

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA BASED BRAND COMMUNITIES ON BRAND COMMUNITY MARKERS AND VALUE CREATION PRACTICES IN AN APPLE (IPHONE) MOBILE

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ABSTRACT

A social media based brand community is composed of two concepts; social media and brand community that we briefly discuss. In this article, we explore whether brand communities based on social media have positive effects on the main community elements and value creation practices in the communities. For this purpose, the users of Apple (Iphone) cell phones in Shiraz, Iran are considered as the statistical society which due to the unlimited statistical society and lack of access to all of them, samples included 196 people have been selected randomly and studied in the fall 2012 by using the standard questionnaire of the researcher Laroch et al., (2012). On the other hand, in order to discuss the relationship between the research variables the Pierson Correlation and for the test of research hypotheses the path analysis are used to evaluate the structure of the recommended framework. In order to do so SPSS AMOS 16.0 software is used. This research has about fifteen hypotheses with the reliability of %95. All of the hypotheses were accepted.

KEYWORDS: Brand community, Social media, Value creation practices, Community markers

Learning about organizing and facilitating about brand communities, series of relationships among people admiring a brand (Munizz & O’Guinn., 2001), have greatly interested marketers (e.g., McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009; Zhou, Zhang, Su, & Zhou, 2011). According to Laroch, et al., (2012) the advantages of brand communities are the reasons why marketers are interested in them. These advantages include learning customer perceptions of new product offerings and competitive actions, maximizing opportunities to attract and collaborate closely with highly loyal consumers of the brand (Franke & Shah, 2003; McAlexander et al., 2002), influencing members’ evaluations and actions (Muniz & Schau, 2005), rapidly disseminating information (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003; Jin, Cheung, Lee, & Chen, 2009), and most importantly gaining a “Holy Grail” of loyal customers (McAlexander et al., 2002). Many companies are also tempted to participate in such communities due to the dramatic popularity and inherent advantages of easy access, low cost, high communication, and efficiency of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Several companies are now using social networking sites to create and develop brand communities by taking advantage of the potentials of social media based brand communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010;

Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Although some research have been conducted on offline brand communities, few studies have been done to investigate social media based brand communities. As these brand communities are becoming more popular and significant, having more insights about them is vital for both marketers and researchers (Laroch, et al. 2012). Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) found evidence of brand communities in both face-to-face and computer-mediated environments. The traditional markers of community (i.e., shared consciousness, shared rituals and traditions, and obligations to society) were also found to be present within brand communities. In another study, Schou (2009) identified four groups of practices creating value in brand communities. Building on these studies, we extend the concept of Apple’s brand communities on Iphone cell phones to social media and find evidence of the three community markers in brand communities established on social media websites. Then we show how these communities create value

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND THE HYPOTHESES

Social media based brand communities

A social media based brand community is composed of two concepts; social media and brand

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community that we briefly discuss. There are different definitions for social media, but we rely on Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) who state: "a group of internet based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and it allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content." This definition implies that the content is not consumed by people passively. Instead, it is produced, shared and consumed by users actively generating content (UGC). There are many researches focusing on the importance of UGC in different contexts. There are many different platforms for social media such as social networking, text messaging, photo sharing, wikis, weblogs, and discussion forums (Harris, 2009).

However, with the popularity of social media websites, several companies are using social networking sites to support the creation of brand communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Brands such as Jeep with famous offline brand communities (Schau et al., 2009) try to connect with their customers and enhance their brand communities on social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook. These sites provide the user with a sense of freedom and allow them to converse in various languages, topics and issues, which foster an environment that allows for the free flow of information (M. Laroche et al. 2012). People join them and other such sites and use words, videos, pictures, and avatars to stay in touch with their friends, make new friends, make plans with them, have fun and flirt with them, exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends, play games, create a little high talk and a lot of idle talks (Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Rheingold, 1991).

