




Consumer-Centered Marketing



Consumer-brand relationships: motivational antecedents for participation in online brand communities and the consequences for brands and online brand communities, a cross-cultural perspective.

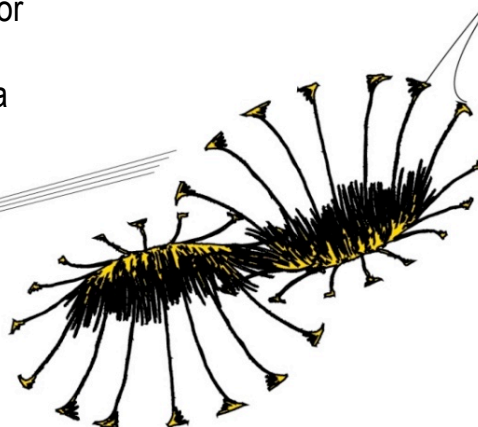
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ABSTRACT

Brand communities are a more common platform for brands to interact with active consumer, and for consumers to interact with fellow community members. Active community members are seen as one of the most committed and loyal consumers of brand. Moreover, these members could facilitate the brand with important information like innovative ideas and product changes. From a marketing perspective it is important to understand how to set up a successful brand community, to profit from the benefits it produces. Especially for global brands it is important to understand how to acquire community members with different cultural backgrounds, and to assure their engagement with the community. The aim of this research was to investigate how differences in cultural backgrounds (i.e. individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance) as moderator would affect the influence of motives to engage and participate in online brand communities (i.e. informative motive, social, status enhancement, entertainment) on the brand consequences (brand loyalty and brand attitude) and community related consequences (i.e. community credibility, community, identification, and community involvement). An online questionnaire was conducted among brand community members, while non-members were primed with a scenario. Questionnaires were distributed on existing global brand communities, resulting in a geographically diverse sample. The findings show a significant influence of community credibility and community involvement on the brand consequences. Moreover, some of the motivations are significant predictors for brand consequences and community consequences, of which social and entertainment elicit the most interactions with the consequences. However, little significant evidence was found for the influence of cultural values on the interactions. Overall, the results highlight the relevance of the recognition of the differences in cultural values while building or maintaining a brand community, and the importance of cross-cultural research in brand communities.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive market with increasing media exposure, growth, and technological developments, the creation and maintenance of consumer-brand relations is more important than ever. The focus of recent studies have shifted attention from branding products and producers to services, consumer response, and relations, therefore gaining understanding on how to create brand value (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). While the consumer can benefit from building and maintaining brand-consumer relationships by achieving social need and satisfaction, the brand can benefit from the advocacy and loyalty of these consumers (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Hermann, 2004; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). The creation of an online brand community is one way to create such strong brand-consumer relations, and is considered the strongest type of relationship a brand can have with its customers (Sung, Kim, Kwon, & Moon, 2010).

Although researchers show interest in the motivations and characteristics of brand community participation, and brand community relations (Algesheimer, et al., 2004; McAlexander, et al., 2002; Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001), its relevance (e.g. consequences and effects) for consumption and consumer behaviour are rarely mentioned.

There are several benefits for brands to create brand-community relations and have a dedicated and committed brand community. First, since brand community members are more committed to the brand, the repurchase rates are higher among these consumers (Duffy, 1999). Longevity research by McAlexander et al. (2002) confirm this outcome on a long-term scale. Since brand community members often offer each other social support, the consumers can create interpersonal bonds with each other. When brands facilitate this interpersonal bond between consumers within the community, this is likely to reciprocate with increased appreciation for the brand. This also enhances the loyalty, brand attitude and brand attachment, which will consequently lead to members actively rejecting competitors' brands (Algesheimer, et al., 2004; Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). Second, brands can benefit from brand communities due to the stronger foundation created by older members and their consumer loyalty for the brand. Additionally, these members can attract potential other members as well. Third, brand community participants can also assist important valuable insights in the development and improvement of (new) product or service designs (Algesheimer, et al., 2004).

Nowadays, more people use the Internet to participate in online brand communities, and to interact with the members than to make online purchases. It is expected that the growth of online brand community memberships will increase even

more in the nearby future (Horrigan, 2001). Therefore, online brand community research is gaining more attention from researchers. In a research on the effects of brand communities on brand reputation, Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009) found that consumers are more influenced by fellow consumers (or community members) than by what the product (or service) producers actually propose as characteristics for the brand. Hence, brand communities could be used to enhance brand awareness through word-of-mouth (Doran, 2002). Therefore it is important to understand what drives consumers to engage and participate in brand communities, and what the consequences of brand community participation are.

However, often missing from these insights is the effects of cultural values on brand consequences (Schroeder, 2009). Cultural values are an important factor to consider in brand-consumer relationship research. These values are argued to be excellent arguments for distinguishing the global market, due to the fact that cultural values are the prime determinants of consumers' attitude, lifestyle, and behaviour (Jain, 1989). To our knowledge there is no prior empirical cross-cultural research been conducted about the influence of cultures on the motivation to participate in brand communities in combination with brand- and community consequences. Furthermore, the limited available outcomes of cross-cultural research on brand communities lead to conflicting results, and are therefore not generalizable. Moreover, very little research on brand community participation has been conducted outside western societies, while outcomes of research on participation in brand communities in one society may lead to different outcomes in another society (Tsai, Huang, & Chiu, 2012). In fact, several scholars address the value of cross-cultural research, such as Hofstede (1984) who states that Asian cultures are more collectively oriented compared to western countries, which are more individualistically oriented. For example, as Atuahene-Gima and Li (2002) observed, many western business attempting to enter the Asian markets fail because managers assume that everyone responds the similar to marketing programs. This information illustrates the importance of cross-cultural research in this field.

The present study will focus on the influence of cultural differences on the motivation to participate in online brand communities, and its influence on community- and brand related consequences. The following chapters will review the arguments for this research question and the hypotheses, after which the research method will be discussed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Brand communities

According to McAlexander et al. (2002) a community is “made up by its member entities and the relationship among them” (p. 38). Communities are identified based on the commonality or identification among members, whether an occupation, neighbourhood, or devotion to a brand. Using communities, people share resources that can be material, cognitive or emotional in nature. The one thing that is always shared in communities is the creation and negotiation of meaning.

Communities that base their primary basis of identification on a brand or consumption activities are called consumption communities. McAlexander et al. (2002) mentions that these consumption communities are invisible. These communities become visible when members actively interact with each other and so become brand communities. Brand communities are defined as “Social entities that reflect the situated embeddedness of brands in the day-to-day lives of consumers and the ways in which brands connect consumer to brand, and consumer to consumer” (Muniz Jr & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 418). A brand community is specialized because it centres around a brand, branded good or service, and is non-geographically bound because communities evolved from a “place” to a shared identity. According to Muniz Jr and O’Guinn (2001), the concept of brand communities was already important in research by sociologists decades ago. Nowadays brand communities remain quite important for brands. However, since the revolution of the Internet as a communication media, more and more consumers find possibilities for communication exchange without geographical boundaries (Woisetschlager, Hartleb, & Blut, 2008). Individuals with a shared passion for a brand, product or service good, and with similar habits, norms and values, find more and more ways to form groups around brands.

A literature review by Muniz Jr and O’Guinn (2001) reveals three core community components. Which are the core characteristics of all types of communities.

1. The first characteristic (which is considered the most important) is **consciousness of kind**, which means “the intrinsic connection that members feel toward one another, and the collective sense of difference from others not in the community” (Muniz Jr & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413). This feeling elicits a collective feeling with the brand and other community members. The consciousness of kind in a virtual setting (i.e. online brand communities) distinguishes from the offline setting (e.g. community events, brandfest events), due to the social ties and communal

relationships with community members. In general the consciousness of kind in a virtual setting is lower than in a non-virtual setting, but can be enhanced by the involvement of genuine relationships and feelings of community

2. The second community characteristic is **shared rituals and traditions**, and is interpreted as “perpetuate the community’s shared history, culture and consciousness” (Muniz Jr & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413). According to Schau and Muniz Jr (2002) the density and intensity of rituals and traditions varies between brand communities, depending on the age of the brand. Researchers agree that members who participate in an offline community are faster and more deeply acquainted with the rituals and traditions of the community members who only observe (Madupu & Cooley, 2010a). Members who want to participate in an online community first have to observe before understanding the customs and rituals, after which the members have to interact with the group and participate to acquaint themselves with these rituals.
3. The third and final characteristic of communities is the **sense of moral responsibility**, which is “a felt sense of duty or obligation to the community as a whole, and to its individual members” (Muniz Jr & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413). According to Madupu and Cooley (2010a) this sense of duty can manifest itself in two ways: First, the integration and maintenance of new members, and second, the assistance of new members in the proper use of the brand or product. McAlexander et al. (2002) suggest that this characteristic was absent for many members prior to entering the brand community. By entering and participating in the community members acquire a sense of moral responsibility.

These characteristics are mentioned by Muniz Jr and O’Guinn (2001) as characteristics of brand communities, while Madupu and Cooley (2010a) describe these as community consequences. Nevertheless, these characteristics are considered essential for community members.

As mentioned before, brand communities include social relationships around a branded good or service. McAlexander et al. (2002) expanded the brand-consumer-consumer triad developed by Muniz Jr and O’Guinn (2001) by adding two more relations: The consumer’s relation with the branded possessions and the marketing agents. According to these researchers, brand communities nowadays have a focal consumer, instead of a focal brand. This focal consumer has relations with the brand, other consumers, the product, and the marketers (figure 1). Therefore, the consumer is the centre of brand community instead of the brand itself. This caused a shift of perspective,

from the brand-centric perspective as proposed by Muniz Jr and O'Guinn (2001), to a consumer-centric perspective as proposed by McAlexander et al. (2002), leading to a broader view of brand communities.

