant, simple advertising campaigns	Mix of advertising and promotional tactics
Distributes through own stores, trade partners, online	Distributes through dealers, retail chains, distributors

The two companies have been engaged in numerous patent infringement lawsuits since 2011, spanning multiple continents and billions of dollars in damages. Key legal battles include [37]:

1. 2012: Apple awarded \$1.05 billion, later reduced to \$600 million
2. 2014: Apple awarded \$120 million, Samsung awarded \$160,000
3. 2018: Apple awarded \$539 million

In Q1 2023, Samsung regained the top spot in global smartphone sales with a 22% market share, followed by Apple at 21%. Samsung smartphones generally offer more features and customization options, while iPhones are known for their minimalist design and user experience. Samsung's smartphones are available at a wider range of price points, while Apple's iPhones are typically more expensive [38].

## 6. Ford vs. Chevrolet

The Ford vs. Chevrolet (Chevy) rivalry has been a longstanding tradition in the American automotive industry, especially in the Midwest region. Families were divided into either Ford or Chevy loyalists in the 1960s, with Dodge being seen as more neutral. This rivalry extended to social gatherings, sports events, and other aspects of life [39, 40, 41].

The author's family was a Ford family, with the author's grandfather and father both working for Ford-related companies, which shaped the author's love for the Ford brand. The author's family owned several Ford vehicles over the years, including a 1959 Ford Fairlane convertible 'rat rod', a 1970 Ford Country Squire station wagon, and a 1970 Ford Bronco. The author's experience of working on the Bronco and learning about automobile engines firsthand was a valuable lesson, even though it led to some mistakes.

The Ford vs. Chevy rivalry continued to exist in the author's high school years in the mid-1980s, with no clear reason for its persistence over the decades. However, in the current market, both brands have their strengths and weaknesses across different vehicle segments:

- **Small SUV Segment:** Ford has a more diverse lineup including the Bronco and Bronco Sport, which outperform Chevrolet's Equinox.
- **Midsize SUV Segment:** Chevrolet's Traverse is the winner, offering more cargo space and an adult-friendly third row compared to the Ford Explorer.

- **Large SUV Segment:** The Chevrolet Tahoe, Suburban, and Ford Expedition are all evenly matched, with each offering unique strengths.
- **Small Truck Segment:** The redesigned Chevrolet Colorado edges out Ford’s offerings.
- **Full-size Truck Segment:** The Ford F-150 is the winner, offering best-in-class towing capacity and a well-rounded package.
- **Sports Car Segment:** Chevrolet’s Corvette has the edge over the Ford Mustang with its mid-engine design and high-end performance.

In recent comparison tests by Cars.com, Ford entries have generally outperformed comparable Chevrolet models across various vehicle segments. However, in the truck segment, the rivalry is most heated, with loyalists on both sides citing sales figures, horsepower, and towing capacity as key metrics. In the muscle car segment, the 2016 Chevrolet Camaro SS won a comparison test over the Ford Mustang GT, though the Mustang has since been updated [42, 43].

### 7. Airbnb vs. Traditional Hotels

The rise of Airbnb has significantly disrupted the traditional hotel industry, causing a real decline in revenue per available room (RevPAR) across various hotel segments as given in Table 5. According to studies, Airbnb’s growth has led to [44, 45, 46]:

- A 2% real decline in RevPAR across all hotel segments
- Up to 4% decline in the luxury hotel segment
- In Boston alone, a 2.5% decrease in hotel RevPAR, amounting to \$5.8 million in lost revenue in 2016

Airbnb now accounts for nearly 3% of all traditional hotel demand in the U.S., reflecting the changing consumer preferences and travel trends.

**Table 5.** Consumer Trends

Consumer Trends	Airbnb Advantages	Hotel Advantages
Unique, authentic experiences	Personalization	Hospitableness
Increased mobility and diverse travel	Communitas	Human interactions
Brand loyalty shifting to instant gratification	Localness	-
Focus on access over ownership	Serendipity	-
Emphasis on wellness and well-being	Ethical consumerism	-

While Airbnb outperforms hotels on dimensions like personalization, communitas, localness, serendipity, and ethical consumerism, hotels maintain an advantage in hospitableness and leveraging the human factor for genuine guest interactions. However, governments have been lenient in regulating Airbnb, focusing more on mitigating negative externalities rather than leveling the playing field, with enforcement of regulations remaining a challenge.

To compete with Airbnb, hotels can:

- Rethink their brand promise and leverage authentic storytelling to connect emotionally with consumers
- Focus on the 'Experiential Value Proposition' beyond just the guest room

- Enhance the human touch and sense of hospitableness
- Leverage loyalty programs to personalize the guest experience
- Explore integrating home sharing models into their business

## 8. Red Bull vs. Monster Energy

Red Bull and Monster Energy are two of the most prominent energy drink brands, engaged in a fierce rivalry for market dominance. The brands have distinct brand identities and marketing strategies that cater to their respective target audiences. Red Bull has cultivated a more aggressive, wild, and powerful brand image, while Monster has embraced a more bloody, scary, and provocative image. Red Bull's catchphrase focuses on giving consumers 'wings' to reach their dreams, tapping into aspirational themes, whereas Monster's catchphrase appeals to the consumer's 'dark side' and ferocity as given in Table 6 [47, 48, 49].