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 412) define a brand community as a "specialized, none-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand." The context of these communities is consumption of a good or a service. Like every other community, a brand community is made up of its entities including its members, their relationships and the sharing of essential resources either emotional or material. However, McAlexander et al. (2002, p. 38) argue that the most important thing being shared in a brand community is the "creation and negotiation of meaning." Other benefits of brand communities are facilitating information sharing, cementing the history and

the culture of a brand, providing assistance to consumers, and positively influencing brand loyalty (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). According to the social media and brand community literatures, people have their own incentives to join. One essential psychological need is to feel socially connected (Sarason, 1974); therefore, joining social media and connecting with people fulfills a need for belongingness (Gangadharbhatla, 2008; Tardini & Cantoni, 2005). Desire for social interaction is stated as one of the motivations of consumers to engage in content generation activities in online environments (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Shopping, researching, entertainment and making money are some other purposes of contributing in social media (Zhou, Zhang, Chenting, & Zhou, 2011a). In contrast with researchers who claim that the lack of proximity and physical co-presence inherent in social media environments results in weak ties (Constant, Sproull, & Kiesler, 1996; Granovetter, 1973), others showed that these ties could bring people together and encourage members to have deep levels of engagement in society (Tardini & Cantoni, 2005; Wellman, 1997). People also join brand communities to fulfill their need to be identified with groups or symbols they wish to associate with, or that are desirable to them (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Schembri, Merrilees, & Kristiansen, 2010). Furthermore, brand communities support their members in terms of sharing necessary information from various sources (Szmigin & Reppel, 2001) and emphasizing different values (Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009). Brand communities provide opportunities for being in touch with highly devoted customers (Anderson, 2005), for communicating effectively with other customers and obtaining valuable information from them (Von Hippel, 2005), and for co-creating value from closely interacting with other customers (Schau et al., 2009). The advantages of social media as a highly efficient communication and distribution channel (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), as a powerful means of influencing customer perceptions and behavior (Williams & Cothrell, 2000), and of bringing together different/likeminded people (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997; Wellman & Gulia, 1999) are motivating brand managers to participate in social media. With the advancement of technology, the previously geographically bounded concept of brand communities is now transcending geography (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Regarding the motivations for joining social media and brand communities for both people and brand managers,

the concepts of social media and brand communities have become closer to each other. The intersection of brand communities and social media leads to a concept that we call social media based brand community (Laroche, et al. 2012). Our goal is to show how these brand communities could affect on brand community markers and value creation practices.

Effects of social media based brand community on community

Communalities Community has been a topic of debate among social scientists and philosophers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century and contemporary contributors (Dewey, 1927; Durkheim [1893] 1933; Lasch, 1991). After a review of the sociology literature, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) identify three core components or markers of a community: shared consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility or obligations to society.

Shared consciousness of kind

For Gusfield (1978), one important element in a community is "consciousness of kind" which is the shared intrinsic connection felt among community members. Weber (1978) describes it as a shared knowing of belonging. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) found that members of a community felt a strong connection with one another and they termed it as "they sort of know each other" even if they have never met. This is the central facet of a brand community. They found that through processes of legitimacy and oppositional brand loyalty members of a brand community perpetuate their consciousness of kind. The former refers to the process of differentiating between the true members of a community and those who are not, and the latter refers to the process through which members of a brand community identify what the brand is not and who the brand community members are not. These notions are also supported by other researchers (Englis & Solomon, 1997; Wilk, 1996).

McAlexander et al. (2002) and Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) found evidence of shared consciousness in brand communities. More importantly, these feelings of oneness exceed geographical boundaries which show that members felt belongingness to a large imagined community. Especially the role of computer-mediated communications such as the World Wide Web is very important (Laroche et al., 2012).

Shared rituals and traditions

These are one of the factors which unite the members of a community and represent vital social processes that bring and keep them together (Laroche et al., 2012). This helps the meaning of the community be transmitted within and beyond the community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Rituals and traditions are a symbolic form of communication that, owing to the satisfaction that members of the community experience through its repetition, is acted out over time in a systematic fashion. Through their special meaning and their repetitive nature, rituals contribute significantly to the establishment and preservation of a community's collective sense of self, which plays a role in building community identity (Laroche et al., 2012). Rituals stabilize this identity by clarifying expected roles, delineating boundaries within and without community, and defining rules so that members know that "this is the way our community is" (Wolin & Bennett, 1984).