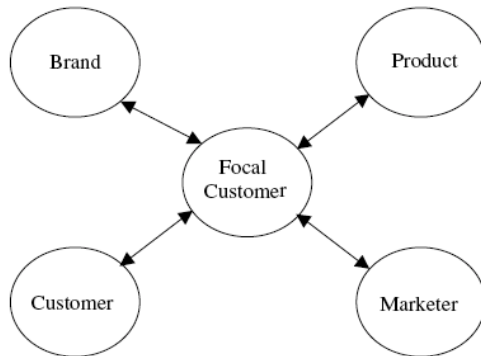


Figure 1. Customer-Centric model of brand community. From: "Building brand community", by McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig (2002). *Journal of Marketing*, 66, 2, 38-54.

Distinctions between social networks and brand communities

Although social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter could be considered as a type of brand community since both have overlapping concepts, there are clear differences that distinguish the two. The main difference is the thematic orientation. In a social network the thematic orientation is wide and general, while in a brand community it is narrow and focused. Furthermore, social networks lack the presence of the three community commonalities, and are more commercially oriented compared to brand communities. Moreover, the strength of ties and the involvement between the members also differ. The ties are stronger between members of brand communities compared to the tie between members of social networks. Finally, brand community members are generally more involved in the brand and the community compared to members of social networks (Zaglia, 2012).

Consumer- and marketer generated brand communities

In general, brand communities can be classified in two different types, based on the initiator and sponsor of the community: Consumer generated brand communities (CGBC) and Marketer generated brand communities (MGBC) (Sung, et al., 2010). CGBCs are build and maintained by enthusiastic consumers who are eager to exchange information and create and maintain relationships with fellow consumers. In contrast, MGBCs are build and maintained by marketers on behalf of the brand, in order to initiate relationships with current and potential consumers of the brand.

BRAND RELATED CONSEQUENCES

This section will elaborate on the brand consequences used in this research. According to Algesheimer et al. (2004) and Muñiz and Schau (2007) brand consequences are outcomes of community member engagement to the brand. Furthermore, these consequences are important outcomes for brand intending to establish or maintain brand communities. The consequences are elaborated by Woisetschlager et al. (2008) and contain several important brand related effects of brand community engagement: Word-of-mouth, brand attitude, and brand loyalty. Many researchers investigated the influence of motivational aspects, community commitment and community consequences on some of these brand consequences. However, often these researchers used solely brand loyalty or word-of-mouth activities. The research did not yet investigate other brand related consequences such as brand attitude, and did not include the influence of cultural differences in these brand consequences (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Fong & Burton, 2008; Jang, Olfman, Ko, Koh, & Kim, 2008; Shang, Chen, & Liao, 2006).

Brand attitude

In branding research, there is a variety of definitions for brand attitude. In the present study, brand attitude is defined as “the perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller, 1993) (p. 3). Several studies agree that positive community engagement can enhance brand attitude (Algesheimer, et al., 2004; Muñiz & Schau, 2007). This effect is mainly caused by consumer empowerment and consumer-generated content (Muñiz & Schau, 2007). These activities may include information sharing or cooperative development of new and improved brand creations.

Consumer engagement in communities can result in positive emotions towards the brand (Muñiz & Schau, 2007). However, Muñiz and Schau (2007) among others assume a positive effect, there still remains a lack of knowledge and significant data that proves this effect. Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009) agree with this statement by mentioning the influence of brand communities on brand attitude and brand reputation. However, this influence is becoming more challenging for brand managers. Brand managers try to influence the perceived brand attitude of the community members, but are often challenged due to their limited control. A new era arises for brand managers, due to the fact that online community members are more involved than regular members. New innovative ideas need to be developed to remain (or generate) more control over the perceived brand attitude through brand communities (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009).

Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is interpreted by Woisetschlager et al. (2008) as a deep commitment or attachment to a brand or service, or the desire to buy a certain product or service in favour of the equivalent from competing brands. Since repeated purchases may also indicate the temporary acceptance of a brand, a distinction is made in attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty (Shang, et al., 2006). Behavioural loyalty is the repeatedly purchasing of a brand, and attitudinal loyalty, assumed to be more stable than behavioural loyalty, represents consumers' commitment to the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Algesheimer et al. (2004) mentioned that a stronger identification and commitment to the brand leads to a stronger member constancy (loyalty) and intentions to recommend the brand or service to others (word-of-mouth). According to Oliver (1999), consumers who receive high social support or community support will experience sustainable brand loyalty. Sustainable brand loyalty is achieved due to the revolving activities around the brand. This reinforces the consumers' loyalty towards sustainable loyalty. This strengthened relationship with the brand also serves as a switching barrier for the consumers, because switching to another brand would strain the developed of interpersonal relationships with fellow community members (McAlexander, et al., 2002).

Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth, or brand recommendation intention, is the consumers' willingness to actively recommend the brand to others (Madupu & Cooley, 2010a). This means that the sender is independent of the brand or the market (Brown, et al., 2007). Since the globalization of brands over the Internet, the attention among research regarding this type of communication has increased (Fong & Burton, 2008). Theorists state that the success of word-of-mouth activities partially depends on the strength of the ties between the individuals. This is affected by the frequent interaction and trustworthiness of the source (Brown, et al., 2007). Assuming that the ties between brand community members are strong (which is a characteristic of brand communities), it is plausible that word-of-mouth activities are a result of brand community participation. This means that the communicated message is perceived as more trustworthy, reliable, and credible compared to marketer-created sources on the Internet (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Brown, et al., 2007).

COMMUNITY RELATED CONSEQUENCES

In line with McAlexander et al. (2002) four major community consequences are developed. These researchers state that community members develop more positive relations with other consumers and with the brand after participation in brand communities. Therefore these consequences are not solely influenced by motivations, but will influence brand consequences as well. This section will discuss the community related outcomes of brand community creation (i.e. identification, commitment, participation, and involvement), and will serve as arguments for the development of the hypotheses.

Participation in the community

Member participation in brand communities is essential to guarantee the survival of the community. Furthermore, (Koh & Kim, 2004); (Algesheimer, et al., 2004) state that participation is a crucial element to ensure the community becomes successful. They mention that a higher level of participation correlates with a higher level of involvement in the community. These authors state that participation in (online) brand community activities increases the members' level of identification with the community and, consequently, increases the value of the community. Casaló, Flavián, and Guinalíu (2008) mention the communities of Coca-Cola and Apple as examples to illustrate the importance of frequent member participation to enhance the communities' success, in terms of participants' interaction and community involvement.

Community identification

Extensive research in the field of brand community creation shows numerous models of the process of community creation. Early research by Plummer (1985) shows that communities committed to the brand can be generated when the brand-consumer relationship goes beyond attractiveness (i.e. from being a passive consumer to an active consumer), to a state where the consumer identifies with the brand. The process of attractiveness with the brand can drive the consumer to a state of identification with the community or group around this brand that shares the same values and emotions (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Maffesoli, 1995) or a state of identification with the brand (Algesheimer, et al., 2004). Therefore, attractiveness (to the brand) and identification (with both the brand and the community) are important variables within the concept of brand community and community identification.

Research on the motivation to engage in brand community participation by Tsai et al. (2012) shows a significant influence of the need for identification with fellow

community members. The identification with the group can also be seen as an affective commitment with the group (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999). This implies that the consumer (active in a brand community) agrees with the values, traditions, and objectives of the community (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995), and is interested in the well-being of the community (Wiswede, 1998). Woisetschlager et al. (2008) even mention identification as essential for brand community creation. Furthermore, several researchers state that identification with the brand and community have a positive effect on both brand loyalty and word-of-mouth activities (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008). Consumers who identify with the brand and community are more likely to repurchase the brands' goods, be supportive to the brand, and make positive recommendations to others (Algesheimer, et al., 2004). These arguments lead to the following hypotheses:

H1: Brand community identification positively influences brand consequences

Community commitment

According to Kaufmann, Loureiro, Basile, and Vrontis (2012), attractiveness and a state of identification cause the individual to feel a kind of commitment to the community and the brand. Attractiveness and a state of identification with the community, causes the consumer to feel committed to the group and the brand.

Researchers agree that there is an overlap between commitment and loyalty, but that these variables are not the same. However, there is a correlation between the variables. Commitment arises when one is still searching for a brand, while loyalty arises later. However, commitment is seen as the foundation for the development of loyalty (Jang, et al., 2008). Jang et al. (2008) found a significant effect for the influence of brand commitment on brand loyalty. Furthermore, Jung, Kim, and Kook (2009) found a significant positive effect of commitment on word-of-mouth activities. These researchers state that the more strongly the community member desires to maintain relationships in the community, the more actively the member desires to participate in collaborative activities and in word-of-mouth activities. These arguments provide evidence for the influence of commitment on brand related outcomes (e.g. word-of-mouth activities and brand loyalty). In this research this effect will be tested. Therefore the following hypothesis is developed:

H2: brand community commitment positively influences brand consequences

Community credibility

Community credibility is “the believability of an entity’s intentions at a particular time” and is assumed to have two main components: trustworthiness and expertise (T. I. Erdem & Swait, 2004, p. 192). Long-term relationships and repeated interaction (as in most brand communities) are considered to be key factors for enhancing credibility (Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012). Furthermore, Laroche et al. (2012) found significant evidence for the influence of community credibility on brand loyalty. More researchers support the effect of brand credibility on loyalty, mentioning that this is one of the most important antecedents of brand loyalty (Boon & Holmes, 1991; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Laroche, et al., 2012; Zhou, Zhang, Su, & Zhou, 2012). Moreover, Reichelt, Sievert, and Jacob (2013) state that trustworthiness as part of credibility should have a positive influence on word-of-mouth communication. Also, people appear credible when this person has knowledge and experience regarding the topic. Assuming that brand community members have knowledge and experience regarding the brand and products, the effect of trustworthiness on brand consequences should also be applicable in this setting. This leads to the development of the following hypothesis:

H3: Brand community credibility positively influences brand consequences

Community involvement

Involvement is defined as the individuals’ perception of the degree of personal relevance towards a brand, community, organization or object. Involvement leads to information seeking due to the fact that the characteristics of the object are related to an individual’s self-image. According to Shang et al. (2006), information seeking is one of the main reasons for members to engage in brand communities. The collective desire for information creates a sense of involvement among the members of the community. One may participate in brand communities and search for information when he is involved in the brand or product (Shang, et al., 2006; Zaichkowsky, 1943). Studies have shown that involvement with communities lead to stronger brand loyalty (Howard & Sheth, 1969). Involvement can both be affective and cognitive. Affective involvement is the projection of one’s desired self-image to the community by the use of this brand or product. This could stress one’s achievement of emotional state evoked by a product or the usage of a certain brand. Cognitive involvement refers to the functional performance of this product or branded good and the concern for costs and benefits of usage. By increasing the knowledge about the costs and benefits (thereby increasing the involvement), one could acquire more loyalty to the brand. Shang et al. (2006) argues that both types of

involvement could influence the brand loyalty. Therefore the following hypothesis is developed:

H4: Community involvement in a brand community positively influences brand consequences

MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE AND ENGAGE

Not much research has yet been conducted on the question of what drives consumers to engage in brand communities. Most of the prominent researchers (e.g. Algesheimer et al. (2004) and McAlexander et al. (2002) and Muniz Jr and O'Guinn (2001) in this field investigated that communities exist and researched the characteristics or antecedents of brand communities. However, they have not yet answered the question of why people engage in communities. Moreover, these researchers argue that communities are characterized by the extent to which they help the consumers to reach motives. Consumers could have several motives to engage in brand communities, and communities could simultaneously help to serve all these motives. Therefore, it is important to investigate which motives are important for consumers to enter brand communities.

Many researchers have found that brand community members have different motivations to engage in brand communities (Table 1). Many of these researchers based their motivations on the social influence model by Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Pearo (2004), often with other variables or with adjusted construct-names. This model by Dholakia et al. (2004) is based on the uses and gratification paradigm and propose five motivations for members to engage in online brand communities: Purposive value, which is defined as "the value derived from accomplishing some pre-determined instrumental purpose" (Dholakia, et al., 2004 p. 244), self-discovery, maintaining interpersonal connectivity, social enhancement, and entertainment. These researchers found that these value perceptions are significant predictors of emotional attachment to the online brand community.

In this research, the motivations of Madupu and Cooley (2010a) are used. These motivations were not solely used in western studies, but also in studies conducted in Asian countries, to ensure the validation of the motivations (Zhou, et al., 2012). The difference of these motivations with the motivations from Dholakia et al. (2004) are the change of the purposive value to information motive, and the maintaining interpersonal connectivity to social integration motive to better reflect the components of these constructs.

Table 1: *Overview of literature on participation motives*

Author	Information receiving	Information sharing	Status	Social	Entertainment	Self discovery
Sicilia and Palazón (2008)	Functional value		Social value		Entertainment value	
Jang et al. (2008)	Information quality / System quality / Interaction		Reward			
Pentina, Prybutok, and Zhang (2008)	Transactional	Information	Status enhancement	Social integration	Entertainment	
Madupu and Cooley (2010b)	Information		Status enhancement	Social integration	Entertainment	Self-discovery
Madupu and Cooley (2010a)	Information receiving	Information sharing	Status enhancement	Social integration	Entertainment	Self-discovery
Sung et al. (2010)	Information seeking		Incentive seeking	Interpersonal utility	Entertainment	

In this research the motivations: Information, status enhancement, social integration, and entertainment will be used. The following section will elaborate on the influence of the used motivations on the brand consequences (i.e. brand attitude, brand loyalty, and word-of-mouth), and the community consequences (i.e. identification, commitment, credibility, and involvement).

Information motive

Community members satisfy the information needs by both sharing and receiving information in the community (Dholakia, et al., 2004). Sharing information extends the opportunity for members to generate and receive rich information about the brand and the usage and consumption of its products or services. Members can post questions by using discussion boards and learn from information shared in other members' posts (Madupu & Cooley, 2010a). Besides sharing and receiving information, the members' participation can also help to accomplish specific tasks, for example to buy and sell products, solve problems, and to generate new ideas (Dholakia, et al., 2004). Dholakia et al. (2004) also state that, in online brand communities, obtaining information is one of the primary reasons for members to participate.

Several researchers describe the influence of informative motive on several brand- and community consequences. Mathwick (2006) and Sicilia and Palazón (2008) demonstrated that the motivation to share and receive information, and the interaction it produces, leads to an enhanced brand loyalty. Moreover, Koh and Kim (2004) state that there is a positive influence of information sharing within a brand community on several community consequences (e.g. community loyalty, community promotion, active community participation). Hence it is plausible that there is a positive influence on other community consequences as well. Therefore the following hypothesis is developed:

H5: The information motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.

Enhancing status

Status enhancement is the “value that a participant derives from gaining acceptance and approval of other members and the enhancement of one’s social status within the community on account of one’s contributions to it” (Dholakia, et al., 2004, p. 244). Madupu and Cooley (2010a) described this phenomenon as status enhancement. Status enhancement may serve as motivation to participate in brand communities due to the peer recognition and status members receive by interacting with community members (Fuller, 2006). Members’ social status within a community is directly related to the extent of contribution and involvement in the community (Madupu & Cooley, 2010a).

Dholakia et al. (2004) were not the only ones to list status enhancement as one of the main motives to engage and participate in brand communities. Rheingold (1993), for example, mentions that the desire for status and prestige is a key motivator for members to engage in virtual communities. Moreover, Smith and Kollock (1999) state that if sharing important knowledge in the community led to status enhancement, members were more willing to share information, and that this recognition in the community was one of the main motivations for participants to participate in virtual communities.

Several researchers discovered important consequences of status enhancement for brands and communities. McWilliam (2012) and Sicilia and Palazón (2008) state that social status has a positive effect on identification with both the brand as the community, and Schau and Muniz Jr (2002) that status enhancement (e.g. in the form of expertise and brand or community knowledge) can increase involvement with the brand and community. However, these effects have not been tested for other brand- or community consequences. Therefore the following hypothesis is developed:

H6: The status enhancement motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.

Social Integration

Social integration involves the establishing and maintenance of contact with others (i.e. fellow community members), and is mentioned by several researchers as a motivation for members to engage in brand communities (Dholakia, et al., 2004; Madupu & Cooley, 2010a). Literature on virtual brand communities shows evidence of the importance of social integrative motive to participate in brand communities. These virtual communities provide a way for members to interact, discuss, gain support, and establish and maintain relationships with like-minded people (Madupu & Cooley, 2010a). By interacting with community members, individuals can develop friendships, intimacy and social support (Dholakia, et al., 2004).

According to Sicilia and Palazón (2008), providing members the option to integrate with the community stimulates the community members to sharing rituals and to contribute to the improvement of the community. It also ensures the members to become more united to the community. It is likely that social integration also has a positive effect on other community consequences. Moreover, research on electronic buying behaviour revealed a positive effect of social integration on electronic word-of-mouth communication (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004), and a large influence on buying choices (Pentina, et al., 2008). Hence, it is expected that social integration has a positive effect on the brand consequences as well. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H7: The social integration motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.

Entertainment motive

Several researchers mention the significant effect of entertainment value as a motivation to engage and participate in communities (Dholakia, et al., 2004; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999). This motive refers to the fun, pleasure and entertaining activities consumers derive from interaction with the community (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999). This does not solely focus on an offline setting, but also include online activities, such as contests.

Researchers agree that the presence of entertainment facilities reinforces social interaction with the community. For example, facilities could be prizes or games. This could provide hedonic benefits for community members (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008). This

implies that the entertainment motive could have a positive effect on community consequences. In this research, the effect on brand consequences will be tested as well, since, according to the current knowledge, this effect has not been tested yet. Therefore the following hypothesis is developed:

H8: The entertainment motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The dimensions by Hofstede (1980) and Hall (1977) are the most cited and accepted differentiators for culture used by researchers. Hofstede's (1980) in-depth research on cultural differences, and the way individuals act and think in the world, has influenced many cross-cultural studies. During a five-year study among 116000 IBM employees in over 50 countries, he was able to determine differences and similarity patterns among the replies. This resulted in the identification of six cultural dimensions. These dimensions are individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, high- and low power distance, long- and short-term orientation, and indulgent vs. restraint (added last) (Hofstede, 2011). Among these dimensions, the individualism-collectivism derived most attention in cross-cultural marketing research, followed by power distance and uncertainty avoidance (Madupu & Cooley, 2010b). In this study, the individualism-collectivism dimension is used, which are believed to be on opposite sides of the cultural-differences scale. This dimension explains the way nations are culturally orientated (i.e. individualistic or collectivistic). Hofstede (1980) states that the fundamental issue of this dimension is the degree of interdependence among these two groups, in which collectivistic cultures (e.g. Ecuador, Panama, Taiwan, Peoples republic of China) are more interdependent compared to individualistic cultures (e.g. Australia, great Brittan, USA, and the Netherlands. For example, collectivistic cultures place more emphasis on the avoiding of losing face (De Mooij, 2010). The power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions by Hofstede (1980) are also used in this research. Power distance refers to the degree to which less powerful members of the community accept that power is distributed unequally. The primary factor is how the culture handles inequality among members of this community. In high power distance cultures (e.g. Malaysia, Philippines, Brazil, and Guatemala), the members accept that everyone has a place, while in low-power distance cultures (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Israel, and Ireland) members strive to equalize the distribution of power. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which members of a culture feel uncomfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty. The key concern is the way that members

handle the uncertainty of the future. Strong uncertainty avoidance cultures (e.g. Belgium, Greece, Guatemala, and Uruguay) maintain definite codes of belief, while weak uncertainty avoidance cultures (e.g. Hong, Kong, Denmark, Indonesia, and Singapore) maintain a more relaxed attitude (Hofstede, 1980).

