

What are brand communities, and how are the interests of companies and community members balanced within them?

XinyiChen, HandanHe, QianYao, XiaohuaDeng

Chongqing Polytechnic Institute, Chongqing 401320, China

Abstract: In the context of Web 2.0 and the proliferation of social media, this study investigates the dynamics of brand communities and the mechanisms through which corporate and individual interests are balanced. Brand communities, defined as social networks centered around shared brand affiliations, have evolved into critical platforms for value co-creation, driven by digital collaboration and user-generated content (UGC). The analysis traces the transformation from traditional consumer-producer dichotomies to decentralized, community-driven economies, where consumers actively participate in product development, marketing, and innovation. Case studies such as Xiaomi and Gymshark illustrate how virtual communities foster brand loyalty through emotional engagement, offline-online integration, and user empowerment. Key findings reveal that individuals join brand communities to fulfill utilitarian needs (e.g., exclusive benefits), social identity, and social capital acquisition, while companies leverage these interactions to enhance customer loyalty, reduce retention costs, and innovate iteratively. The study highlights the emergence of a “community share” business model, where profitability hinges on trust-building, personalized user profiling, and collaborative ecosystems. Ultimately, the equilibrium between corporate objectives and member interests is achieved through reciprocal value exchange: consumers gain belonging and influence, while brands secure advocacy and sustainable growth. This research underscores the imperative for firms to adopt psychologically informed strategies to optimize co-creation in the mobile internet era.

Keywords: Brand Communities; Value Co-Creation; Virtual Community Economy; User-Generated Content (UGC); Brand Loyalty; Digital Collaboration

1. Introduction

In the context of Web 2.0. To the present day. What is a brand community? How can corporate and personal interests be balanced in a community? The discussion of these questions is still relevant because we can see from it that the role of communities, companies, and individuals in brand communities, among other aspects, has changed under the boom of social media and the rapid penetration of the mobile Internet. For example, incorporate brand marketing practices. The focus of brands is no longer on unilateral marketing or advertising to consumers but on collaborating with consumers to create value. Companies are increasingly interacting with individuals in communities, and value-creating activities are becoming more common as a result of brand-individual collaboration. However, there has been relatively few studies on the co-creation of value between companies and individuals. This article will begin by exploring some of the different definitions of brand community theory, then move from the formation and development of community economies to a discussion of individuals’ motivations for participating in brand communities. Then to a panel of companies’ business models for brand community economies, and finally to an analysis of the roles played by companies and community members in brand communities. This essay will argue that the interests of companies and community members are balanced within the brand community, that customers can meet social needs by building and maintaining relationships, and that brands can profit from the loyalty and advocacy of these customers. The findings will not only help companies and individuals to understand their role in the brand community and thus help companies to think about how to use individuals appropriately for value co-creation but also support further research discussions on the benefits of individuals in the brand community.

2. Brand community

2.1 Historical Conceptualization: From Tribes to Consumer Communities

The concept of community can be traced back to the ‘tribes’ that emerged in primitive societies and the ‘clans’ that were formed in feudal societies. The term community we are talking about is distinct from the ‘tribe’ formed by blood ties or the ‘clan’ formed by geographical

ties. Cova, V. (2002) argues that individuals like to congregate in communities. Compared to marketing agencies or other 'formal' cultural authorities, these social, close-knit communities may have a greater influence and effect on people's behaviour. In addition, they further argued that individuals are more interested in the added value that accompanies consumer objects, that is, social connections and identities, than in the objects they consume. In a nutshell, 'community' represents a kind of world that is not available to the people. However, we would very much like to inhabit, as argued by Bauman (2001). Therefore, individuals are very eager to find the path that might take them there. Thus, Cova and White (2010) argued that many companies want to benefit from their own brand's fanatic base. Consequently, in modern society, communities are not just confined to groups of people in the same area. Nevertheless, consumers who consume similar goods are seen as community partners who share

the benefits, risks, and concerns of a common topic also referred to as consumer communities. Brand communities are derived from the concept of "consumer communities" introduced by the American historian Boorstin, who interpreted the term to mean human relationships built around products (Boorstin, 1973). As in the case of a brand community, the majority of members of this community are consumers of the brand. This group of consumers creates a connection around the brand's products. This interaction can be between members of the brand community and members, members and companies, or members and brands. For the online brand community, it can be seen as a new form of community. Online brand communities have similarities to traditional communities, but they also have differences.

