Brand Community Duty: The Role of Duty in Brand Communities

by

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ABSTRACT

BRAND COMMUNITY DUTY: THE ROLE OF DUTY IN BRAND COMMUNITIES

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In their exploratory study Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) found three markers of a brand community: a sense of belonging, rituals and tradition and a sense of duty toward the community. Two of the three markers of community have been included in conceptual models on brand communities. However, the third marker (sense of duty) has not been implemented up to now. Hence, the objective of this thesis is to extend Bagozzi & Dholakia’s (2006) brand community model by incorporating the construct “sense of duty”.

In this research, a conceptual model of brand communities is developed. Overall, the findings support the conceptual model. The results show that sense of duty is a decisive mediator of brand community behaviours and that sense of duty is divided into three distinct components: new member integration, product usage and member retention. Further, this research indicates that community-related behavioural intentions are not significantly related to purchase intentions.
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# Table of Contents

1 Introduction .............................................................................................................................1

2 Literature Review .....................................................................................................................7

2.1 Definition of Brand Community .........................................................................................7

2.2 Brand Community Antecedents .........................................................................................8

2.2.1 Social Identity ..............................................................................................................8

2.2.2 Brand Relationship .....................................................................................................12

2.3 Brand Community Outcomes .............................................................................................15

2.3.1 Community-Related Behaviour .................................................................................15

2.3.2 Brand-Related Behaviour .........................................................................................17

2.4 Sense of Duty toward the Brand Community ....................................................................18

2.4.1 Definition of Sense of Duty and Norms ....................................................................18

2.4.2 Markers of Community .............................................................................................20

2.5 Contextual Factors .............................................................................................................21

2.5.1 Brand Community Ownership ....................................................................................22

2.5.2 Means of Communication ........................................................................................23

2.5.3 Brand Community Size ............................................................................................23

2.5.4 Membership in Other Brand Communities ...............................................................24

2.5.5 Brand Community and Culture ................................................................................24
2.6 Summary of Research Gaps ................................................................................25

3 Conceptual Model & Hypotheses ...........................................................................29

4 Methodology ............................................................................................................32

4.1 Questionnaire ......................................................................................................32

4.2 Measurement Items ..........................................................................................33

4.3 Participants & Survey Location ..........................................................................35

4.4 Method of Data Analysis ..................................................................................35

5 Results ....................................................................................................................36

5.1 Pilot Studies of the Measurement Instrument ..................................................36

5.2 Main Study .........................................................................................................37

5.2.1 Assessment of Measurement Model ..........................................................38

5.2.2 Assessment of the Structural Model ...........................................................40

5.2.3 Hypothesis Testing ......................................................................................42

5.2.4 Assessment of Rival Models .....................................................................44

6 Implications ............................................................................................................47

6.1 Theoretical Contributions ...............................................................................47

6.2 Managerial Implications .................................................................................48

7 Limitations & Suggestions for Future Research ....................................................50

8 Conclusion ............................................................................................................52

9 References ............................................................................................................53
Appendices ................................................................. 59
List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of Normative Concepts in Previous Studies ........................................ 20
Table 2: Comparison of Recent Studies on Brand Communities ....................................... 27
Table 3: Details of Measurement Items ............................................................................ 34
Table 4: Final Measurement Model with Factor Loadings and Reliability ....................... 39
Table 5: Correlation Matrix for Latent Variables (incl. AVE on the off diagonals) ........... 40
Table 6: Hypothesis Testing Results ................................................................................. 44
List of Figures

Figure 1: Brand Community Model ................................................................. 29

Figure 2: Brand Community Model ................................................................. 41

Figure 3: Rival Model .................................................................................. 44
1 Introduction

Facing increasingly saturated markets with growing competition, marketers look for ways to ensure their long term profitability by binding their customers. This phenomenon is also influenced by technology advances and increasing consumer connectedness. Among the most desirable brand outcomes to ensure long term profitability are brand loyalty, brand equity and positive word of mouth (WOM).

The ultimate goal in brand loyalty is to create a combination of perceived product superiority, affective commitment and social ties (Oliver, 1999). This way, customers purchase the product repeatedly, because of feelings of obligation due to their social network surrounding the product. These factors make brand switching less likely and thus, ensure long term profitability.

Brand equity takes a different approach at describing desirable long term brand outcomes by illustrating the value of a company’s intangible assets. It is the “the degree of market inefficiency that the firm is able to capture with its brands” (Keller & Lehmann, 2006, p.745). From a consumer perspective, brand equity is “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (Keller, 1993, p.1). Hence, brand knowledge structures are created by marketing which may lead to purchase behaviours. Therefore, brand equity likewise ensures long term profitability.

WOM is “perceived to be more reliable, credible, and trustworthy by consumers compared to firm-initiated communications” (Brown et al., 2007, p.4), because consumers are independent from the brand they talk about. Thus, WOM has a powerful influence on behaviour, especially on information search and on decision making (Brown et al., 2007). The power of WOM has been realized in recent years through technological advances like the Internet. This provides a
platform for the exchange of opinions among consumers by lowering barriers to communication. Consequently, WOM is a desirable brand outcome, because it has the potential to persuade costumers to buy a brand more than any other marketing channel.

Brand communities have been shown to provide a source for the aforementioned desirable brand outcomes (e.g. Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002; Brown et al., 2007). They are composed of a set of people who share a common bond, an admiration of, and a commitment to a brand. These people have a sense of belonging to the community due to identification with the brand, a sense of duty toward the community, and shared rituals and traditions surrounding the brand (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002). The social ties among members are what makes brand communities desirable and profitable for marketers, because they bind the customer to the brand more so than the product itself. Brand communities can reduce marketing costs, reduce brand switching, increase brand loyalty and brand equity, and foster positive WOM (Fournier & Lee, 2009).

The body of literature on brand communities has grown considerably in recent years. There has been a slight shift from exploratory research (cf. Schau et al. (2009) for a comprehensive overview on brand community case studies) to confirmatory research (e.g. Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). This development is fostered by advances in technology, especially by the growing number of online communities.