Cultural influence in brand community participation

Numerous researchers state the importance of empirical research explicitly on the influence of cultures (i.e. collectivistic and individualistic) on branding and brand communities (Kaufmann, et al., 2012; McAlexander, et al., 2002; Tsai, et al., 2012). Although some researchers conducted their research in other countries (e.g. China, Taiwan, Korea) than the United States, there is still limited comparative research regarding this topic and the researchers often used only limited characteristics or antecedents (Madupu & Cooley, 2010b).

Although some researchers view the individualism-collectivism dimension the most influential (Madupu & Cooley, 2010b), Kaufmann et al. (2012) stated that not only the individualism-collectivism dimension could be of influence in brand communities, also the other dimensions from Hofstede (1984) could have a role in the consumers' role in branding. However, only the power distance dimension is used most besides individualism-collectivism. Yet, most researchers use the individualism-collectivism dimension as an important influence of brand community participation.

One important limitation in several research regarding brand communities is the lack of using multivarious industries and brands. McAlexander et al. (2002) stated that auto- or motor brands are most suitable to use in brand community research, since this industry has strong communities. However, since most of the members in these communities are men, it is important to also investigate the female influence. Furthermore, it is also interesting to investigate the influence of several cultures in one brand community, instead of investigating the influence between several communities (Tsai, et al., 2012).

Culture as moderator for motivations

Informative motive

Whether members of brand communities decide to provide information or not may also be influenced by their cultural background. However, there is discrepancy between the results of different researchers regarding culture. Fong and Burton (2008) state that providing information in brand communities requires people to express their opinion,

which could differ from opinions of fellow community members. This could conflict with the maintenance of relationship harmony and saving face, which is very important in collectivistic cultures. Collectivistic cultures rely more on information obtained from a reference group (e.g. fellow community members) because this is seen as relationship-enhancement. In contrast, individualistic cultures are more independent and rely more on their own ability and are more autonomous, and may therefore rely less on others in information-giving activities (Fong & Burton, 2008; Madupu & Cooley, 2010a; Wong & Chan, 1999).

Since the research conducted by Fong and Burton (2008) adjusted the motivation information sharing to engage in word-of-mouth activities in the discussion of their research, and focused more on recommendation activities rather than plain information sharing, the information motive as described by Madupu and Cooley (2010b) and Wong and Chan (1999) will be leading. It is expected that the reliance on reference groups' information may influence the information-seeking behaviour. Therefore, the following hypothesis states:

H9: In collectivistic cultures the information providing motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures.

More arguments on the effect of cultural differences on information receiving are provided by (Hall & Hall, 2001). Hall and Hall (2001) use context to explain differences that occur in communication styles between cultures. According to Hall and Hall (2001), culture is categorized in a scale from high- to low-context cultures. In high-context cultures (e.g. China, India, and Japan), most of the information is in the physical context or known by the person. Very little information is in the explicit part of the message. In high-context countries, people are often acquainted with personal information of others in their network. Therefore, less extensive background information is needed (Treven, 2011). In low-context cultures the greater part of the information is embodied in the explicit code. These cultures convey meaning depending on the use of words. The word choice is important to express complete and accurate meanings (Hall, 2000; Treven, 2011). According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) there are similarities between the individualism-collectivism scale and the high- and low-context cultures by Hall (2000), and that high-context cultures are similar to collectivistic cultures, while low-context cultures are similar to individualistic cultures. Fong and Burton (2008) state that members of high-context cultures (i.e. collectivistic cultures) are more likely to request for information since

these members rely more on information provided by others, and thus the frequency of information requests is higher among high-context cultures (i.e. collectivistic cultures). Which results in the following hypothesis:

H10: In collectivistic cultures the informative receiving motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures.

Status enhancement

Although members of all cultures value status enhancement, the degree to which members strive for status differs between cultures, which refers to Hofstede's (1980) power distance dimension (Huberman, Loch, & Öncüler, 2004). In countries high on the power distance scale, members are more status conscious, and more motivated to enhance their status, compared to countries low in the power distance scale, in which members are less status conscious (Hofstede, 1980; Madupu & Cooley, 2010b). Madupu and Cooley (2010b) additionally state that besides the cultures high on the power distance scale, also collectivistic cultures have stronger motives for status enhancement. Therefore, it is expected that members high on the power distance scale are more strongly driven by gaining acceptance and recognition by fellow community members compared to members low on the power distance scale, who are in general less status conscious. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H11: In high power distance countries the status enhancement motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to low power distance countries.

Social integration

People in different cultures tend to react and belief differently in interpersonal relationships. In collectivistic cultures, members tend to value the integration in strong groups more (Huberman, et al., 2004). Therefore, it can be assumed that collectivistic cultures value social integration more, and have a stronger need for this. In contrast, members of individualistic cultures accept that people are more responsible for themselves, and that ties between members are loose. Therefore, they may be less interested in establishing and maintaining relations with others, in contrast with members of collectivistic cultures (Madupu & Cooley, 2010b). Hence, the following hypothesis is developed:

H12: in collectivistic cultures the social integration motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures

Entertainment motive

In their research on motivation to use social networking sites between Korean and US participants, Kim, Sohn, and Choi (2011) found a significant difference between Korean and US participants for the entertainment motive. US participants (individualistic culture) were much more inclined to use social networking sites for entertainment, compared to Korean participants (collectivistic culture). It is expected that this also applies for online brand communities. Even more so because collectivistic cultures are more focussed on relationship building and maintaining, while individualistic cultures rely more on independence and self-reliance (Fong & Burton, 2008; Madupu & Cooley, 2010b). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H13: in individualistic cultures the entertainment motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to collectivistic cultures.

Culture as moderator for the influence of community consequences on brand consequences

Commitment

Researchers indicate that culture plays an important role in influencing the extent to which individuals trust fellow community members, and are willing to commit or reciprocate to a brand (Griffith, Hu, & Ryans, 2000). Therefore, the way that consumers interact or reciprocate to brands may vary between cultures. As stated before, several researchers mention that members of collectivistic cultures tend to be more trusting (Fong & Burton, 2008; Griffith, et al., 2000). After a trust relationship is established among members of collectivistic cultures, these members tend to be more committed to the community than members of individualistic cultures (Griffith, et al., 2000).

According to Hofstede (1980), members of cultures that are low on the power distance scale do not accept that power is distributed unequally, and assume that organizations and brands are consumer oriented. In contrast, consumers high on the power distance scale (i.e. Malaysia, Mexico, Venezuela, Indonesia) tend to elicit greater trust in organizations, and therefore generate greater commitment in organizations and brands. Consumers low on the power distance scale expect equality to be the base of the

organizational trust. The knowledge that members high on the power distance scale elicit higher levels of commitment towards the community and its members lead to the following hypothesis:

H14: In high power distance cultures the community commitment has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences compared to low power distance cultures.

Credibility

According to Erdem, Swait, and Valenzuela (2006) members from high-uncertainty avoidance cultures may use brands more as a measure for social approval compared to members of low-uncertainty avoidance cultures. Credibility is considered as uncertainty decreasing, and to make consumers feel comfortable. According to Schau, Muniz Jr, and Arnould (2009) information exchange (e.g. on how to use the products, personal experiences) between individuals can reduce the uncertainty and can increase the predictability of brand actions. Brand communities can facilitate this information exchange between members, and improve the brand credibility. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H15: in high uncertainty avoidance cultures the community credibility has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences compared to low uncertainty avoidance cultures.

Identification

Several researchers mention the influence of identification on brand community engagement and participation in a cross cultural context (Fong & Burton, 2008; Kaufmann, et al., 2012). Some researchers state that identification is the most important motive of brand community participation. Moreover, McAlexander et al. (2002) state that consumers who identify more with the brand community are more likely to act in ways that benefit the whole community compared to the individual. Fong and Burton (2008 and Kaufmann et al. (2012) proposed that members from collectivistic countries could be more involved in brand communities due to the fact that these members are more interdependent and because these members are used to act in ways that benefit the whole community compared to the self. This is supported by Madupu and Cooley (2010b), who state that members of collectivistic cultures exhibit a stronger moral responsibility and consciousness of kind, and are more familiar with shared rituals and traditions. This is mainly due to the fact that members of collectivistic cultures have stronger relations with each other. Furthermore, these members identify themselves more with the group

(Hofstede, 1980). In contrast, members of individualistic cultures see membership primarily to attain personal and independent self-relevant goals. When the costs of being a member outweigh the benefits, they tend to leave relationships (such as brand communities). Therefore the following hypothesis is developed.

H16: In collectivistic cultures the community identification has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences, compared to individualistic cultures

Involvement

Involvement is an important variable in brand community participation. McAlexander et al. (2002) posit that, if strongly involved with the brand, community members are more willing to support various goals that benefit the whole brand community, rather than self-interested goals. Considering that collectivistic cultures value the group more than the individual, it is expected that collectivistic cultures are more involved in the community. Hence the following hypothesis:

H17: In collectivistic cultures the community involvement has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures

Research model

Figure 2 displays a graphical representation of the research model. The model shows the relation of the motivation to engage in brand communities with brand consequences and community outcomes. Furthermore, the influence of community consequences on brand consequences is displayed. Finally, the influence of culture as a moderator on all interactions is displayed.