2.2 Defining Brand Communities: A Multidimensional Framework

One of the biggest differences is that it is internet based and has some unique features. Muniz and Guinn (2001) first introduced the concept of a brand community. They argue that a brand community is a set of social relationships that brand consumers build around a brand. In addition, in contrast to traditional communities, this community of brands can now be online or offline and is not limited by geography. However, brand communities also share the same basic characteristics as traditional communities. These include a sense of commonality, rituals and practices, and a sense of responsibility based on ethics. Moreover, a brand community is a network of relationships centred on the core consumer, with key relationships including consumer-brand, consumer-marketer, consumer-product, consumer-consumer and emphasising the full range of consumer experiences with the brand. Brand communities are defined in terms of three dimensions: space, time and the type and frequency of consumer engagement as argued by McAlexander et al. (2002). They further argued that brand communities could exist in the physical world as well as in cyberspace. In the spatial dimension, there is a continuum from the real world to the virtual space. To enable this concept to be implemented, they even consider the territorial and virtual aspects of brand communities as the two poles of the spatial dimension of brand communities. On the geographical side, community members can communicate and share their consumption experiences in predetermined locations, and the brand company usually sponsors such communication activities, which are included in the scope of physical communities. Virtual communities, where members communicate and share their experiences via the internet, are those that exist in cyberspace. Some of these online communities are formed by consumers themselves, while others may be funded by brands or directly led by brands. Virtual brand communities also have their own rituals and practices, which are often beyond the control of the brand company.

2.3 Link Value as a Core Mechanism

For companies, running a brand community is an important way to build brand loyalty. Linking value is one of the basic foundations for the success of companies developing brand communities. In addition, the value of this linkage is also a specific value created by consumers and producers, as argued by Cova and White (2010). Furthermore, Link values reach their most organised expression in the realm of brand communities, consumer subcultures and consumer culture (Kates, 2006). It

is worth noting that Consumer groups both create and use link value. Therefore, one of the most important resources for online or offline activities in a brand community is the individual. The more active an individual is in a campaign, the more participants an event has, the more opportunities there are to interact and develop relationships with the brand, the company and members of the community. By participating in an event, members of the brand community are engaged, a series of connections are made, and link value is generated. These generated link values are subliminally attached by consumers to the community's brand and its affiliated products or services, paving the way for future consumer decisions or behaviour. Without the support of consumers, companies cannot produce link value even if they invest significant

resources in production. Encouraging consumers to join brand communities and leveraging close online and offline activities is therefore conducive to enhancing customer value, increasing consumer satisfaction and loyalty to the brand, and reducing customer retention costs.

3.The formation of a virtual community economy

3.1 Technological Enablers: Mobile Payment and Social Media Platforms

With the further development and maturity of mobile payment technology and communication technology, virtual communities have grown up on the fertile soil of online social media and are rapidly gaining ground. From a form of social gathering, virtual communities have emerged as a new economic form. The logic of the virtual community economy is a reversal of the logic of scale of the industrial economy. In traditional business models, there is a clear division of functions and roles, with a clear distinction between consumers and producers.

3.2 Paradigm Shift: Decentralization of Producer-Consumer Roles

However, in the context of digital communities, the roles of producer and consumer have changed considerably and are no longer as clear-cut as they once were. In fact, many virtual communities allow consumers to participate directly or indirectly in production, or even become direct producers. This has become a common and typical way of branding in the mobile internet era, as evidenced by the explosion of user generated content. As consumers' productivity is fully unleashed in the process of production, the boundaries between producer, consumer and marketer are blurred and a "decentralised" business transformation is taking place.