Up to now, few scholars have investigated the psychological processes underlying brand community behaviour (e.g. Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Dholakia et al., 2004; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). These early studies combined social identity theory with behavioural theories, for example the theory of planned behaviour and brand relationship theory, to model the processes underlying brand community behaviour.
Apart from social identity theory, which yielded significant results in each conceptual model, the other theories incorporated in these conceptual models did not always yield significant or strong results. In Bagozzi & Dholakia’s (2002) study, only one of six components of the theory of planned behaviour was significantly related to behavioural intentions. Dholakia et al. (2004) combined social influence variables with value perceptions. Only three of five value perceptions were significantly related to other social influence variables. In Bagozzi & Dholakia’s (2006) study, regression paths were low, especially for the components of the theory of planned behaviour (attitude: $\beta=0.13$, $p<0.05$; positive anticipated emotions: $\beta=0.23$, $p<0.01$; negative anticipated emotions: $\beta=0.10$, $p<0.05$; subjective norms: $\beta=0.24$, $p<0.001$; perceived behavioural control: $\beta=0.05$, not significant). Consequently, there must be another factor driving brand community behaviours than the ones examined in previous studies.

Drawing on exploratory research, there are three markers of community: a sense of belongingness (which can be seen as social identity), rituals and tradition (the behavioural component) and a sense of duty toward the community (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). The first two markers have been incorporated in brand community models. However, none of the scholars have incorporated the concept “sense of duty” in their conceptual models. Hence, the main objective of this thesis is to incorporate sense of duty in a brand community model as a mediator of brand community behaviour.

This thesis is divided into six sections. In the first section, literature on brand community research is reviewed. After a brief definition of this thesis’ key concept “brand community”, brand community antecedents, outcomes and contextual factors are discussed. In each subsection special emphasis is placed on research gaps, which are discussed in a summary at the end of the
section. This summary of research gaps leads toward this thesis’ conceptual model, which is developed in the second section.

In the second section, the conceptual model is developed with distinct brand community antecedents and outcomes from the first section. Specifically, the model consists of social identity, sense of duty, intention for community-related behaviour and intention for brand-related behaviour. It is hypothesized that social identity will have a positive influence on intention for community-related behaviour directly and through sense of duty. Further, social identity is expected to regress on intention for brand-related behaviour through sense of duty. Additionally, intention for community-related behaviour is expected to have a positive relationship with intention for brand-related behaviour. Thereby, sense of duty is shown to be a decisive mediator for behavioural intentions in brand communities.

The research methodology is explained in the third section. For this thesis, a survey method was used to measure the latent constructs social identity, sense of duty, intention for community-related behaviour, and intention for brand-related behaviour. Three pilot studies were conducted: two studies with a student sample for study design and scale development and one study with a non-student sample from a John Deere brand community to test the final questionnaire. The main study was conducted at a John Deere antique tractor convention in March 2012. At this convention, 204 members of a John Deere brand community filled out the questionnaire.

In the fourth section, the results of the pre-tests, as well as the main study are discussed. Overall, the findings support the conceptual model. The pre-tests showed that the construct sense of duty is a second order construct with three distinct components: new member integration, product usage and member retention. The results indicate that sense of duty is a decisive
mediator of brand community behaviours. Further, community-related behavioural intentions are not significantly related to purchase intentions.

The findings lead to theoretical as well as managerial implications, which are derived in sections five. The mediating function of sense of duty between social identity and behavioural intentions emphasized its importance for brand communities. The individual member has to feel obliged to the community to participate in it and to buy products of the brand. The ability of sense of duty to induce buying behaviour is of particular interest to marketers. Supporting activities that increase sense of duty to the community is a marketing tool that increases buying behaviour. Furthermore, sense of duty was found to be a multidimensional second order construct. This implies that each component, new member integration, product usage and member retention, is equally important to sense of duty. Thus, marketers should find ways to stimulate each component to induce a sense of duty in brand community members. Finally, the behavioural constructs were not significantly related. The inability of community participation to influence buying behaviours puts even more emphasis on the importance of sense of duty for triggering purchase intentions. However, there are alternative explanations for this unexpected finding, which are discussed in the final part of this thesis.

The final section is devoted to outline this thesis’ limitations and to give suggestions for future research. This thesis’ is limited in the representativeness of the sample, as the findings are restricted to offline brand communities which are built around the common enthusiasm for antique farm machinery. Further, the relationship between community-related behaviour and brand-related behaviour is not clear. This contradictory finding might be explained by purpose of the brand community under study, as for a brand community with a focus on antique farm machinery, restoring and preserving might be more important than buying behaviour. Another
possible explanation is that the measurement items do not capture the complexity of the brand loyalty facets displayed in brand communities.


2 Literature Review

After the key construct “brand community” is defined, this chapter discusses literature on brand community antecedents, outcomes as well as contextual factors. Brand community antecedents are divided into social identity theory and brand relationship theory, as these theories were used in prior brand community models. Below, community practices, word of mouth and brand loyalty are discussed as brand community outcomes. Sense of duty is then developed in a discussion of exploratory brand community studies and literature on sense of duty in general. The contextual factors influencing brand community models are divided into brand community ownership, means of communication in the community, brand community size, membership in other brand communities and culture.

2.1 Definition of Brand Community

McMillan & Chavis (1986) provide a definition of the term “community” in a general sense. They distinguish between geographical community, the territorial collective of people, and relational community, the relations among people. The “sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p.9).

McAlexander et al. (2002) focus less on community members’ needs and stress the feeling of belonging due to communality. “A community is made up of its member entities and the relationships among them. Communities tend to be identified on the basis of commonality or identification among their members, whether a neighbourhood, an occupation, a leisure pursuit, or devotion to a brand” (McAlexander et al., 2002, p.38).
Muniz & O’Guinn (2001, p.412) provide a widely acknowledged definition of the more specific term “brand communities”. They define brand community as “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand.”

In this research, brand community is defined as a set of people who share a common bond, an admiration of and a commitment to a brand. These people have a sense of belonging due to identification with the brand, a sense of duty toward the community, and shared rituals and traditions surrounding the brand (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002). This definition combines the aspect of commonality found in McAlexander et al.’s (2002) definition and the markers of community developed by Muniz & O’Guinn (2001).