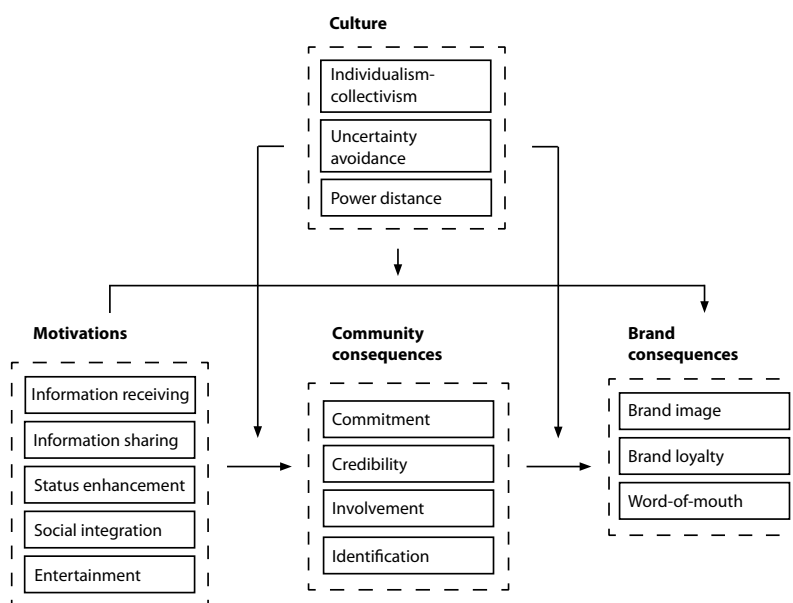


Figure 2. The moderating influences of cultural values on the studied interaction effects

METHOD

The data was collected using an online questionnaire. In this questionnaire the constructs: motivation (informative, status enhancement, social integration, and entertainment), community consequences (commitment, credibility, involvement, identification), and brand consequences (attitude, loyalty, and word-of-mouth) were measured.

Sample

A total of 514 respondents started the questionnaire of which 233 respondents completed the questionnaire (non-response of 54,77%). Seven incomplete questionnaires were removed from the total, leaving 226 unique respondents (58,5% male and 41,5% female respondents), with 20 different nationalities. The average age of the respondents was 30,28 (SD=14,21, min = 18, max = 83). 70.8% of the respondents were between 18 and 28 years of age. 45.6% of the respondents stated to be member of a brand community. Most of these communities were technologically oriented (e.g. Sony, Apple, or Android), regarding photography (e.g. Nikon), or car communities (e.g. Audi). Moreover, over 60% of these members reported to visit the community at least once a week, while more than half of this group (37,6% in total) reported to visit the community at least once a day. 53,2% of the brand community members spends between 10 and 30 minutes on the community website. Almost half of the community members (47,7%) reported to rarely post new messages on the community. Only 36,7% of the community members posts at least once a week on the community website. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

Procedure and measures

Sampling has been done through an online questionnaire distributed among brand community members of existing global brand communities and acquaintances of the researcher. In China the questionnaire was distributed among students of the Guangzhou College South China University of Technology. The questionnaire has been translated in Mandarin Chinese and translated back into English to minimize the translation bias. The questionnaire was divided into six parts and began with a definition of brand communities. After reading the definition by Muniz Jr and O'Guinn (2001) and a few examples of brand communities, participants had to answer whether or not they are currently a member of a brand community. If so, they continued on to the rest of the questionnaire. If participants did not consider themselves member of a brand community, an additional scenario by Stokburger - Sauer (2010) (listed in appendix A) was shown to

prime the participants with brand community characteristics of their favourite brand. After reading this scenario participants continued on to the rest of the questionnaire, skipping the questions regarding the frequency of visiting and posting on the community and the average duration of the visits. All participants had to answer a total of 81 questions. Additionally, participants who reported to be member of a brand community had to answer three more questions regarding the frequency of visiting and posting on this community, and the average duration of the visits. These additional questions for existing members of brand communities were derived from research by Song, Zhang, Xu, and Huang (2010).

The second part of the questionnaire contained questions about the motivation to engage and participate in brand communities. This set included questions about: *information receiving* (7 questions) derived from Dholakia et al. (2004), *information sharing* (2 questions), *social integration* (3 questions), *status enhancement* (4 questions) all derived from Dholakia et al. (2004) and Madupu and Cooley (2010b), and *entertainment* (4 questions) derived from Dholakia et al. (2004). This set of questions was concluded with a final question in which the participants had to address the likeliness of engaging in a brand community based on each of the five motivations. All questions were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*extremely important*).

The third cluster measured the brand related outcomes. This set consisted of 13 questions, divided over three constructs: *Brand loyalty* (5 questions) derived from Quester and Lim (2003), *word-of-mouth* (3 questions) derived from Arnett, German, and Hunt (2003), and *brand attitude* (5 questions) derived from Woisetschläger, Hartleb, and Blut (2008). All questions were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Respectively ranging from 1 (*not at all important, very unlikely, strongly disagree*) to 7 (*extremely important, very likely, strongly agree*).

The fourth part of the questionnaire measured the community related outcomes and consisted of 21 questions, divided over four constructs. *Community commitment* (5 questions) was derived from Holt (1997). *Community credibility* (5 questions) was derived from Erdem and Swait (1998). *Community identification* (6 questions) was derived from Mael and Ashforth (1992). The measurement of community involvement (6 questions), which was adopted from the Personal Involvement Inventory by Zaichkowsky (1943). The first two sets of questions used a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) for measurement. The set of questions measuring the community involvement used a bipolar 7-point Likert scale (e.g. important-unimportant, appealing-unappealing).

The fifth part of the questionnaire measured the cultural dimension. All 16 questions were derived from Schumann et al. (2010) and measured power distance (5 questions), uncertainty avoidance (5 questions), and individualism-collectivism (6 questions).

The final part of the questionnaire contained questions that measured demographic characteristics as age, gender and country of residence.

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, several participants tested the questionnaire online in both English and Mandarin Chinese to ensure it was easy to understand. The complete questionnaire is listed in appendix B.

Reliability tests and factor analysis

The survey consisted of established scales. Although all scales were reliable due to a high Cronbach's alpha, a principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted to measure joint variations. Scale adjustment of the motivation information variables was needed due to the non-existence of accepted scales (Table 2).

Table 2: *Factor structure and reliability of the motivation variables*

	Receiving information $\alpha=.78$	Social integration $\alpha=.88$	Status enhancement $\alpha=.96$	Entertainment $\alpha=.89$
Motivations				
Receive information				
Get information	.64			
Learn form others	.80			
Generate ideas		.59		
Negotiate			.52	
Something to do for me			.60	
Solve problems	.76			
Make decisions	.79			
Provide information				
Provide info		.86		
Contribute to the pool of info		.87		
Social integration				
Stay in touch		.65		
Meet new people		.71		
Enhance relationships		.61		
Status enhancement				
To impress			.86	
To feel important			.87	
To gain prestige			.88	
To attain status			.80	
Entertainment				
To be entertained				.88
To play				.76
To relax				.87
To pass the time				.82

Table 2 shows the results of the factor analysis and the new constructs for the motivation information variables. The results show that the questions: to get information, to generate ideas, to negotiate, and to get someone to do something for me had to be removed from the constructs due to low factor levels and to remain reliable constructs. Moreover, the providing information motivation is combined with social integration to due a high level of internal coherence. This results in four motivational constructs: receive information ($\alpha=.78$), social integration ($\alpha=.88$), status enhancement ($\alpha=.96$), and entertainment ($\alpha=.89$).

Table 3: *Factor structure and reliability of the brand consequences and community consequences*

	Brand loyalty $\alpha=.92$	Brand attitude $\alpha=.89$	Com. Credibility $\alpha=.92$	Com. identification $\alpha=.91$	Com. Involvement $\alpha=.80$
Brand consequences					
Loyalty					
Buy this brand over other brand	.70				
Like this brand	.79				
Think about the brand	.77				
Continue to buy this brand	.75				
Consistently buy it over other brand	.78				
Word-of-mouth					
Recommend this brand		.66			
Speak positively about the brand		.74			
Encourage other people to buy this brand		.60			
Brand attitude					
Brand is trustworthy		.68			
Brand is reliable		.66			
Brand is likeable		.76			
It is a very good brand		.72			
It is an attractive brand		.71			
Community consequences					
Commitment					
Sense of belonging			.48	.55	
Degree of emotional attachment				.65	
Degree of trust			.64		
Degree of satisfaction			.57	.41	
Need to participate			.57	.49	
Credibility					
Delivers what promises			.81		
Expect to keep promises			.78		
Deliver it claims			.71		

Has a name to trust	.77	
Ability to deliver what it promises	.76	
Identification		
When criticized, it is a personal insult	.72	
Interested what others think of community	.67	
I talk about 'we' when spoken of community	.77	
Community successes are my successes	.86	
When praised, it is a personal compliment	.87	
If media criticized the community, it is embarrassing	.81	
Involvement		
Important-unimportant		.77
Means nothing – means a lot	.44	.47
Appealing – unappealing		.86
Boring – interesting	.49	.54
Worthless - valuable	.53	.41

The community commitment construct was dropped from further analysis due to the cross-loadings it had on several other factors. In the community involvement the second, fourth, and fifth item (i.e. means nothing - means a lot, boring – interesting, and worthless – valuable) were removed due to low factor levels. Moreover, two items of the word-of-mouth construct (i.e. to recommend, and speak positively about the brand) were merged with the brand attitude construct due to cross loadings. The third word-of-mouth item (i.e. to encourage other to buy this brand) was removed due to a low factor level. This results in two brand consequences: brand loyalty ($\alpha=.92$) and brand attitude ($\alpha=.89$), and three community consequences: community credibility ($\alpha=.92$), community identification ($\alpha=.91$), and community involvement ($\alpha=.80$). All constructs exhibited acceptable values of reliability, suggesting that the (new) constructs have a high level of internal coherence.