3.3 Contrasting Industrial vs. Community Economic Logics

In the era of economies of scale, everything has to be standardised and streamlined in order to maximise efficiency, profit and scale. However, the virtual community economy does not conform to this logic at all. In the virtual community economy, the production of goods is highly dependent on the community. Because the information age has dissolved most of the technological barriers to production, people have formed different circles and groups of people because of differences in their needs and preferences. Group collaboration in production has changed the attributes, lifespan, ups and downs in sales, cycles and management of products under the logic of communities. The traditional product development model is no longer adapted to the rapidly iterating Internet society, instead it has shifted to rely on a large network of participants who constantly maintain a stable value structure in an iterative process of identification. The logic of the community is, therefore, to position individuals, design products around them, market them, communicate them

and create the corresponding ecosystem. The value of the product is created by the interaction between the manufacturer and the consumer in the community-the shift from mass consumption to individual consumption. Then virtual communities, using the technology of the Internet to break the limits of time and space, allow these people with common needs to connect with each other. By establishing virtual communities, as far as production technology allows, products and services can be optimised and iterated quickly, brands can be continuously strengthened, and companies can grow rapidly.

And for companies, this is what they are happy to see. In the industrial age, companies dominated production, relying on technology to improve productivity and competitiveness through cost advantages. However, in the Internet era, on the one hand, the main gap between companies is no longer production technology due to the ease of access to information, and on the other hand, the pace of market demand may lag behind technological advances and iterations. As a result, much knowledge is disproved as soon as it is available, many technologies are surpassed just as they are upgraded, and products are immediately outdated as soon as they are released. In such circumstances, brand manufacturers are in great need of deep user involvement in the design and development process of their products, using the wisdom of users to inspire and create fuel for product development. The continuous development of smart terminals, localised location services, instant messaging technologies such as WeChat and Weibo have made it easy and efficient to collaborate in virtual communities, which can gather a large number of people with similar traits across time and space. The virtual, interactive, platform-based, and inter-temporal nature of virtual communities allows for direct and effective communication channels between companies and users, and users and users. Many consumers are even directly involved in the production process, working with companies to develop, design, and promote their brands and products. As a result, online social media has given rise to virtual communities in which consumers participate and unite production and sales, keeping com-

panies' products alive. Take the Chinese mobile phone brand Xiaomi for example, a company that pioneered the creation of mobile phone brands on the Internet. It has built a virtual community where companies and users are closely connected, also known as the Xiaomi Community, and in which an ecological environment of interdependence and interaction between companies and users has been constructed. In the Xiaomi community, brand fans can practically participate in many aspects of product development, testing, marketing, and public relations, directly deciding on product additions or deletions and the direction of future innovation. For example, the development and testing of its phones involve enthusiasts, meaning that Xiaomi's forum users and Xiaomi's internal staff test new versions of the phones at the same time. By putting itself in the shoes of its users and engaging with them in sincere dialogue, Xiaomi has given 'Mi fans' a great sense of honour and belonging, prompting them to participate more actively in the forum discussions. The enhanced interaction between companies and users, with users investing emotional capital,

increases the activity and sense of belonging of fans and fosters user loyalty. This model of research and development, with its emphasis on user involvement, has created a large number of so-called 'Mi fans,' meaning Xiaomi phone enthusiasts, and Xiaomi's products are avidly pursued by enthusiasts. In addition, Xiaomi's social interaction with the Internet has created a large number of mobile phone enthusiasts called 'Mi Fan,' who later became an important force in making Xiaomi popular on the Internet. Besides, Xiaomi actively interacted with its fans offline through events such as hometown meetings, 'popcorn' user meetings, 'Mi Fan Festival,' and theatre-style product launches. In these events, Xiaomi makes full use of media platforms such as the MIUI community and official microblogs, and Weibo to disseminate information about the events. Promote the product culture during the online promotion and registration process, and the offline interaction activities are an exchange between users and promotion of Xiaomi products. Through the combination of online and offline interaction between users and Xiaomi, the word-of-mouth marketing of Xiaomi mobile phones has been highly effective and has fostered a shared sense of product value and a strong sense of trust and reliance among fans.