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) and McAlexander et al. (2002) found shared rituals and traditions between brand community members and marketers both in computer mediated environments and in face-to-face contexts. Community members reinforce culture, history, and rituals of the community through processes of celebration of brand history, storytelling, advertising, and shared experiences. Also, most virtual communities create and use shared conventions and language (e.g., jargon, emoticons, or acronyms), maintain social roles, establish boundaries, enact rituals, show commitment to communal goals, and follow norms of interaction (Laroche et al. 2012).

Moral responsibilities/obligations to society

This community marker is a felt sense of duty or obligation to the community as a whole as well as to its members (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Moral responsibility has two main functions in communities which make it very important. First it supports community survival through reasoning and recognizing what is right and what is wrong in the community, which results in integrating and retaining members. Second, moral responsibility makes members seek out help from each other in their consumption behavior by disseminating information (M. Laroche et al. 2012). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) and McAlexander et al. (2002) found that moral responsibility manifested itself in their communities. Furthermore, reasoning and disseminating information are highly

significant in computer mediated environments in which capabilities of media support sharing information. As Rheingold (1991) stated people use the new technology to do what they always did.

H1a. Social media based brand community positively influences on consciousness of kind among community members.

H1b. Social media based brand community positively influences on shared rituals and Traditions.

H1c. Social media based brand community positively influences on sense of moral Responsibility.

Value creation practices

A new stream in the literature regards customers not as mere recipients of the products and values of the firm but as co-creators of value, competitive strategy and the firm's innovation processes (Franke & Piller, 2004; Schau et al., 2009). With a meta-analysis, Schau et al. (2009) identified four categories of practices through which customers co-create value in brand communities: social networking, impression management, community engagement, and brand use. They assert that people in brand communities are involved in such value creation practices that work together both to enhance the value people realize and to promote the collective health and welfare of social bodies centered on the brands (Laroche et al., 2012).

Social networking practices

They focus on creating, enhancing, and sustaining ties among brand community members. Welcoming, empathizing and governing are different social networking practices, which enhance similarities among members and homogeneity of brand communities (Schau et al., 2009). We believe social networking practices to be fostered by the community markers (i.e., shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and obligations to society). Schau et al. (2009) bring exactly the same example (field note) for supporting social networking practices that Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) brought for supporting shared consciousness. This implies that these concepts are highly related; moreover, in our context, social media could foster such practices as welcoming, empathizing and governing. However, there is no empirical support for it (Laroche et al., 2012).

H2a. Social networking practices are positively influenced by the shared consciousness of kind.

H2b. Social networking practices are positively influenced by the shared rituals and traditions.

H2c. Social networking practices are positively influenced by the sense of moral obligations of members of the community.

Community engagement practices

These reinforce members' escalating engagement with the brand community (Schau et al., 2009). Laroche et al., (2012) believe the concept of engagement goes beyond community participation; it is the process of working collaboratively with relevant partners who share common goals and interests. Although some researchers believe that the Internet, the World Wide Web and ,in general, the new technologies make people increasingly detached from meaningful social relationships and less likely to engage the community as they spend more time online (Davis, 2001; Gackebach, 1998; Turkle, 1996), others reject this idea and say that "being wired" which they refer to as being connected online has the potential to foster and build social associations and encourage community building (Dertouros, 1997). In particular, the individuals who use internet communities to explore interests and gather data are found to be more, rather than less, socially engaged (Shah, Holbert, & Kwak, 1999). Laroche et al., (2012) also believe that communities in the context of social media have the capability to foster engagement.

H3a. Community engagement practices are positively influenced by the shared consciousness of kind.

H3b. Community engagement practices are positively influenced by the shared rituals and traditions.

H3c. Community engagement practices are positively influenced by the sense of moral obligations of members of the community.