2.2 Brand Community Antecedents

Prior studies have used different theories to describe brand community antecedents (e.g. the theory of planned behaviour; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002 & 2006; Dholakia et al., 2004). However, some of the components of these theories did not yield significance, unlike studies using social identity theory and brand relationship theory. For that reason, social identity theory and brand relationship theory will be the theoretical focus for brand community antecedents in this thesis and will be examined in the following subsections.

2.2.1 Social Identity

Hogg (1992, p.90) defines social identity as “one’s conception of self in terms of defining features of a self-inclusive social category that renders self stereotypically ‘interchangeable’ with other ingroup members and stereotypically distinct from outgroup members.” Notably, this definition builds on two key features. Firstly, the self is defined as part of a group and the
associated shift from personal identity to social identity. This shift implies that group members are interchangeable and dissolve into the group. Secondly, the group defines itself upon the features of group members, the ingroup, and non-group members, the outgroup. This self-definition of ingroup and outgroup is also accompanied by ingroup favouritism, which can frequently be seen in brand communities (e.g. Hickman & Ward, 2007). Consequently, the underlying processes of group behaviour are categorization and social comparison (Hogg, 1992).

Self-categorization theory is sometimes regarded as a subcategory of social identity theory (Hogg, 1995). In fact, self-categorization theory stresses different aspects than social identity theory. However, the content of the two theories is largely congruent. Self-categorization theory emphasizes the “operation of the categorisation process as the cognitive basis of group behaviour, and focuses more on intra-group processes than on macro-social intergroup relations” (Hogg, 1992, p.93).

Another similar, yet distinct theory is identity theory. Hogg (1995, p.256) argues that “identity theory explains social behaviour in terms of the reciprocal relations between self and society.” On first glance, this definition sounds very much like social identity theory. Conceptually, however, the theories describe different approaches to explaining group behaviour.

Notably, they differ in level of analysis, role of intergroup behaviour, relationship between groups and roles as well as the salience of the social context (Hogg, 1995). Firstly, regarding the level of analysis, social identity theory is a social psychological theory with more emphasis on socio-cognitive processes, whereas identity theory has sociological roots and focuses on the roles the individual takes on in society (Hogg, 1995; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Secondly, Hogg (1995) argues that social identity theory focuses on comparison with other
groups, thus on intergroup behaviour, while identity theory is concerned with the roles individuals take on in society and the comparison of counter-roles, e.g. father-son roles. Thirdly, social identity theory places more emphasis on contextual cues and group dynamics, whereas identity theory views individual roles as relatively stable (Stryker & Burke, 2000). These unique nuances explain why social identity theory is more suitable when explaining brand community behaviour (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Dholakia et al., 2004; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006).

Ellemers et al. (1999) distinguish three components of social identity: cognitive, evaluative and emotional. Cognitive social identity is the self-categorisation process, the distinction between ingroup and outgroup. The evaluative component of social identity refers to the group self-esteem, meaning whether the group membership is evaluated negatively or positively by the individual. Affective commitment is the emotional component of social identity and describes the degree of emotional involvement with the group. This structure of social identity was tested using a 2 (Ingroup Status: high/low) x 2 (Ingroup Size: large/small) x 2 (Group Formation: assigned/chosen) ANOVA. Ellemers et al.’s (1999) scale on social identity gives a more holistic picture of the concept than measures of cognitive group membership or affective commitment to the group alone. Subsequently, Bergami & Bagozzi (2000) applied a modified version of Ellemers et al.’s (1999) scale to an organisational context. Their findings confirmed the structure of social identity found by Ellemers et al. (1999). Additionally, Bergami & Bagozzi (2000) found that social identification with the organisation was an indirect determinant of citizenship behaviours, like altruism, sportmanship and virtue, mediated by affective commitment and self-esteem. Subsequently, Bagozzi & Dholakia (2002 & 2006) and Dholakia et al. (2004) used the scale by Bergami & Bagozzi (2000) in their brand community models to measure social identity.
Bagozzi & Dholakia (2002) were first to investigate the psychological processes underlying brand communities and found social identity to be one of the brand community antecedents. They tested their model of goal directed behaviour on 157 active members in virtual chat rooms. The combination of the theory of goal-directed behaviour and social identity theory explained group-level intentions, which they refer to as “we-intentions”, as main contributor of brand community behaviour. One of the limitations of Bagozzi & Dholakia’s (2002) is the way in which the “group norms” and “past behaviour” were operationalized. Group norms were operationalized in terms of individual goals and may not accurately describe the construct in question. Similarly, past behaviours were operationalized in a broad sense and could be treated with more specificity. This is a possible explanation why the influence of these two constructs’ was not significant.

Dholakia et al. (2004) built on their earlier model (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002) by introducing value perceptions to the model, which is purposive value, self-discovery, maintaining interpersonal interconnectivity, social enhancement and entertainment value. They argued that these value perceptions ultimately influence participation behaviour mediated by group norms and social identity. They tested their model with 545 members of 264 virtual communities and found that purposive value, self discovery and entertainment value, of the five value perceptions in the model, were significantly correlated with group norms and social identity. Further, small virtual communities showed larger effect sizes than large ones.

Bagozzi & Dholakia’s (2006) following study built on Bagozzi & Dholakia (2002). They omitted past behaviour and group norms and included brand identification and brand behaviour in the model. They tested their model on a specific brand community (Harley Davidson community; N=154) and on a non-brand specific community (Southern Cruisers Riding Club;
N=255). Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006) only tested small groups (average group size in Harley group: 9; in non-Harley group: 8). Brand identification was not a significant mediator of brand behaviour. In contrast, social identity had a direct effect on brand behaviour, but only in the non-brand specific group. From both behavioural outcomes only one of them was preceded by behavioural intention, which limits the scope of the study. Specifically, only brand community behaviour was preceded by social intentions, but brand behaviour was not preceded by an intention for brand-related behaviour. Therefore, intention for brand-related behaviour will be included in the conceptual model developed in this thesis.