4. Individuals' motives for participation in the Brands community

4.1 Utilitarian Motivations: Maximizing Customer Perceived Value

In order to be more accessible to understand what benefits individuals desire to derive from the brand community, for the later analysis of how the interests of the company and the brand member community are balanced. It is therefore crucial to identify the reasons why individuals may participate in virtual communities. Flanagin and Metzger (2001) argued that Individuals are often goal-oriented in their search for media in order to fulfil a range of core motivations. This explains well why consumers are potentially engaged in virtual communities. In other words, the satisfaction of individual members' needs remains fundamental to the sustainability of the community and its ability to generate economically meaningful activities. This also means that the community itself should be of value to the user in many ways. This section summarises three main motivations for individuals to participate in brand communities. Firstly, consumers may participate in brand communities to pursue their profit claims. As Kotler and Keller (2006) has defined the concept of 'customer perceived value', the difference between the overall customer benefit of the product or service and image that the customer receives and the overall customer cost in terms of time, effort and money invested in making a purchase decision is the customer perceived value.

4.1.1 Access to Exclusive Benefits and Functional Information

Individuals will only consider joining a brand community if they perceive that the value of participating in the community outweighs the cost. Perhaps functional information such as product information and brand discounts is the direct reason for consumers to join a community. Brand communities act as an intermediary between brands and their members and have an advantage in terms of product benefits. By becoming a member of the community, members will have greater priority in receiving information

about the brand's latest events or will be able to purchase the brand's products at a lower price than consumers who are not part of the brand's community.

Secondly, individuals may participate in branded communities out of a search for a sense of identity and belonging. McKenna and Bargh (1999) argue that most people join communities primarily to combat their feelings of isolation and to meet people who are like-minded

in order to gain peer and community support. The role of community identity in branding communities cannot be underestimated, as it is a self-centred affirmation of the ego in modern life, achieved through participation in social group activities; the construction of self-worth requires long-term interaction between members.

4.2 Identity and Belonging: Social Psychological Drivers

As in the theory of dramaturgy, where each person plays a certain role in everyday life in order not to disappoint the audience, as argued by Goffman (1959). The role of the individual in the brand community can be seen as a reflection of this theory. That is, a sense of collective identity is gained through the contribution of the community. In that they gain a sense of collective identity through their contribution to the community. Take Gymshark for example, a successful fitness apparel brand. One of the most notable success factors for this brand is the strong community it has built. This strong community has fuelled the growth of the brand. This strong community drives the growth of the brand. Compared to other brands with cumbersome user registration forms or costly entry requirements, the Gymshark brand community is relatively easy for new and existing community members alike. Furthermore, Gymshark's social media postings continue to attract new members to the community and grow the brand's fan base. Their blog is full of tips, tutorials and exercise posts filled with health and fitness related information, and many community members have gained recognition and praise from their peers by answering others' questions and providing information in the blog. At the same time, the brand uses the health and fitness-related information collected from its members as a key indicator to lay the foundation for new product innovation and development. At the same time, Gymshark has a number of popular offline brick-and-mortar shops across the UK. These feature not only special sales, but also live classes, demonstrations and appearances by Gymshark athletes. The community members interact in a real-life capacity at the events, bringing members closer together and satisfying the inner desire to meet new people. Usually, these community members are willing to wait for hours in order to get their hands on some exclusive gear and meet other Gymshark fans. Of course, the more successful these branded events are, the more the community members feel rewarded for their efforts and their value within the group.

4.3 Social Capital Accumulation

Finally, individuals may participate in brand communities in order to gain social capital. People interact with others to gain more social resources. Because perhaps it could pave the way for achieving personal goals in the future. (McKenna & Bargh, 1999). In addition, Sociologist Bourdieu (1990) argues that social capital is the sum of the social ties that individuals have and that they can

use them to gain social benefits and material resources. Against the backdrop of the rising socio-economic value of information, the social capital derived from social relationships has become increasingly important. With a large number of members in a brand community and a wealth of information resources, members can easily access the latest information about the brand through the dissemination of information in the community network. Those who actively share information gain the attention of other brand members and accumulate emotional and cultural capital, while those who receive information rely more on the community and gain access to information and communicate with members in the community to enhance their relationship with their fan base. Thus, virtual relationships built in online forums can also become real-life resources.