Impression management practices

They are "activities that have an external, outward focus on creating favorable impressions of the brand, brand enthusiasts and brand community in the social university beyond the brand community" (Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). It includes practices such as evangelizing and justifying through which customers preach the brand, share good news about it and bring some arguments to encourage others to use the brand. Online communities foster impressionable facts about the brand through word-of-mouth communications and by sharing personal

experiences (Laroche et al., 2012). Consumers engage in these activities for altruistic nature or to attain higher status (Dichter, 1966; Gatignon & Robertson, 1986), but Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, and Wilner (2010) found that these intentions are more complex. Whatever their motivation, members of a community are involved in managing impressions activities (Laroche et al., 2012).

Laroche et al., (2012) believe that these activities are not only observable in social media communities, but are enhanced by the capabilities of social media.

H4a. Impression management practices are positively influenced by the shared consciousness of kind.

H4b. Impression management practices are positively influenced by the shared rituals and traditions.

H4c. Impression management practices are positively influenced by the sense of moral obligations of members of the community.

Brand use practices

This relates to the member’s tendency to help other members with newer, improved and enhanced ways to use the focal brand (Laroche et al., 2012). These basically include the information given by one member to another with regards to customizing the product for better applicability to their needs. They also relate to feelings of one member towards helping or assisting other members who are relatively new to the community. Brand use practices include grooming, customizing, and commoditizing (Laroche et al., 2012). All these activities result in enhanced uses of the focal brand (Schau et al., 2009). Social media could foster these activities through keeping in touch with brand devotees and other members and facilitating their information and resource sharing (Laroche et al., 2012). In addition to these explanations

about value creation practices, Laroche et al., (2012) believe that brand community markers directly affect value creation practices within the brand community. Moreover, regarding the role of social media in fostering and facilitating communication, its role in information access and networking, the embeddedness of such brand communities in social media contexts results in the enhancement of value creation practices (Laroche et al., 2012). The stronger the feelings of shared consciousness, shared rituals and traditions and obligations to society, the more members of a community and the company feel united, close to each other and motivated which enhance collaborative value creation practices. It was also shown that shared consciousness enhances interpersonal ties in a group and increases the willingness to share information and resources with other members, to provide support and to commit to goals identified by the group (Walther, 1996; Wellman, 1999). Thus, we hypothesize that community markers positively affect value creation practices in the context of social media based brand communities:

H5a. Brand use practices are positively influenced by the shared consciousness of kind.

H5b. Brand use practices are positively influenced by the shared rituals and traditions

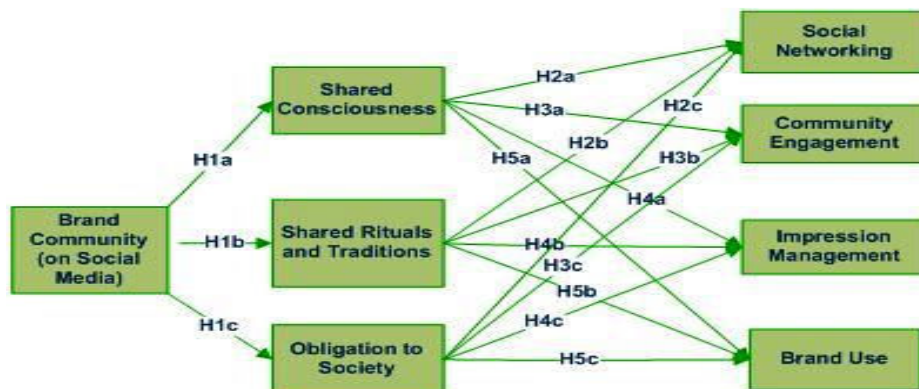
H5c. Brand use practices are positively influenced by the sense of moral obligations of members of the community.

These hypotheses are depicted in Fig. 1, which provides the model to be tested.

Fig. 1 shows the complete model of how brand community affects on brand community markers and value creation practices.