The adjustment of the motivation constructs lead to the revision of some of the hypotheses. Hypothesis 2, hypothesis 9, and hypothesis 14 are removed, due to the removal of the constructs community commitment and information providing. Table 4 displays the researched hypotheses.

Table 4: Overview of the researched hypotheses

Old hypotheses		
H1	Brand community identification positively influences brand consequences	
H2	Brand community commitment positively influences brand consequences	Removed
H3	Brand community credibility positively influences brand consequences	

H4	Community involvement in a brand community positively influences brand consequences	
H5	The information motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.	
H6	The status enhancement motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.	
H7	The social integration motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.	
H8	The entertainment motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.	
H9	In collectivistic cultures the information providing motive has a stronger positive influence on community – and brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures.	Removed
H10	In collectivistic cultures the informative receiving motive has a stronger positive influence on community – and brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures.	
H11	In high power distance countries the status enhancement motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to low power distance countries.	
H12	In collectivistic cultures the social integration motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures	
H13	In individualistic cultures the entertainment motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to collectivistic cultures.	
H14	In high power distance cultures the community commitment has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences compared to low power distance cultures.	Removed
H15	In high uncertainty avoidance cultures the community credibility has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences compared to low uncertainty avoidance cultures.	
H16	In collectivistic cultures the community identification has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences, compared to individualistic cultures	
H17	In collectivistic cultures the community involvement has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures	

RESULTS

General results

Table 5 shows the general descriptive statistics of the applied variables: motivations, brand consequences, community consequences, and cultural values.

Table 5: *General results of this study*

	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
Motivations			
Receive information	5.02	1.24	1.54
Social integration	4.09	1.40	1.97
Status enhancement	2.86	1.57	2.47
Entertainment	4.32	1.52	2.30
Brand consequences			
Brand loyalty	4.88	1.22	1.50
Brand attitude	5.70	0.79	0.63
Community consequences			
Community credibility	4.88	1.13	1.28
Community identification	3.45	1.44	2.07
Community involvement	4.42	1.47	2.16
Cultural values			
Power distance	2.89	1.14	1.30
Uncertainty avoidance	4.89	1.02	1.03
Individualism/collectivism	4.29	1.11	1.23

The participants rated receive information as the most important motive for engagement in a brand community ($M=5.02$, $SD=1.24$). On the 7-point Likert scale applied, the mean score varies between somewhat important and very important. The second most important motive is entertainment ($M=4.32$, $SD=1.52$), which is rated between neutral and somewhat important. The ranking is concluded by social integration ($M=4.09$, $SD=1.40$) and status enhancement ($M=2.86$, $SD=1.57$) respectively. Social integration is located between neutral and somewhat important, while status enhancement is located between very unimportant and somewhat unimportant on the 7-point Likert scale. In general, the respondents perceived the average brand attitude as very positive ($M=5.70$, $SD=0.79$), while the average brand loyalty is less positive ($M=4.88$, $SD=1.22$). Participants rated the community credibility as positive ($M=4.88$, $SD=1.13$), followed by community involvement ($M=4.42$, $SD=1.47$) and community identification ($M=3.45$, $SD=1.44$). The uncertainty avoidance and individualism-collectivism cultural values are close around the median ($M=4.89$, $SD=1.02$; $M=4.29$, $SD=1.11$ respectively), while the mean rating of power distance

cultural value was less ($M=2.89$, $SD=1.14$) compared to the other cultural values, which is more common for European countries.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The influence of community consequences on brand consequences

The theory and the resulting model suggest an influence of community consequences on brand consequences. A regression analysis was performed (Table 6) to assess the influence of community consequences on brand consequences.

Table 6: Overview of the influence of community consequences on brand consequences

	Brand loyalty			Brand attitude		
	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.
Community Consequences						
Credibility	.28	3.66	.00**	.28	5.62	.00**
Identification	.10	1.72	.09	-.02	-0.66	.51
Involvement	.21	3.73	.00**	.12	3.37	.00**

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

The results in Table 6 show a significant positive effect of both community credibility and community involvement on brand loyalty and brand attitude. However, there was no significant effect of community identification on brand loyalty and brand attitude, rejecting H1. Due to the lack of coherence of community commitment, H2 was not tested and therefore rejected. Community credibility is a significant positive predictor ($\beta=.28$) for brand loyalty and a significant positive predictor ($\beta=.28$) for brand attitude. Therefore H3 is accepted. Finally, community involvement is a significant positive predictor ($\beta=.21$) for brand loyalty and a significant positive predictor ($\beta=.12$) for brand attitude, accepting H4.

The results imply that when brand community members are more involved with the community and perceive the community as credible, their perception of the brand attitude becomes more positive, and these members become more loyal to the brand.

The influence of motivations on brand- and community consequences

To support the theoretical framework and the resulting model, a linear regression analysis was performed to measure the influence of all motivations on brand consequences and community consequences. Table 7 and 8 present the main influence of the motivations on the brand consequences (table 7) and community consequences (table 8).

Table 7: Overview of the influence of motivations on brand consequences

	Brand loyalty			Brand attitude		
	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.
Motivation						
Receive info	.05	0.81	.42	.10	2.37	.02*
Status	-.05	-0.88	.38	-.07	-1.71	.09
Social integration	.14	2.05	.04*	.05	1.14	.26
Entertainment	.19	3.31	.00**	.13	3.44	.00**

Table 8: Overview of the influence of motivations on community consequences

	Community credibility			Community identification			Community involvement		
	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.
Motivation									
Receive info	.08	1.43	.15	.01	0.12	.92	-.02	-0.23	.92
Status	-.04	-0.80	.42	.12	1.88	.06	-.09	-1.22	.23
Social integration	.30	4.92	.00**	.46	6.28	.00**	.37	4.48	.00**
Entertainment	.14	2.86	.01*	.02	0.35	.73	.14	2.03	.04*

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 7 and 8 show several significant effects of motivations on brand consequences and community consequences. Statistically significant support was found for information receiving on brand attitude ($\beta=.10$), confirming H5 for this brand consequence. No significant effect was found for the influence of status on brand consequences and community consequences, thereby rejecting H6. Among the results, there is a positive significant effect of social integration on brand loyalty ($\beta=.14$), community credibility ($\beta=.30$), community identification ($\beta=.46$), and community involvement ($\beta=.37$), hereby accepting H7 for these four consequences. Finally, a statistical positive significant effect was found of entertainment on brand loyalty ($\beta=.19$), brand attitude ($\beta=.13$), community credibility ($\beta=.14$), and community involvement ($\beta=.14$), thereby accepting H8.

The moderating effect of culture on the influence of motivations on brand consequences and community consequences

The interaction effects with the cultural values as moderator are displayed in Table 9 and 10. This table presents the moderating effect of culture on the influence of motivations on the community- and brand consequences.

Table 9: Overview of the effect of culture on the influence of motivations on brand consequences

	Brand loyalty			Brand attitude		
	Beta	t	Sig	Beta	t	Sig
Interaction						
Status * PD	-.02	-0.35	.73	-.02	-0.69	.49
Receive info * IC	-.05	-0.96	.34	-.02	-0.51	.61
Social integration * IC	.03	0.42	.68	.03	0.87	.39
Entertainment * IC	-.00	-0.06	.95	-.04	-1.45	.15
Status * IC	.09	1.50	.14	.12	3.07	.00*

Table 10: Overview of the effect of culture on the influence of motivations on community consequences

	Community credibility			Community Identification			Community involvement		
	Beta	t	Sig	Beta	t	Sig	Beta	t	Sig
Interaction									
Status * PD	.03	.68	.50	-.00	-0.06	.95	-.03	-0.60	.55
Receive info * IC	.00	.10	.92	-.04	-0.78	.44	.00	0.04	.97
Social integration * IC	.01	.18	.86	.07	1.08	.28	.04	0.49	.63
Entertainment * IC	-.09	-2.26	.03*	-.06	-1.33	.18	-.06	-1.16	.25
Status * IC	.16	3.46	.00**	.15	2.57	.01*	.12	1.76	.08

Note: IC: individualism/Collectivism; PD: Power Distance.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

H9 is rejected due to cross-loadings it had with other motivations. Results in table 9 and 10 show no significant positive moderating effect of culture on the influence of receiving information on brand- and community consequences, rejecting H10. There is no significant positive moderating effect of power distance on the influence of status enhancement on brand consequences and community consequences, rejecting H11. However, there is a positive significant effect of individualism-collectivism on the influence of status on brand attitude ($\beta=.12$), community credibility ($\beta=.15$), and community identification ($\beta=.15$). This implies that for collectivistic oriented members the influence of status enhancement on the mentioned consequences is significantly higher compared to individualistic oriented members. Furthermore, no significant effect was present of individualism-collectivism on the influence of social integration on brand consequences and community consequences, rejecting H12. There was one negative significant influence present of individualism-collectivism on the influence of entertainment on community

credibility ($\beta = -.09$). This means that members of individualistic cultures perceive the community as more credible when entertainment is an important motivation, and members of collectivistic cultures perceive the community as less credible when entertainment is an important motive, thereby rejecting H13.

The moderating effect of culture on the influence of community consequences on brand consequences

Aside from motivations, brand consequences can also be influenced by community consequences as proposed in the model. Table 11 shows the influence of community consequences combined with the moderating effect of cultural values on brand consequences.