5. Branded community economy business models

5.1 User-Generated Influence and Cultural Campaigns

The growing maturity of the profit model is an important sign of the formation of a virtual community economy. After all, it is only with a defined profit model that there is a clear business value and a clear business value that there is a stable economic form. On the basis of these actions, the profitability model of the formation of a community economy is reflected in the following two main areas. Firstly, brands could build their influence by running their own communities to promote user-generated consumer behaviour. Take designer sportswear brand MAIA ACTIVE for example. If a single sporting connection is no longer enough to meet the spiritual needs of a community, then connecting community members and doing something meaningful is perhaps a better way to use brand culture to bring the community together. This sportswear brand's community has added 'FUN' to its name, which is akin to setting a fun and meaningful tone for community activi-

ties. They regard the city as a playground and have organised nearly 100 MAIA FUN CLUB events, bringing together tens of thousands of sporty girls to add fun to the process. For example, MAIA ACTIVE's frequent adoption events are a series of very influential and successful plans. MAIA ACTIVE and TA Shanghai Pets for Charity has launched the "Woofers Adoption Moe Doga Day", where not only could they bring their pets on site to do yoga with them, but they could also complete a yoga session with them. In addition, for the Christmas season, MAIA ACTIVE and TA Shanghai Pets will again jointly launch the "Take TA home" stray animal adoption and rescue programme to encourage adoption instead of purchase. At the same time, MAIA ACTIVE's online and offline purchases, campaign punches, and love transfers will all be converted into winter food for stray animals. Besides, MAIA ACTIVE will also recruit and use vegetarian models to shoot the brand's promotional videos and materials, so that vegetarians can actively become the brand's spokesperson and transform their personal roles within the community, while also encouraging community members to share the brand on various platforms, so that more people can get to know the brand and increase exposure and word of mouth.

Secondly, once the brand influence of a virtual community has reached a certain level, it becomes a value platform where fees can be charged for providing transactional information.

5.2 Transactional Platforms and Monetization Strategies

While the general path is the same for different types of community economy models, there are specific elements that vary in terms of how they manifest themselves and the extent to which they act, particularly at the level of community interaction, bringing about different actions. On the one hand, brands can charge fees to community members, and on the other hand, they can charge commissions to businesses. Many virtual communities, once established, often hold cross-border events to generate significant transaction fees. Essentially, virtual communities are profitable because of their members and the added value they bring. The larger the membership, the greater the value of the community and the wider the source of profit.

5.3 Metrics of Maturity: User Acquisition vs. Sustainable Profitability

Therefore, the sign of the maturity of the virtual community economy is, on the surface, the growing maturity of the profit model, but in essence, it is the growing maturity of the way virtual communities acquire and operate their users. The brand started out as a self-publisher, built a knowledge community by connecting audiences with common characteristics, ran a series of online and offline events, and successfully brought the community from virtual to reality, and achieved high profitability and high valuation, completing the metamorphosis from self-publishing to virtual community economy. The successful transformation of Luoji Siwei's business model is due in large part to the active building of the community. For example, the brand launched a branded 'Luoji Siwei Mooncake' for the Mid-Autumn Festival. The product was first distributed within the group, with a total of 100 copies of the product being pre-sold at a price of RMB 10,000 each, with members subscribing to raise a total of RMB 1 million for the project. The Luoji Siwei brand then makes public all the procedures involved in producing the mooncakes, including the financial advisory, production, procurement, sales and production processes, which members subscribe to and participate in. After the mooncakes are sold and the money is earned, a reasonable salary is paid to all members involved in the project, and 20 percent of the total profit is left for the public good, and finally, the rest of the money is split between the original shareholders. The brand calls this chain 'cloud organisation', where a project emerges and a team is formed within the community, which is 'decentralised,' but the project team forms a short-lived 'neo-centre.' When the project ends, the team is automatically disbanded. In addition, the Luoji Siwei brand has also launched a sub-answer function on its mobile APP, where group members produce and answer questions, enabling group members to serve group members. Once formed, such a branded business community not only generates a brand effect in itself, but also produces content spontaneously, forming a constantly self-renewing ecosystem.