The effects of brand community

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of laroch et al, (2012)



METHOD

Subjects and procedure

Following Laroch et al., (2012), we test the model in the context of social media based brand communities. The target population is all members of Apple (Iphone) communities on social networking websites. We used the screening condition that respondents had to be members of these brands communities. The study aims to investigate the effects of these communities on members, regardless of a specific product, brand or social media. The survey was conducted as an interview and questionnaires were completed by the researcher to ensure the completeness of data. The survey was conducted in fall 2012 in Shiraz, Iran. All participants of the present study were the users of Apple (Iphone) cell phones. Considering the fact that there was no data in this field, the statistical society was considered unlimited and estimated as follows:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \alpha/2 \times p(1-p)}{\varepsilon^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.07)^2} \cong 196$$

An analyzable sample of 196 respondents, the sample included %57.5 males and % 42.3 females, the age range varied between 18 and 55.

Survey instrument development (Measures)

The standardized questioner of Laroch et al., (2012) including 30 questions .The questionnaire was constructed using 5-point Likert items. The items were organized in 8 sections, each section measuring one variable. A pretest with 30 respondents was conducted to validate the constructs. . The Cronbach's alpha was 0.904.

Brand community

As we measured it in a social media context, we first asked respondents to answer the items based on their experiences with brand communities on social networking sites of which they were members. A set of six items on a 5-point Likert scale measured this construct (Srinivasan, Anderson, & Ponnayolu, 2002). Based on the validity of this scale, we adopted it with some modifications to suit our context. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.610.

Shared consciousness, shared rituals and traditions, and obligations to society

The scales were derived from the definitions given by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) and consisted of two

items each. The items were tested in a three factor confirmatory model and an acceptable fit was obtained, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.602, 0.750 and 0.655 respectively.

Social networking

Eight 5-point Likert items measured this construct. The scale was developed for use with an online store (Hsieh, Chiu, & Chiang 2005). However, since the scale measures the same construct as in the original study, it was used with a slight modification. The scale reliability is 0.720.

Community engagement

Four 5-point Likert items measured this construct. The items measured the degree to which a person is involved with a community of brand users due to intrinsic benefits of the activity (Algesheimer et al., 2005). The scale reliability of is 0.704.

Brand use

Three 5-point Likert-type statements measured the degree to which a member of a community gets useful information about the brand's use. The items were constructed from the definition of brand use practices given by Schau et al. (2009). The Cronbach's alpha is 0.687

Impression management

It is derived from the definition given by Schau et al. (2009). The scale consists of three 5-point Likert items. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.729.

RESULTS

In order to assess the validity of the measures, we used path analysis, using SPSS Amos 16.0. The chi-square for this model is significant ($\chi^2 /df = 2.696$). However, since the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size, we also assessed additional fit indices. The comparative fit indices (CFI), The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI) of this model are 0.859, 0.845, and 0.622 respectively. We also assessed the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), which assesses fit incorporates a penalty for lack of parsimony; the RMSEA of this model is 0.087 indicating a good fit to the population. Although the achieved Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is a bit lower than the acceptable range (>1.96), the other meaningful indices obtained support our model using SPSS AMOS

16.0. Figures 1 and 2 display the structural model for the suggested framework. The paths whose CR exceed 1.96 support the hypotheses.

Discriminate validity

Discriminate validity is achieved when the correlations between the constructs differ significantly from 1 or when chi-square difference tests indicate that two constructs are not perfectly correlated. As a test of discriminate validity, the correlations among the latent variables were checked to determine if they are significantly different from Table 2 show the results for the discriminate validity, confirming the validity of all constructs.

The relationship between variables and hypotheses analysis

We found strong support for the effects of social media based brand communities on the three markers of community, i.e., shared consciousness, shared rituals and traditions, and obligations to society. The CR values are 5.272, 5.214 and 6.035. All of these relationships are significant at the CR 1.96, providing support for H1a, H1b and H1c. Table 2 summarizes these and other results.