**Table 6.** Red Bull vs. Monster Energy

Red Bull	Monster Energy
Simple, minimalist can design	Cluttered, eye-catching can design
3 can sizes (250ml, 355ml, 473ml)	2 can sizes (250ml, 500ml)
Consistent product identity across range	Differentiated identities for various flavors
Premium pricing (e.g., 473ml can 2.08)	Lower pricing (e.g., 500ml can 1.59)

While both brands have built strong brand loyalty through fan communities and sponsorships partnerships, their strategies differ. Red Bull has employed more ownership strategies, such as owning Formula 1 teams, while Monster has relied more heavily on sponsorships. Both brands have high-profile brand ambassadors, like Sebastien Vettel and Thierry Henry for Red Bull, and Nate Adams for Monster.

Targeting dynamic, active consumers aged 18-30, including 'night birds' and sportspeople, Red Bull has expanded its reach to include workers and trendsetters, while Monster has focused more on using 'Monster Girls' to attract male attention. Red Bull is a major advertiser, while Monster does not engage in traditional advertising. However, both brands are active on social media, with Red Bull having significantly more followers [50].

Competition between the two brands is intense, with Red Bull positioned as the market leader and pioneer, while Monster is seen as a follower. Red Bull has a clearer and more positive brand image compared to Monster, which has more negative associations. Taste is the most important factor for consumers when choosing an energy drink, followed by price and brand reputation. In a blind taste test, consumers preferred the taste of Red Bull over Monster, even when the drinks were mislabeled [51].

## 9. Netflix vs. Traditional Cable TV

Netflix has disrupted the traditional TV industry with its streaming service, boasting about 233 million paying subscribers globally. It offers several subscription tiers ranging from \$6.99 per month for an ad-supported plan to \$19.99 per month for a premium plan, making it a more affordable option compared to the typical household's \$217.42 per month for a base cable TV package as given in Table 7 [52, 53].

Netflix’s journey began in 1997 as a DVD rental service, and it launched its streaming service in 2007, allowing customers to watch content on various devices. The company’s success and growth have been driven by its foray into producing original content, which started in 2013. Additionally, Netflix’s data-driven approach to content selection and personalization has been a key competitive advantage.

While Netflix faces increasing competition from rivals like Amazon, Google, and Disney, its focus on exclusive content and user experience has helped it maintain its dominance. However, in Q1 2023, Netflix lost 2.31 million subscribers to cable TV and live TV providers, indicating the ongoing battle for viewership.

**Table 7.** Netflix vs. Traditional Cable TV

Netflix	Traditional Cable TV
Affordable subscription plans	Expensive base packages
On-demand streaming	Linear programming
Original and licensed content	Primarily licensed content
Data-driven content selection	Programming based on ratings
Device compatibility	Limited to TV sets
Personalized recommendations	One-size-fits-all approach

The rise of cord-cutters, who have replaced traditional cable with streaming services, is evident. According to data [48]:

- Cord-cutters in the US are expected to reach 55.1 million by 2022.
- As of 2021, only 45% of households in America subscribed to cable, down from 52% in 2015.
- In 2021, 74% of US households had a subscription video on demand (SVoD) service.
- 70% of US adults use streaming services, while only 65% had cable TV as of 2015.
- 64% of adults in the US subscribe to Netflix, making it the most subscribed to streaming service.

The competition between traditional TV, YouTube (AVoD), and Netflix (PVoD) in the audiovisual media market is intense. While younger generations view YouTube as a closer alternative to TV compared to older generations, consumers are more likely to view Netflix as an alternative to TV than YouTube. However, there are mixed views on whether YouTube and Netflix are alternatives to each other (see Fig. 2).

The study suggests that there is strong competition between these services during prime-time evening hours for entertainment consumption. YouTube is more complementary for purposes like gaining knowledge or personal motivation, while Netflix and TV compete more for feature films and series. Older age groups use YouTube less than younger groups, who are more likely to substitute YouTube for TV. Competition between streaming and traditional TV is intensifying, with [‘consolidation’, ‘strengths and weaknesses’, ‘social media marketing’, ‘content marketing’, ‘competitor analysis’, ‘pricing strategy’, ‘market economy’] playing a crucial role. According to Nielsen data, streaming TV time is poised to equal traditional TV viewing time in November 2023, with each accounting for 49% of total TV time. Netflix remains the SVOD leader, delivering twice as many viewing minutes as its nearest competitor. Furthermore, 23% of US adults consider Netflix their default TV source, almost four times as many as the closest rival, Hulu.



Figure 2. Prospects of AI in digital marketing.

## 10. Conclusion

The battle for consumer attention and loyalty in the marketing landscape is intense, with brands employing various tactics to gain a competitive edge. From iconic advertising campaigns to disruptive innovations, the rivalries explored in this article showcase the power dynamics and strategic maneuverings that shape consumer choices and drive industry evolution. While some rivalries have endured for decades, fueled by deep-rooted consumer loyalties and brand identities, others are more recent, arising from the disruption of traditional business models by nimble upstarts. Ultimately, these marketing battles serve as a testament to the ever-changing nature of consumer preferences and the need for brands to continuously adapt, innovate, and redefine their value propositions to remain relevant in a highly competitive market economy.

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