Algesheimer et al. (2005) also regarded social identity to be one of the brand community antecedents. They combined social identity theory (what they called “brand community identification”) with the concept of brand relationship quality. In their conceptual model, all outcomes were mediated by normative pressure and community engagement (except for brand relationship quality which had a direct effect on brand loyalty intentions). Algesheimer et al. (2005) tested their model on 529 respondents from 101 car clubs and, similar to the studies mentioned before, found a moderating effect of brand community size. A limitation of the study is the scale for social identity. Since it was developed by Mael & Ashforth (1992), it does not reflect the structure of social identity found by Ellemers et al. (1999). A further limitation concerns the separation of the concepts “community engagement” and “community participation”. Algesheimer et al. (2005) do not clearly distinguish these concepts theoretically. Likewise, the operationalization does not clarify how these constructs differ.

2.2.2 Brand Relationship

The relationship with the brand has also been identified as one of the brand community antecedents (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002; Algesheimer et al., 2005). The
underlying assumption in consumer-brand relationship frameworks is that humans feel a need to humanize objects to facilitate interactions. That means that brands are able to function as a relationship partner (Fournier, 1998). From a psychological perspective, relationships always serve a purpose. They add meaning to a person’s life. Relationships also help resolve life themes or may deliver life projects. According to Fournier (1998), relationships are qualified by perceived ego-significance of the chosen brands: “Put simply, consumers do not choose brands, they choose lives” (p.267).

To clarify the terms used in this context, consumer-brand relationships typically incorporate, but are distinct from brand attitudes and involvement. Brand “attitudes reflect one’s evaluative reactions to an object and these reactions can develop without any direct contact with it” (Thomson et al., 2005, p.78). Consequently, brand attitudes differ from brand relationships, because brand relationships develop over time and generally involve direct contact with the desired brand. Further, brand attitudes might be a mere evaluation of a brand. The concept of involvement can be defined as “is a state of mental readiness that typically influences the allocation of cognitive resources to a consumption object, decision, or action” (Thomson et al., 2005, p.79). However, brand relationships exceed the allocation of cognitive resources and by describing a bond between the individual and the brand. Consequently, brand relationships go beyond both positive brand attitudes and involvement with the focal brand.

Research by Fournier (1998) found 15 different types of consumer-brand relationships (e.g. arranged marriages, best friends, or secret affairs). Committed partnerships and best friendships seem to be the most suitable relationship types for strong brand communities from this typology because they imply stability and strength. Fournier (1998) accrued a total of 12-15 hours interview time over a three-month period and developed a framework for brand
relationship quality with 6 dimensions (love/passion, self-connection, commitment, interdependence, intimacy, brand partner quality).

Whether consumers can or want to build a relationship with the focal brand is partially determined by the brand’s personality. Brand personality “refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p.347). Aaker (1997) developed a widely used 42-item brand personality scale along the dimensions sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Brand personalities arise, because consumers often assign human personality traits to brands. They are inferred based on individual behaviour, physical and demographic characteristics, attitudes and beliefs (Aaker, 1997).

Research on brand communities showed that primarily hedonic products, for example, lend itself to build a committed relationship (Fournier, 1998) and are, thus, more suitable for brand community formation. When predominantly utilitarian goods form the basis for a community, they are usually used under a hedonic aspect (McAlexander et al., 2002; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; Schau et al., 2009). For example, a car can be a predominantly utilitarian good, but a BMW community would praise hedonic aspects of the car.

McAlexander et al. (2002) used a multiple method approach to develop a model for brand community integration. The methods included ethnographic studies of Jeep and Harley Davidson communities, that means naturalistic observation and participation, and a survey conducted at two Jeep events (N=453). In their model, brand community integration was dependent on four different types of relationships (owner-product relationship, owner-brand relationship, owner-company relationship, owner-owner relationship). Thereby, owner means the brand community member. In addition, they showed the dynamic aspect and influence of brand fests on brand community integration with a longitudinal study. However, this research is limited by its
measurement instrument. The measure of owner-owner relationship, which can be seen as parallel to social identification, is based on Belk’s (1988) concept of the extended self. This concept has been shown to be unable to explain certain brand community characteristics (Dholakia et al., 2004).

2.3 Brand Community Outcomes

Brand community membership influences its antecedents and outcomes. That means that, e.g. social identity is enhanced by membership as well as the brand relationship is improved. However, in the following section only brand community outcomes, e.g. community interaction, repeat purchase behaviour or affective brand loyalty, will be discussed.

2.3.1 Community-Related Behaviour

Community practices, rituals and traditions are a fundamental part of a well-functioning community. Through these practices, brand community members can derive more value for themselves than provided by the product alone. Moreover, the value creating effects of brand community practices are self-enforcing and evolve over time (Schau et al., 2009).

In their research, Schau et al. (2009) identified 12 common brand community practices organised in four thematic groups: social networking practices, impression management practices, community engagement practices and brand use practises. Schau et al. (2009) collected data in in-depth interviews, naturalistic observation and as participants in nine brand communities from one year up to a 23-year period. They distinguish between community internal practises, i.e. social networking and community engagement, and outward oriented practises, i.e. impression management and brand use. Thereby, community internal practises concern brand community members amongst themselves. In contrast, outward oriented practises involve brand
community members and their relationship to non-members, i.e. how brand community members represent their community and their brand.

In contrast, Dholakia et al. (2004) and Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006) did not differentiate community-related outcomes. Their research only defined community-related desires, intentions and behaviours in terms of interaction of group members, not in terms of which rituals they participate in. Similarly, Algesheimer et al. (2005) divided community-related outcomes further, but only included community participation, community recommendation, and membership continuance intentions and community membership duration.

Word of Mouth (WOM) is a form of community-related behaviour where community members discuss the brand, advantages and disadvantages and give recommendations to other members. Consequently, WOM forms part of the outward-oriented practises by Schau et al. (2009), because WOM is concerned with the brand more than with the community.

Brown et al. (2007, p.4) define WOM as “a consumer-dominated channel of marketing communication where the sender is independent of the market. It is therefore perceived to be more reliable, credible, and trustworthy by consumers compared to firm-initiated communications” (Brown et al., 2007, p.4). Accordingly, Brown et al. (2007) argue that WOM has a powerful influence on behaviour, especially on information search and on decision making. Godes & Mayzlin (2004, p.545) even go thus far to say that WOM “has more potential impact than any other communication channel”.

As discussed earlier, brand communities provide a gathering place where individuals have the opportunity to share information. WOM information is also important for non-members, because they might utilize brand communities, especially online, to get information about the
focal brand. That is why brand communities, particularly virtual communities, have become more and more important for companies and researchers.