Shared consciousness has a significant effect on value creation practices; hypothesized in H2a, H3a, H4a and H5a. We found support for all these hypotheses at CR> 1.96. Shared consciousness has a significant effect on social networking (CR=5.827, CR>1.96), supporting H2a. It has a positive significant effect on community engagement, impression management and brand use practices with CR= 5.618, CR= 3.080 and CR=3.796.

The effect of shared rituals and traditions is significant on social networking (CR=3.608, CR>1.96), supporting H2b. It has a positive significant effect on community engagement with CR=4.939, and impressions management practices with CR=3.816 respectively, which support H3b and H4b. The effect of shared rituals and traditions on brand use (H5b) is supported (CR=3.432).

Obligations to society has significant positive influences on all the four constructs of value creation practices (social networking, community engagement, brand use practices, and impressions management), supporting H2c, H3c, H4c and H5c with significant CR of 5.414, 6.374, 3.063 and 2.653.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and reliability statistics for construct of measures.

Constructs	No. of items	Apple		
		Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's α
Social media brand community	6	2.00	0.612	0.610
Social networking	8	2.25	0.650	0.720
Community engagement	4	2.50	0.981	0.704
Impression management	3	3.00	1.031	0.729
Brand use practices	3	2.00	0.886	0.687
Shared consciousness	2	2.50	0.786	0.602
Obligations to society	2	2.33	0.711	0.750
Rituals and traditions	2	2.33	0.754	0.665

Table 2: Regression Weights: (APPLE - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
SC	<---	OB	.543	.103	5.272	***	
TT	<---	OB	.565	.108	5.214	***	
OBCO	<---	OB	.552	.091	6.035	***	
SN	<---	SC	.210	.036	5.827	***	
CE	<---	SC	.233	.041	5.618	***	
IM	<---	SC	.137	.044	3.080	.002	
BU	<---	SC	.179	.047	3.796	***	
SN	<---	TT	.124	.034	3.608	***	
CE	<---	TT	.194	.039	4.939	***	
IM	<---	TT	.161	.042	3.816	***	
BU	<---	TT	.154	.045	3.432	***	
CE	<---	OBOC	.293	.046	6.374	***	
IM	<---	OBOC	.151	.049	3.063	.002	
BU	<---	OBOC	.139	.052	2.653	.008	