Table 11: *Overview of the effect of culture on the influence of community consequences on brand consequences*

	Brand loyalty			Brand attitude		
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Community consequences						
Credibility * UA	-.00	-0.23	.82	.00	0.12	.90
Identification * IC	-.01	-0.28	.78	.01	0.24	.81
Involvement * IC	.01	0.31	.76	.01	0.66	.51

Note: UA: Uncertainty avoidance; IC: individualism/Collectivism; PD: Power Distance. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 11 shows no significant effect of culture as moderator on the influence of community consequences on brand consequences, therefore rejecting H15, H16, and H17. H14 was removed do to the cross-loadings community commitment has on several other factors.

Table 12 shows an overview of all accepted and rejected hypotheses, optional with the dependent variables that had a significant effect.

Table 12: *Overview of all accepted and rejected hypotheses*

Hypotheses	Content	Result
H1	Brand community identification positively influences brand consequences	Rejected
H2	Brand community commitment positively influences brand consequences	Rejected

H3	Brand community credibility positively influences brand consequences	Accepted
H4	Community involvement in a brand community positively influences brand consequences	Accepted
H5	Information receiving has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.	Accepted*
H6	The status enhancement motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.	Rejected
H7	The social integration motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.	Accepted**
H8	The entertainment motive has a positive influence on both community consequences and brand consequences.	Accepted***
H9	In collectivistic cultures the information providing motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures.	Removed
H10	In collectivistic cultures the informative receiving motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures.	Rejected
H11	In high power distance countries the status enhancement motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to low power distance countries.	Rejected
H12	In collectivistic cultures the social integration motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures	Rejected
H13	In individualistic cultures the entertainment motive has a stronger positive influence on community consequences and brand consequences compared to collectivistic cultures.	Rejected
H14	In high power distance cultures the community commitment has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences compared to low power distance cultures.	Removed
H15	In high uncertainty avoidance cultures the community credibility has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences compared to low uncertainty avoidance cultures.	Rejected

H16	In collectivistic cultures the community identification has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences, compared to individualistic cultures	Rejected
H17	In collectivistic cultures the community involvement has a stronger positive influence on brand consequences compared to individualistic cultures	Rejected

- * Only supported for brand attitude.
- ** Only supported for brand loyalty, community credibility, community identification, and community involvement.
- *** Only supported for brand loyalty, brand attitude, community credibility, and community involvement.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to investigate if differences in cultural values could influence the motivation to engage and participate in brand communities, and could influence the effect of motivation on brand consequences and community consequences. Using Hofstede's (1984) cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance, it was hypothesised that the motivational aspects would influence the brand consequences and community consequences, that the community consequences would influence the brand consequences, and that cultural values would serve as moderator for these interactions. The results partly support the hypotheses and accentuate the importance of cross-cultural research in this field, and the relevance of cultural differences while developing or maintaining brand communities.

The results show a positive significant influence of community credibility and community involvement on brand consequences. This implies that community members are more loyal to the brand and have a higher perceived attitude towards the brand when they classify the community as credible and are involved in the community. No significant effects were found for the influence of community identification on brand consequences.

The results reveal that most of the motivations are a significant predictor for both brand- and community outcomes, partly supporting Madupu and Cooley (2010a) framework of the influence of motivations on brand consequences, and confirming several elements of this proposed model. Additionally, most of the community consequences are significant positive influencers for brand consequences. However, there were limited moderating effects of cultural values on the interactions between motives and community consequences and brand consequences, and the interaction of community consequences on brand consequences. This section will elaborate on the results and their consequences, limitations and implications for marketing managers.

Significant effects were found for the influence of some of the motivations on brand consequences and community consequences. There is a positive significant effect of receiving information on brand attitude, suggesting that members who value information receiving as an important motivation to engage in brand communities, value the brand attitude as more positive. There were no significant effects of status enhancement on any of the brand consequences or community consequences. Furthermore, social integration is a significant predictor for all consequences, except brand attitude. This implies that brand community members who value social integration as a motivation are more loyal to the brand, more identified and involved with the community, and perceive the community

as credible. Furthermore, a significant effect was found of the entertainment motive on all consequences, except for community identification. This indicates that community members who value entertainment as a motive to participate in brand communities are more loyal to the brand, have a higher perceived brand attitude, perceive the community as more credible, and are more involved in the community. This highlights the importance of entertainment and social aspects on brand community participation.

A key purpose of this study was to examine the effect of cultural differences on the influence of motivations on brand consequences and community consequences, and of the influence of community consequences on brand consequences. However, limited significant effect was found for this influence. There are some positive moderating influences of culture. Individualism-collectivism elicits a positive effect on the influence of status enhancement on brand attitude, community credibility, and community identification, meaning that an increase on the individualism-collectivism scale evokes an increase on these three consequences. This implies that collectivistic users have a more positive perceived brand attitude, perceive the community as more credible, and identify more with the community members, when these members consider status as an important motive to engage in brand communities, while it can be interpreted that the influence of status on these consequences is less strong for individualistic members. Moreover, a small negative significant effect was found for the effect of culture on the influence of entertainment on community credibility, meaning that the influence of entertainment on community credibility is higher for individualistic members, while this influence is lower for members from collectivistic cultures.

Limitations and future research directions

Several limitations of this study should be mentioned that could suggest new approaches for further research. This study used existing measures by Dholakia et al. (2004) for the motivations, which were later restructured after applying a factor analysis. Although the scales were tested for validity and reliability, in future research the original scales should be tested in this setting as well.

Due to the lack of participants from existing brand communities, an scenario by Stokburger - Sauer (2010) was used to prime the participants as if they are part of a brand community. This could have an effect on the mean score for motivations and the consequences. Research in existing brand communities could enhance the mean scores of motivations and consequences. Moreover, it is possible that participants with different cultural values interpreted the scenario differently. Furthermore, the use of different brand

communities could also have influenced the outcomes. It would be interesting to investigate one brand community with members with different cultural backgrounds. This could give insight in the behaviour of the national cultures on this community. More research in the difference between types of communities (e.g. mobile phones, cars, or non-profit organizations) should be conducted to investigate whether there is a significant difference between types of communities.

In this research, there is no differentiation between consumer generated brand communities (CGBC) and marketer generated brand communities (MGBC). Limited empirical research has been conducted to compare these two types of communities. Extensive research by Sung et al. (2010) among Korean community members showed significant differences between the two types of brand communities. Receiving information and entertainment motives appear to be stronger motives for CGBC compared to MGBC, and are only significant predictors for community commitment for members of a CGBC. Additionally, Muniz Jr and O'Guinn (2001) state that the attitude of community members towards the community depends on the host of the community. Therefore, it is interesting to research the influence of culture in this context as well, since culture could also influence the strength of the motivation in these two types of brand communities.

Two of the consequences used in this study (i.e. community credibility and word-of-mouth), were removed from the analysis due to a high level of variance. McAlexander et al. (2002) considered trust as an important factor in the community engagement and participation process. However, in this study McAlexander et al. (2002) had generalized the results to cultures outside the United States. Other scholars state that Chinese societies exhibit lower levels of trust, compared to Western cultural groups, where trust has a greater influence in the community participation process (Redding, 1993). This (could) indicate(s) the importance of cross-cultural investigation. Moreover, other brand consequences or community consequences could be applied in this setting as well. For example, several researchers mention the use of community members as a source of innovation, or to generate ideas as motive to engage in brand communities (Fuller, 2006; Wu & Fang, 2010). Prior research among community members in Taiwan showed the positive effect of consumer-to-consumer interaction on idea generation. Due to the extensive product knowledge by brand community members it is plausible to assume that idea generation is a valid consequence as well. However, this appears to be more suitable for MGBC.

This research only focussed on online brand communities. However, online brand communities do not substitute for offline activities. Hence, there is need for comparative research. So, future research should be conducted on the differences between online and offline communities, and the influence of cultural differences (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013). For instance, it is known that interaction frequencies are less for offline brand communities (Madupu & Cooley, 2010a), and that the level of commitment of community members differs between online and offline communities (Schau & Muniz Jr, 2002). Although many offline brand communities also operate online, it is interesting to research if brand community members who also participate offline differ in motivations and outcomes from members who solely participate online.

The minimal or insignificant influence of culture, and the interaction of some cultural values on the motivations and brand consequences and community consequences can be explained by the sampling method used for this study. The fact that an online questionnaire was used to collect data can negatively influence the measurement of cultural values. According to Porter (2000) globalization and location involves a paradox: It is widely known that technology has decreased many roles of location in global markets. Therefore, it is plausible that the participants in this study are less collectivistic due to the technology used to collect the data. This could imply that the collectivistic sample is not a correct representation of reality, and so reduced the effect of cultures in this study. A different sampling method such as offline questionnaires, content analysis, or observation could provide more insight in the effect of cultures on brand community engagement and participation.

Finally, the results of this study can also be explained in a different way. It is known that people with different cultural background respond differently to Likert scales (Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002). This may implicate that the differences could be caused by the way participants perceive and respond to Likert scales, instead of cultural differences.

Managerial implications

The results of this study show that community marketing activities could influence the strength of the relation of the consumer with the brand, other consumers and the community. From a strategic brand development perspective, brand managers should carefully develop a plan to develop and maintain brand relationships in the form of brand communities. This study results in several implications and suggestions for marketing managers. By facilitating and maintaining brand communities, marketers display their

gratitude towards consumers, and value their input in the enhancement of long-term relationships. The act of creating brand communities and enhancing these long-term relationships does not apply solely to existing customers, but also applies for future customers who share an interest in the community and the brand. In some cases marketers provide brand community members with the occasion to experience a new facet or product of the brand before it is introduced in the market, or with special benefits. Sung et al. (2010) stated that providing these hedonic benefits can result in positive word-of-mouth among community members, which can strengthen the brand-consumer relationship.