For example, Brown et al. (2007) showed how WOM in an online community influences decision making and attitude formation. They conducted semi-structured interviews (N=30) with individuals who use the internet as key information source and analysed posts in a single online community over a three-month period (1,151 postings by 106 contributors). The results indicate that site tie strength and site homophily enforces source credibility, which is the primary driver of WOM. Additionally, Brown et al. (2007) show that members develop social ties with the brand community as a whole and not only with individual members. This study has similar antecedents as general brand community behaviour, because site tie strength can be seen as equivalent of consumer-brand relationship and site homophily is considered in the sense of shared interest, like in the affective component of social identity theory. However, the proposed model has not yet been tested empirically.

In their study on measurement problems of WOM, Godes & Mayzlin (2004) researched volume and dispersion as WOM drivers. Their findings suggest that volume determines the effectiveness of WOM and weak social ties between groups determine WOM dispersion. Nevertheless, Godes & Mayzlin (2004) emphasise the difficulty to infer causality with existing measures and call for measurement development in WOM.

2.3.2 Brand-Related Behaviour

Thus far, brand community research has identified different brand-related behavioural outcomes. Purchase behaviour was one of the outcomes in the brand community model by Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006). Schau et al. (2009) also identified purchase behaviour as one ritual
or tradition in brand community behaviour. However, most brand community studies show more affective outcomes within the concept of brand-related behaviour, like brand loyalty.

Brand loyalty is defined as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same-brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour” (Oliver, 1999, p.34). Consequently, brand loyalty consists of repeated purchases, as explained before, combined with varying degrees of positive attitude towards the brand. In their model of brand community influences on behaviour, Algesheimer et al. (2005) found brand loyalty to be one of the major outcomes.

Oliver (1999) argues that brand loyalty is strongest when social ties enhance the behavioural and affective loyalty components. Brand communities foster affective commitment towards the brand as well as social ties among brand community members. Hence, Johnson et al. (2006) found strong brand loyalty in brand communities. This high probability of brand loyalty is another benefit of a brand community, thus reinforcing the importance of brand communities to companies, because it enhances the probability of future sales.

2.4 Sense of Duty toward the Brand Community

2.4.1 Definition of Sense of Duty and Norms

Muniz & O’Guinn (2001, p.424) mention “a sense of duty to the community as a whole, and to individual members of the community” as one of the four markers of community. To clarify the term “duty” further, Edwards (1967, p.442) argues that “a man’s duties are the things he is expected to do by virtue of having taken on a job or assumed some definite office. ... Duties, then, are counted as one of the considerations which guide and constrain rational choice.”
Thus, the sense of duty toward the community is an intrinsic motivation to serve the group and individuals in the group. The individual member puts other members’ needs or group needs before his own individual needs.

Early brand community models (e.g. Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Dholakia et al., 2004; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) included norms to their models, which are a similar, but distinct concept from sense of duty. According to Kazdin (2000) “norms are cognitive representations of what is typical, average, or appropriate. They serve as standards for comparative judgement. [...] Norms are both descriptive and prescriptive, that is, they characterize both: what an object, event, person, or experience is like and what it ought to be like” (Kazdin, 2000, p.468).

Hence, the sense of duty is intrinsically motivated, whereas norms are extrinsically motivated. This difference was also shown in the operationalization in prior brand community studies. Norms were operationalized as an extrinsic factor that is forced upon the individual. The source of pressure was either other brand community members (c.f. the latent factor “normative pressure” in Algesheimer et al., 2005), or important others (i.e. people who are important to the respondent and do not belong to the community; c.f. the latent factor “subjective norms” in Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002 & 2006).

Further, in the studies by Bagozzi & Dholakia (2002) and by Dholakia et al. (2004) group norms were operationalized as “interaction as an individual goal”. This view of group norms implies intrinsic motivation, yet this motivation was operationalized as “goal” in contrast to “duty” as in the definition by Muniz & O’Guinn (2001).
Additionally, to the differences in operationalization, norms did not seem to have much explanatory power, since average variance extracted was low or regression paths between norms and other constructs were insignificant or low (cf. Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>source of pressure</th>
<th>subjective norms</th>
<th>normative pressure</th>
<th>group norms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>important non-members</td>
<td>fellow brand community members</td>
<td>self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagozzi &amp; Dholakia (2002)</td>
<td>β=0.09, not significant</td>
<td>β=0.12, not significant</td>
<td>β=0.02, not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dholakia et al. (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R²=0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algesheimer et al. (2005)</td>
<td>R²=0.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagozzi &amp; Dholakia (2006)</td>
<td>β=0.24, p&lt;0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For this thesis, Muniz & O’Guinn’s (2001) definition of sense of duty will be followed. Thus, sense of duty will be operationalized as intrinsically motivated obligation that the brand community member feels towards the community as a whole and towards other members.

2.4.2 Markers of Community

The markers of community were first developed by Muniz & O’Guinn (2001), used in subsequent studies (e.g. Dholakia et al., 2004; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) and were refined by Schau et al. (2009).

Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) conducted offline and online ethnographic studies of the Saab, Macintosh and Bronco brand communities. Over a 12-month period, they gathered longitudinal data with 14 households within a small neighbourhood and from the respective brand community websites. Three common markers of community were identified: shared consciousness, rituals and traditions and a sense of duty towards the community and its individual members.

20
Ellemers et al. (1999) also mentioned shared consciousness as fundamental to the emotional component of social identity. It refers to a we-feeling, a connection among the members. Rituals and traditions function to maintain the community culture. Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) emphasize greeting rituals, celebrating the brand’s history and sharing of brand stories as major behavioural categories.

They view the sense of duty towards individual members and to the community as a whole as the key feature of brand communities. It is a moral system, which enhances collective action and group cohesiveness. The sense of duty is especially important for integrating new members and retaining members as well as for assisting in brand use (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Given the importance of this construct to understand the processes of brand communities, this construct will be incorporated in the brand community conceptual model.