6.Consumer and company co-production

6.1 Theoretical Framework: Value Co-Creation

It is well known that a strong consumer-brand relationship leads to positive outcomes for both parties. Customers can fulfil social needs by building and maintaining relationships within communities, while brands benefit from the loyalty and advocacy of these customers

(Algesheimer et al., 2005). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) suggest that brand communities can be seen as a tool that is used to strengthen the relationship between consumers and brands. Contemporary brands actively seek to cultivate

social connections through and around their symbolic resources, rather than simply existing as a resource for advertising or marketing. And in doing so, brands present themselves as an open space for the exchange of social and cultural meaning (Arvidsson, 2005). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) asserted that consumers form social networks in these spaces. Moreover, consumers even use the symbolic resources provided by the brand in a transformative way, reconfiguring them and the meaning of the brand to serve a wide range of collective perceptions, identities and goals (Billard, 2016). In the era of Web 2.0, the line between consumer and producer becomes blurred and consumers can also play the role of producers. Members of the brand community can also be involved in the process of developing, maintaining and transformation of brand equity and cultural capital. Particularly noteworthy is the concept of co-creation introduced by Vargo and Lusch (2004). The focus of brands is no longer on one-way marketing output to consumers, but on interacting and co-marketing with consumers to create value for both the company and the consumer (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004). In particular, the concept of co-creating the value of brand communities is pushed to the limit as brands bring together employees and consumers on a virtual platform, based on the quite same passion.

The above analysis shows that the interests of enterprises and community members have been balanced in the community. The mobile internet has promoted the emergence and development of the community economy, which is characterised by strong aggregation and fission, a focus on the dissemination of emotional values, and a self-organised communication and collaboration mechanism, which has transformed all aspects of the production, marketing and consumption system. The business model being built in the future is to design the organisational structure around the user, not around the product.

6.2 Strategic Implications for Social Business Models

The purpose of a community is not to advertise, but to build trust in each other. Social business efforts are geared towards emotional connection, attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. The essence of the social business endeavour is to get users to sincerely recommend the brand and focus on the lifetime value of the user. Instead of the traditional utilitarian market share as a strategy, the social economy is a strategic path of community share, where companies will view users as an essential part of their company's source of value and provide as many products as possible around their needs. The difference between users and competitors in the same industry is made by the difference in community share. Companies collaborate with users to create, rather than just sell products to customers. At the same time, by working deeper into the community, it is possible to continue to develop new business with existing users, rather than continuously investing in finding new customers. And, when maintaining a community, companies should ensure that each user is profitable when using the service, rather than sacrificing customer trust, for example, to ensure that each product or transaction is profitable.

6.3 Balancing Economic and Social Objectives

Use community communications to understand user needs through interactive communication and to actively engage with users on an ongoing basis, rather than using mass media to build, promote and maintain the brand and distribute the product. Moreover, take care to maintain the company's relationship with individuals such as users and partners, understanding them according to their habits and social preferences, and creating value through valuable information and interaction. A good information structure is judged not only by the need that it should be set up in a structure that takes into account the needs of its members in different directions such as self-satisfaction, community building and community economic behaviour. Moreover, a good organisation of information (e.g. Wikipedia) helps members to work together. In addition, user profiling is also used in community strategies. By user profiling we mean labelled user models abstracted from the social attributes, consumption and lifestyle habits of users. Accurate marketing comes from effective user profiling, analysing the potential users of a product so that they become the focus of attention when designing the product, and using data mining to focus on the motivations and behaviours of the target users to build intelligent recommendation systems and even personalised products or services. Through increase user engagement and satisfaction by personalising products or services to serve a specific user or group of people. Because, according to Algesheimer et al. (2005), the more an individual identifies with a brand community, the more positively it affects consumer behaviour and loyalty to the brand. If the brand community can provide an enabling environment for the emergence of consumers who are spontaneously involved

in value production. Then this group of individuals is likely to become a good partner for the company, and ideally, the needs of individual members of the brand community will be well met while the company grows. (Cova & White,2010).