Participation is essential for establishing a strong brand community, which can increase loyalty, attitude, commitment, reduce marketing costs, and generate innovative ideas (Fournier & Lee, 2009). It is important to understand the actions necessary to acquire active community members to profit from the benefits of brand communities. Knowing the antecedents and motives is essential to develop the actions necessary to acquire loyal brand community members.

The results showed a variety in strengths of motivations to engage and participate in brand communities. As a result, an essential task of community managers is to match participants' complementary motives completely, and to maintain and remain a balance, which assures the achievement of most participants purposive goals (Kozinets, 1999). Receiving information and entertainment are the most important motives for members to engage in online brand communities. The information that is available for the community members may be provided by fellow community members or by the brand. Providing this information is an important task for the community managers. Providing information allows marketers to build trust and loyalty among community members (Kozinets, 1999). Furthermore, to fully benefit from the brand community, it is important to include ways to integrate socially and entertainment options for the members, since these motivations elicit the most significant influence on brand consequences and community consequences. However, since not all motives may be equally important for all communities and all members, it is important for marketing managers to understand the needs that the brand community will facilitate.

Community credibility and community involvement seem critical for a successful brand-consumer relationship due to the building of brand loyalty and brand attachment. Both community consequences are significant influencers for brand loyalty and brand attachment. The desire for information is one of the main reasons for community members to engage in brand communities. Therefore, it is important for marketing managers to

facilitate in this desire by offering relevant information. Moreover, marketing managers should establish a credible community by appearing as an expert and trustworthy. Other important entities of credibility are long-term relations and repeated interaction. For brand managers, this means that a brand community is not solely a platform for providing information to community members, but also for repeated interaction with members. This could enhance the credibility, which influences important brand consequences.

The results showed significant effects of culture as a moderator on the influence of status on several consequences. These results indicate that for brand community managers, members of collectivistic cultures value status more as a motive to engage in brand communities, compared to members of individualistic cultures. In addition, this has a positive influence on brand attitude, community credibility, and community involvement. Collectivistic community members are more concerned with enhancing status and gaining acceptance from the group. Display status in the form of expertise, brand knowledge, and community knowledge, can increase involvement with the group and attachment to the brand. Therefore, local and global brand community managers should facilitate community members to display status within the community.

Finally, marketing managers should facilitate the community members for example with locations to communicate with other members or experts, encourage the exchange of innovative ideas, to engage in product- or brand related discussions, socialize with other member, entertainment features, and to negotiate with fellow community members. These facilities have the potential to develop loyalty to the brand and commitment and involvement with the community, simultaneously generating valuable information for the brand.

Conclusion

In this study the effect of cultural differences on the influence of motivations on brand consequences and community consequences, and the effect of community consequences on brand consequences was examined. The effects were measured using a general linear model analysis. The community consequences: credibility and involvement appear to be significant influencers for both brand consequences: brand loyalty and brand attitude. The motivations: social integration and entertainment are significant predictors for four out of five of the consequences. The motivation receiving information only has a significant relationship with brand attitude, whereas status enhancement has no significant relation with any of the consequences.

Further analysis only elicits a small influence of cultural values on the mentioned interaction effects. It appears that for members who are more collectivistic oriented the status enhancement motive has a stronger influence on brand attitude, community credibility, and community involvement, whereas for individualistic oriented members this interaction is less strong. Moreover, it appears that members of individualistic cultures perceive the community as more credible when entertainment is an important motivation, whereas members of collectivistic cultures perceive the community as less credible when entertainment is an important motive. There was no significant influence of cultural values on the interaction of receiving information and social integration on any of the consequences. Moreover, analysis showed no statistical evidence of the effect of cultural values on the influence of community consequences on brand consequences.

In general, results show that global brand community managers should put emphasis on ways to integrate socially and on entertainment facilities in the community, to benefit from the community optimally. However, it is important to facilitate all group members' motives to ensure the success of the community. Since the sample rated receiving information as important motives to engage in brand communities, it is important to include this in the community as well. When the community is more oriented in serving members from collectivistic cultures it is important to include ways to display status to fellow community members, while for individualistic cultures it is more important to include ways for members to entertain themselves.

Conclusively, it is through enhancing current knowledge on the moderating effect of culture on brand communities that may one truly understand important influences on brand communities and consequences for the brand and the community.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Scenario

Imagine the following activities of your favorite brand's website. Extensive information on your favorite brand's products and services are offered. Additionally, a discussion forum is offered. There you can exchange experiences related to your favorite brand's products or services, or other topics with other consumers who also use your favorite brand's products. You can give other your favorite brand's customers advice for everyday life and receive some in return. Regular visits to the forum give you the chance to get information on the newest developments on your favorite brand, such as products, events, etc.

If you wish to get to know your discussion partners better, you can have a look at the guest book. Here, everybody can post his or her contact information in addition to a photo and write about his or her most interesting experiences with your favorite brand. If you are lucky, you might even be chosen for a your favorite brand's advertising campaign.

Experts and your favorite brand's staff will regularly answer specific questions concerning their products or services in a chat room. Here you have the chance to seek professional advice on any problems. Above all, fun is not neglected! The new website of your favorite brand does not only provide all kinds of information, but also good entertainment. There are interesting online games to try.

Please answer the following question as if you are a member of this community.

Appendix B - Questionnaire

Regarding my master thesis in the field of marketing communications at the University of Twente, I would kindly ask you to help me and fill in this questionnaire. The topic is *cultural influences on brand communities*. This questionnaire will take about 10 minutes. It is completely anonymous, and results will only be used for scientific intentions. There are no wrong answers, since the topic entails motivations and consequences.

If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire or the study, please don't hesitate to contact me

Thanks in advance.

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Please read this definition of brand communities carefully.

Brand communities are social connections that reflect the presence of brands in day-to-day lives of consumers and the ways that the brand connects consumers to the brand, and to other consumers. (e.g. the attachment to your favourite brand, the sense of belonging to a group of people who share the same interest in this brand, the intention to interact with these people by for example forums, and the willingness to express this.)

Examples of brand communities are car clubs (Harley-Davidson, Saab, Audi), computer/-operating systems (Macintosh, Windows, Android), telephone brands (iPhone, Samsung), cosmetics (e.g. Dove).

Based on the previous definition, do you consider yourself member of a brand community?

- Yes
- No

Please type the community to which you belong

What is your level of visiting this brand community?

- Rarely
- Once a month
- Once every 2 weeks
- Once a week
- 2–4 times a week
- 5–6 times a week
- Once a day
- Several times a day

What is the duration level for each visit of this community?

- Less than 10 minutes
- 10 minutes–less than 30 minutes
- 30 minutes–less than 60 minutes
- 1 hour–less than 2 hours
- Over 2 hours

What is your level of posting on this community?

- Rarely
- Once a month
- Once a week
- 2–4 times a week
- 5–6 times a week
- Every day
- Several times a day

MOTIVATION

Rate the importance of each of the following statements

I (would) use this community...

- To get information
- To learn how to do things
- To generate ideas
- To negotiate or bargain
- To get someone to do something for me
- To solve problems
- To make decisions

- To provide others with information
- To contribute to a pool of information

- To stay in touch
- To meet people with my interests
- To build relationships with others

- To impress
- To feel important
- To gain prestige
- To attain status in the community

- To be entertained
- To play
- To relax
- To pass the time away when bored

How likely are you to engage with the community based on the following motivations

- To receive information
- To give information
- To integrate with the community
- To enhance my status as an 'expert'
- To entertain, or to be entertained

BRAND RELATED OUTCOMES

Rate the importance of each of the following statements

- It is very important for me to buy [brand] over an(other) brand
- I always use [brand] because I like this brand
- I always think of [brand] over other brands when I consider buying these products
- I will continue to buy [brand] because I like the brand very much
- I always find myself consistently buying [brand] over the other brands

Rate the likeliness of each of the following statements

- I would recommend [brand] to friends and relatives
- I will speak positively about [brand]
- I intend to encourage other people to buy my [brand]

To what extent do you agree with the following statements

- This brand is trustworthy.
- This brand is reliable.
- This brand is likeable.
- This brand is a very good brand.
- This brand is a very attractive brand.

COMMUNITY RELATED OUTCOMES

To what extent do you agree with the following statements

- The community (would) give(s) me a sense of belonging
- I (would) be/am emotional attached to the community
- I (would) trust the community
- The community (would) satisfy/satisfies me
- The community (would) enhance(s) the need to participate
- This community (would) deliver(s) what it promises.
- Over time, my experiences with this community (would) have led me to expect it to keep its promises, no more and no less.
- This community (would) be/is committed to delivering on its claims, no more and no less.
- This community (would) have/has a name you can trust.
- This community (would) have/has the ability to deliver what it promises.
- When someone (would) criticize(s) the community, it feels like a personal insult.
- I (would) be/am very interested in what others think about the community.
- When I (would) talk about the community, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'.
- The community successes (would) be/are my successes.
- When someone (would) praise(s) the community, it feels like a personal compliment.
- If a story in the media (would) criticize(d) the community, I would feel embarrassed.

Please, state your attitude towards the community....

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| - Important | unimportant |
| - Means nothing | means a lot to me |
| - Appealing | unappealing |
| - Boring | interesting |

- Worthless valuable

CULTURE

The following section include questions regarding cultures

To what extent do you agree with the following statements

- People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions.
- People in higher positions should not ask people in lower positions too frequently.
- People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions.
- People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions.
- People in lower positions should not delegate important tasks to people in higher positions.

- It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I'm expected to do.
- It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures.
- Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me.
- Standardized work procedures are helpful.
- Instructions for operations are important.

- Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group (either at school or the workplace).
- Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties.
- Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.
- Group success is more important than individual success.
- Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group.
- Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.

DEMOGRAPHICS

What is your gender

- Male
- Female

What year were you born

In which country do you reside?