2.5 Contextual Factors

The context, in which brand communities operate, affects the entire community life. It influences how strong members’ bonds are with the community and the brand, how brand community practises are carried out, how sophisticated brand community practises are. Contextual factors also influence which psychological processes underlie brand community behaviour. As yet, scholars have researched the impact of brand community ownership (e.g. Thomke & von Hippel, 2002), means of communication in the community (e.g. Stokburger-Sauer, 2010), brand community size (e.g. Dholakia et al., 2004; Algesheimer et al., 2005), membership in other brand communities (e.g. Thompson & Sinha, 2008) and culture (Cova et al., 2007; Madupu, 2010; Ahn et al., 2010), which will be discussed in the following section.
2.5.1 Brand Community Ownership

For marketers, consumer-regulated brand communities bear the risk of displaying the brand in a non-favourable way. A prominent example is the case of the Harley Davidson brand community. The “Hell’s Angels” started as a consumer-regulated and –founded Harley Davidson brand community, but they soon began to take actions against the law, which had a negative impact on the brand Harley Davidson. Thus, the company launched the H.O.G. (Harley Owners’ Club) and tried to dissociate themselves from the “Hell’s Angels”, but this was only 40 years after the “Hell’s Angels” were founded (Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). This example shows that companies should try to build brand communities themselves in early stages of the product life cycle, to prevent such negative effects by a brand community. However, for a company, the maintenance of a brand community involves time and costs that have to be weighed against the possible harm to the brand through a consumer-regulated community and have to be allocated.

Further, in company-regulated communities, loyalty and a sense of belonging to the community have to be ensured by creating significance (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). This has to come from the community members, and the company should give the community some leeway and some insider information to show appreciation and connection with the community (Kozinets, 1999). This step in the brand community life cycle is especially important for online communities, because bonds cannot be forged via personal interaction between community members. Particularly considering that loyalty is not necessarily as strong as in physical communities and thus, idea theft and fraud is more common (Kozinets, 1999).

Knowledgeable brand community members can also function as key drivers for innovation by co-creating value with the manufacturer (Thomke & von Hippel, 2002). They know the brand very well and thus, have the same level of understanding as product designers
and engineers. Due to technological advances, the possibilities for consumer innovation have grown steadily in recent years. These advances make this innovation process also relatively inexpensive, if successful (Thomke & von Hippel, 2002). Hence, consumer innovation is a vital field for manufacturers, if executed and implemented carefully and intelligently.

2.5.2 Means of Communication

The first brand communities were physical communities which were informal gatherings of brand admirers, e.g. the “Hell’s Angels”, founded in 1948 as Harley Davidson community. With the advancement of technology, especially the internet, more and more online brand communities emerged (Kozinets, 1999).

According to Stokburger-Sauer (2010) the attachment to the community and the brand is stronger in physical than in virtual communities, because humans have a need to meet face-to-face. In an online community, communication among brand community members is limited due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, e.g. to text, videos, photos, video conferences in forums, blogs or on websites. Nevertheless, Cova & Pace (2006) found online consumers to be “more active, participative, resistant, militant, playful, social and communitarian than ever before” (Cova & Pace, 2006, p.1090). These mixed findings require further research to investigate different attachment and engagement levels in the virtual versus the physical context.

2.5.3 Brand Community Size

In research on brand communities, group size was frequently mentioned as moderator (e.g. Dholakia et al., 2004; Algesheimer et al., 2005). Dholakia et al. (2004) showed that small group brand communities and large networks have a different motivational basis. For the large network purposive value was greater than for the small group, whereas social enhancement and interpersonal connectivity were more important for the small group brand community.
Additionally, Algesheimer et al. (2005) found that community identification and normative pressure was lower for large brand communities. Consequently, small group brand communities seem to be driven more by emotional factors and large networks by cognitive aspects.

2.5.4 **Membership in Other Brand Communities**

When studying brand communities, researchers normally only consider membership in one brand community and negate the influence of membership in other brand communities in the case of overlap. Thompson & Sinha (2008), however, showed that overlapping memberships have an effect. They used a hazard modeling approach to examine the relationship between brand community membership (and overlap) and new product adoption. Longitudinal data were gathered over three months in two product categories (x86 microprocessors and 3D video cards). They found that participation and membership duration showed a positive relationship with oppositional loyalty, i.e. the more members participated, or the longer the membership lasted, the more ingroup favouritism these members demonstrated.

However, overlapping memberships showed counter-intuitive results. When individuals were members in two or more brand communities, higher participation in the community, led to weaker oppositional loyalty. Apparently, other members, who overtly shared the dislike for the opposing brand, were perceived negatively by members with overlapping membership. Thus, in the case of overlapping membership, the bonding ritual of sharing dislike for the outgroup can backfire and lead to less dislike for the other brand.

2.5.5 **Brand Community and Culture**

Cultural differences also distinguish community members and communities. However, up to now literature has been dominated by North-American ideas and understanding. There have
been a few case studies comparing the US and another culture, e.g. France (Cova et al., 2007), India (Madupu, 2010) or Korea (Ahn et al., 2010). These studies demonstrated that cultural differences exist, in physical and virtual communities. However, the findings only apply to the particular country and the particular product under investigation. A comprehensive framework on cross-cultural differences remains to be investigated.

2.6 Summary of Research Gaps

Previous studies combined social identity theory with behavioural theories to model the processes underlying brand community behaviour (cf. Table 2). However, the behavioural theories scholars used for their conceptual model of brand communities, like the theory of planned behaviour, did not always yield significant and strong results.

In Bagozzi & Dholakia’s (2002) study, only one of six components of the theory of planned behaviour, namely positive anticipated emotions ($\beta=0.33$, $p<0.01$), was significantly related to behavioural intentions. Dholakia et al. (2004) combined social influence variables with value perceptions. Only three of five value perceptions, purposive value ($\beta=0.34$, $p<0.001$), self discovery ($\beta=0.19$, $p<0.05$), entertainment value ($\beta=0.21$, $p<0.001$), were significantly related to other social influence variables. In Bagozzi & Dholakia’s (2006) study, regression coefficients were rather low, especially for components of the theory of planned behaviour (attitude: $\beta=0.13$, $p<0.05$; positive anticipated emotions: $\beta=0.23$, $p<0.01$; negative anticipated emotions: $\beta=0.10$, $p<0.05$; subjective norms: $\beta=0.24$, $p<0.001$; perceived behavioural control: $\beta=0.05$, not significant). Thus, another factor must influence brand community behaviours.