7.Conclusion

This essay has explained the concepts of clan, tribe, community, brand community and discusses the value of brand communities. In traditional business models, there is a clear division of functions and roles, with a clear distinction between producers and consumers. However, in the form of digital communities, the roles of producer and consumer have changed considerably and are no longer as completely separate as they were in the past. Consumer productivity is unleashed through participation in the production process and the boundaries between producer, consumer and marketer are thus blurred. Moreover, for communities to be able to sustain and enable economically meaningful activities, the satisfaction of individual members' needs is still fundamental. This also means that the community itself needs to generate value for its users. This value can be multifaceted. For instance, individuals may be participating in a branded community to satisfy their interests, seek a sense of identity and belonging, or gain social capital. For companies, an increasingly sophisticated profit model is an important indicator of the formation of a virtual community economy. With a defined profit model, there is a clear business value, and with a clear business value, there is a stable economic form. The profit model of a company's community economy is reflected in two main aspects. Firstly, brands could build their influence by running their own communities to promote user-

generated consumer behaviour. Secondly, once the brand influence of a virtual community reaches a certain level, it becomes a value platform that can charge fees for providing transaction information. Therefore, a good brand community should not only balance the needs of its members in different directions, such as self-satisfaction, community building and community economic behaviour. Besides, it needs a good organisational model that helps members to work together. In summary, this paper argues that the interests of companies and community members are balanced in brand communities, where customers can fulfil social needs by building and maintaining relationships, and brands can profit from the loyalty and advocacy of these customers. However, for the community economy to become a sustainable and balanced new economic model, it may be more practically relevant for companies to investigate the direction of psychological mechanisms that make value co- creation between individuals more feasible.

References

- [1] Algesheimer, R., Dholakia, U. M. and Herrmann, A. (2005) 'The Social Influence of Brand Community: Evidence from European Car Clubs', *Journal of Marketing*, 69(3), pp. 19–34. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.69.3.19.66363.
- [2] Arvidsson, A. (2005) 'Brands: A critical perspective', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(2), pp. 235– 258. doi: 10.1177/1469540505053093.
- [3] Bauman, Z. (2001) *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*. Oxford, UNITED KINGDOM: Polity Press. Available at: <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/goldsmiths/detail.action?docID=1187719> [Online](Accessed: 14 April 2021).
- [4] Billard, T. J. (2016) 'Transgender communication studies: Histories, trends, and trajectories', *Journal of Communication*, 66(2), pp. E11–E13. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12224>.
- [5] Boorstin, D. J. (1973). *The Americans: The Democratic Experience*. New York: Vintage Books
- [6] Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press.
- [7] Cova, B. and Cova, V. (2002) 'Tribal marketing: The tribalisation of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing', *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(5/6), pp. 595–620. doi: 10.1108/03090560210423023.
- [8] Cova, B. and White, T. (2010) 'Counter-brand and alter-brand communities: the impact of Web 2.0 on tribal marketing approaches', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 26(3–4), pp. 256–270. doi: 10.1080/02672570903566276.
- [9] Flanagin, A. J. and Metzger, M. J. (2001) 'Internet use in the contemporary media environment', *Human Communication Research*, 27(1), pp. 153–181. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2001.tb00779.x>.
- [10] Kates, S. (2006). 'Researching brands ethnologically: An interpretive community approach'. *Handbook of qualitative research*

methods in marketing. Edited by: Belk, R. Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar. pp. 94–105.

[11] McAlexander, J. H., Schouten, J. W. and Koenig, H. F. (2002) 'Building Brand Community', *Journal of Marketing*, 66(1), pp. 38–54. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.66.1.38.18451.

[12] McKenna, K. Y. A. and Bargh, J. A. (1999) 'Causes and Consequences of Social Interaction on the Internet: A Conceptual Framework', *Media Psychology*, 1(3), pp. 249–269. doi: 10.1207/s1532785xmep0103_4.

[13] Muniz, A. M., Jr. and O'Guinn, T. C. (2001) 'Brand Community', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), pp. 412–432. doi: 10.1086/319618.

[14] Newman, D. M. and O'Brien, J. (2008) *Sociology: Exploring the Architecture of Everyday Life Readings*. Pine Forge Press.

[15] Prahalad, C. K. and Ramaswamy, V. (2004) 'Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation', *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(3), pp. 5–14. doi: 10.1002/dir.20015.

[16] Vargo, S. L. and Lusch, R. F. (2004) 'Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing', *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), pp. 1–17. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.68.1.1.24036.