Figure 2: Structural Apple Model

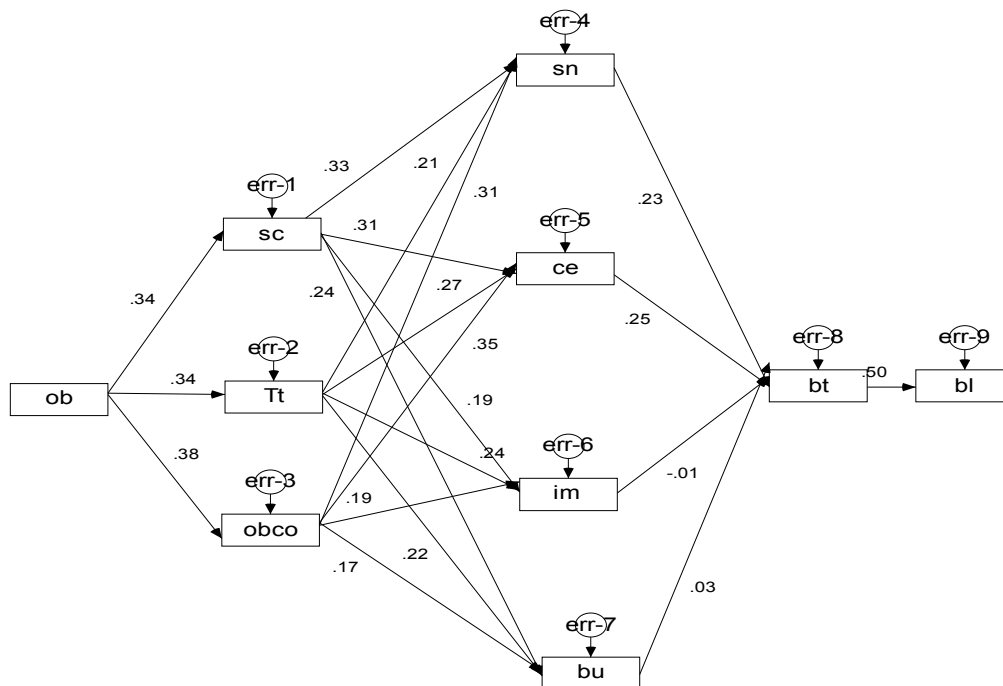


Table 3: Correlation matrix for Apple community

	OBSOC	SC	TT	OB	SN	CE	BU	IM
OBSOC	1.00							
SC	0.511	1.00						
TT	0.339	0.509	1.00					
OB	0.336	0.445	0.505	1.00				
SN	0.381	0.455	0.316	0.302	1.00			
CE	0.436	0.563	0.523	0.501	0.499	1.00		
BU	0.272	0.372	0.366	0.386	0.318	0.477	1.00	
IM	0.330	0.538	0.390	0.377	0.300	0.470	0.405	1.00

Limitations and future research

We acknowledge the limitations of this research and accordingly propose new avenues for research. First, investigating other brand types and cultures, the context of the study, may affect the results. One avenue for research is to investigate the effects of other brand communities or brand types and other cultures on brand community markers and value creation practices. Second, as Larch et al, (2012) mentioned the effects of value creation practice evolve over time; since the brand type investigated in this research (Apple) are almost new in the context of study, the results may differ as time passes. Therefore, future research may consider the differences of such effects over time.

CONCLUSION

This article, demonstrated the effects of Apple online brand communities on the underlying elements and practices in communities. To sum up briefly, our findings echoes the optimism of brand community researchers such as McAlexander et al. (2002), Muniz and O’Guinn (2001), Algesheimer et al. (2005) and laroch et al., (2012). As Laroch et al., (2012) stated social media based brand communities offer brand owners the ability to enhance value and feelings of community among members. Marketers may do well to take advantage of the opportunities that such brand communities present.

Appendix A. Summary of measures

Brand community

- Ob1 – The community allows direct user input or posting to site
- Ob2 – Customers share experiences about products online with other customers
- Ob3 – The community is useful for gathering various information about the product or the brand
- Ob4 – The members of this community benefit from the community
- Ob5 – The members share a common bond with other members of the community.
- Ob6 – The members are strongly affiliated with other members

Social networking

- Sn1 – The brand community keeps in touch with me with notifications
- Sn2 – At least some of members of my community know me
- Sn3 – I received special treatment after I became a member
- Sn4 – The community provides with me product information
- Sn5- The community is concerned with my needs.
- Sn6 – The community collects my opinions about the services/product

Sn7 – The community recognizes special occasions and sends me greetings.

Sn8 – I share my opinions on the community

Shared consciousnesses

Sc1 – An intrinsic connection is felt among the members

Sc2 – A general sense of difference exists from members who are NOT in your community

Rituals and traditions

Tt1 – I recollect vital social traditions or rituals specific to the brand community

Tt2 – I think these traditions contribute towards a specific culture of the community

Obligations to society

Obcoc1 – The members of the community assist/advice other members of the same community in the proper use of the brand

Obsoc2 – The community engages in integrating and retaining members.

Community engagement

Ce1- I benefit from following the community's rules.

Ce2 – I am motivated to participate in the activities because I feel good afterwards or because I like it

Ce3 – I am motivated to participate in the community's activities because I am able to support other members.

Ce4 – I am motivated to participate in the community's activities because I am able to reach personal goals.

Impression management

Im1 – Community encourages discussions related to company, brand or the product

Im2 – Members actively engage in discussions in order to justify their reasons for their affinity towards the brand

Im3 – Members actively defend/refute the actions of the company's management

Brand use

Bu1 – Members of my community share useful tips about better uses of the product or brand

Bu2 – Members of my community share their experiences about their successful and unsuccessful attempts at customization of the product

Bu3 – Members of my community monitor and foster the activities deemed to help community building

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