As explained in chapter 2.4, norms have been included in former studies, but they were operationalized differently than sense of duty in Muniz & O’Guinn (2001). Specifically, norms
were operationalized as an external factor. For example, Algesheimer et al. (2005) included normative pressure by brand community members. Bagozzi & Dholakia (2002 & 2006) incorporated subjective norms, where pressure was exerted by important other non-members. Other studies operationalized group norms as “interaction with the group as an individual goal” (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Dholakia et al., 2004). This view of group norms implies intrinsic motivation, yet this motivation is operationalized as a goal as opposed to a duty as in the definition by Muniz & O’Guinn (2001).

Additionally, to the differences in operationalization, norms did not seem to have much explanatory power, since average variance extracted was low or regression paths between norms and other constructs were insignificant or low.

Consequently, previous studies included some form of obligation or pressure in their models, however, the insignificant results or low effect sizes (cf. Table 1 in chapter 2.4.1) suggest that a different concept might be more suitable in capturing the processes underlying brand communities. Therefore, this thesis will extend the most recent brand community model by Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006) by incorporating sense of duty.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Type of brand community</th>
<th>Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muniz &amp; O'Guinn (2001)</td>
<td>Community Theory in philosophy</td>
<td>3 markers of community: shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, sense of duty</td>
<td>offline + online</td>
<td>cars, computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagozzi &amp; Dholakia (2002)</td>
<td>Theory of Planned Behaviour + Social Identity Theory</td>
<td>positive anticipated emotions, social identity</td>
<td>online</td>
<td>diverse chatrooms (sports, city, age group, general interest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dholakia et al. (2004)</td>
<td>Theory of Planned Behaviour + Social Identity Theory + value perceptions</td>
<td>purposive value, entertainment value, self-discovery, group norms, social identity</td>
<td>online</td>
<td>various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algesheimer et al. (2005)</td>
<td>Social Identity Theory + Brand Relationship Quality</td>
<td>social identity, brand relationship quality</td>
<td>offline</td>
<td>cars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown et al. (2007)</td>
<td>Social Ties</td>
<td>site usage, site homophily</td>
<td>online</td>
<td>TV-show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schau et al. (2009)</td>
<td>Community Theory in philosophy</td>
<td>12 value-creating practises in 4 thematic categories: social networking, impression management, community engagement, brand use</td>
<td>online + offline</td>
<td>internet device, PDA, car, GPS system, carbonated beverage, cameras, musical group, cosmeceutical, TV-show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Research</td>
<td>Social Identity Theory + sense of duty</td>
<td>social identity</td>
<td>offline</td>
<td>antique farm machinery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Comparison of Recent Studies on Brand Communities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Moderators</th>
<th>Mediators</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muniz &amp; O’Guinn (2001)</td>
<td>in-depth interviews + netnography</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagozzi &amp; Dholakia (2002)</td>
<td>survey</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>social desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McAlester et al. (2002)</td>
<td>ethnography, survey</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dholakia et al. (2004)</td>
<td>survey</td>
<td>brand community size</td>
<td>mutual agreement, social desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algesheimer et al. (2005)</td>
<td>survey</td>
<td>brand community size, brand knowledge</td>
<td>normative community pressure, community engagement, reactance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagozzi &amp; Dholakia (2006)</td>
<td>survey</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>social desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown et al. (2007)</td>
<td>in-depth interviews + netnography</td>
<td>brand knowledge</td>
<td>site tie strength, source credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson &amp; Sinha (2008)</td>
<td>analysis of user signatures</td>
<td>membership in other brand community (in the same industry)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schau et al. (2009)</td>
<td>in-depth interviews, naturalistic observation + netnography</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Research</td>
<td>survey</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>sense of duty; intention for community-related behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Conceptual Model & Hypotheses

Following the literature review, the brand community model developed in this thesis incorporates social identity, sense of duty, intention for community-related behaviour and intention for brand-related behaviour (cf. Figure 1). Social identity is a second order construct with three distinct components: affective, cognitive and evaluative social identity (Ellemers et al., 1999; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). It is measured by the items used by Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006). Sense of duty is a concept previously examined in exploratory studies, but not in conceptual models. A scale for sense of duty was developed in the pre-tests. Intention for community-related behaviour is described by participation behaviour intentions (measurement items by Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). Intention for brand-related behaviour is measured by purchase intentions and brand loyalty intentions (measurement items by Algesheimer et al., 2005). The hypothesized relationships between the latent constructs will be explained subsequently.

Figure 1: Brand Community Model
Following Muniz & O’Guinn (2001), social identity is predicted to lead to a sense of duty toward the brand community.

**H₁:** Social identity will have a positive effect on sense of duty.

Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) argue that sense of duty leads to intentions for community-related behaviour, such as celebrating brand history, storytelling and interacting with the community. As such, I hypothesize that sense of duty has a positive effect on intention for community related behaviour.

**H₂a:** Sense of duty will have a positive effect on intention for community-related behaviour.

Similarly, sense of duty is expected to lead to brand-related behaviour, such as buying the brand and actively searching for the brand (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Thus, the third hypothesis is that sense of duty has a positive effect on intention for brand-related behaviour.

**H₂b:** Sense of duty will have a positive effect on intention for brand-related behaviour.

A recent study by Algesheimer et al. (2010) showed that participation in a brand community increased purchase behaviour. Thus, intention for community-related behaviour has a direct effect on intention for brand-related behaviour. Consequently, sense of duty has an indirect effect on intention for brand-related behaviour through intention for community-related behaviour.

**H₃:** Intention for community-related behaviour will partially mediate the relationship between sense of duty and intention for brand-related behaviour.
Sense of duty is expected to mediate both, intentions for community-related and brand-related behaviour. Consequently, social identity will have a direct effect on intentions for community related behaviour (as found by Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) as well as an indirect effect through sense of duty.

**H₄a**: Sense of duty will partially mediate the relationship between social identity and intention for community-related behaviour.

Social identity will only have an indirect effect on intentions for brand-related behaviour through sense of duty. This is consistent with Bagozzi & Dholakia’s (2006) study in which they did not find a significant direct effect of social identity on brand behaviour in the brand-related community.

**H₄b**: Sense of duty will fully mediate the relationship between social identity and intention for brand-related behaviour.
4 Methodology

Since the conceptual model consists of latent constructs, a survey method was used to measure the constructs. The measurement items stem from previous studies for social identity (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006), intention for community-related behaviour (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) and intention for brand-related behaviour (Algesheimer et al., 2005). The scale for sense of duty was derived from exploratory research by Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) and refined in pre-tests.

Three pre-tests were conducted: two studies with a student sample for study design and scale development and one study with a non-student sample from a John Deere brand community to test the final questionnaire. The main study was conducted at a John Deere antique tractor convention, in which a high density of John Deere club members was anticipated.

The data was analysed using structural equation modelling. This method is suitable for this research because it takes into account measurement error and observed as well as latent variables can be included in the analysis.

4.1 Questionnaire

A survey method was used to measure the latent constructs social identity, sense of duty, intention for community-related behaviour, and intention for brand-related behaviour (cf. appendix A for the main study questionnaire). A prequalifying question ensured that participants were active members of a brand community. This step was accomplished in writing for the pre-tests and verbally for the main study. The main study questionnaire was used to gather information on brand community processes. Prior to completing the questionnaire, respondents were required to complete a consent form to verify their willingness to participate in the study.
4.2 Measurement Items

Bergami & Bagozzi (2000) developed a scale for social identification with the organisation, which has been applied to a brand community context by Bagozzi & Dholakia (2002 & 2006) and Dholakia et al. (2004). In this thesis, the most recent scale by Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006) was adapted to the context of this study.

The scale for sense of duty was developed according to Muniz & O'Guinn’s (2001) findings. A multidimensional construct was developed with three components: new member integration, product usage and member retention. The measurement items were carefully chosen and amended after feedback from five Marketing students in the graduate program as well as two Marketing professors to ensure the scale’s face validity. Further, the scale for sense of duty was refined after three pre-tests, using a student sample in the first two pre-tests and the third pre-test collected data from a John Deere brand community. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. The details of final measurement items and corresponding sources are shown in Table 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Social Identity (CSI)</td>
<td>To what degree does your self-image overlap with the identity of your John Deere fan club as you perceive it?</td>
<td>CSI1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you express the degree of overlap between your personal identity and the identity of your John Deere fan club when you are actually part of the brand community and engage in group activities?</td>
<td>CSI2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Social Identity (ASI)</td>
<td>How attached are you to your John Deere fan club?</td>
<td>ASI1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How strong would you say your feelings of belongingness are toward your John Deere fan club?</td>
<td>ASI2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Social Identity (ESI)</td>
<td>&quot;I am a valuable member of my John Deere fan club.&quot;</td>
<td>ESI1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I am an important member of my John Deere fan club.&quot;</td>
<td>ESI2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions for Community-Related Behaviour (ICB)</td>
<td>&quot;I plan that my John Deere fan club does activities together sometime in the near future.&quot;</td>
<td>ICB1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We plan to do activities together with my John Deere fan club sometime in the near future.&quot;</td>
<td>ICB2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions for Brand-Related Behaviour (IBB)</td>
<td>&quot;I plan to buy a John Deere in the near future.&quot;</td>
<td>IBB1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I would actively search for John Deere in order to buy their products.&quot;</td>
<td>IBB2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I plan to buy other John Deere products.&quot;</td>
<td>IBB3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Member Integration (NMI)</td>
<td>&quot;Whenever new members enter the club, I try to make them feel welcome.&quot;</td>
<td>NMI1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I think it is the right thing to include new members in activities.&quot;</td>
<td>NMI2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Usage (PU)</td>
<td>&quot;I feel compelled to help other club members to learn how to use their John Deere products.&quot;</td>
<td>PU1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;If I hear about a fellow club member having a problem with their John Deere products, I offer help.&quot;</td>
<td>PU2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Retention (MR)</td>
<td>&quot;If I hear that a fellow club member wants to leave our John Deere fan club, I encourage him to stay.&quot;</td>
<td>MR1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I think it is the right thing to encourage fellow club members to remain a club member.&quot;</td>
<td>MR2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Participants & Survey Location

The main study was conducted at a John Deere antique tractor convention (“Gathering of the Green”) in Davenport, Iowa, USA, on March 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2012. This convention is attended by John Deere antique tractor enthusiasts mostly from North America, but also from other parts of the world. Consequently, a high density of John Deere club members was anticipated. The required sample size was estimated at 150 participants.

4.4 Method of Data Analysis

Similar to previous studies on brand community models (e.g. Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Dholakia et al., 2004; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) the data was modelled using structural equation modelling (SEM). In SEM, processes under study are modelled pictorially (e.g., the conceptual model in chapter 3), and are shown in a series of structural equations. The advantage of SEM over other methods is that it takes into account error variances, thereby increasing accuracy of the model. Further, SEM can include observed and latent variables, for example the latent construct of sense of duty in the current study (Byrne, 2011). The software Mplus (6.12) was used to analyse the data of the pilot as well as of the main study (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2010).
5 Results

5.1 Pilot Studies of the Measurement Instrument

Three pre-tests were conducted: two studies with a student sample for study design and scale development and one study with a non-student sample from a John Deere brand community to test the final questionnaire.

The first pre-test was conducted using the full questionnaire with a sample of 59 students from the Marketing & Consumer Studies participant pool of the University of Guelph. In total, 118 respondents answered the pre-qualification question, of which 67 participants were brand community members. Eight participants were excluded due to errors. Cronbach’s Alpha calculations were all above the cut-off point of $\alpha=0.70$ as suggested by Nunnally (1978), ranging from $\alpha=0.728$ to $\alpha=0.904$. However, inter-item correlations were very low for some of the constructs, ranging from 0.232 to 0.921. Carmines & Zeller (1979) suggested that the factor loadings should fall above $\lambda=0.707$, because it ensures that more than 50% of the construct variance are explained by the item ($R^2>0.50$). Some of the factor loadings were below the cut-off point of $\lambda=0.707$ (Carmines & Zeller, 1979), ranging from $\lambda=0.369$ to $\lambda=0.909$.

Consequently, the questionnaire was refined and tested in a second pre-test. It consisted of 60 students from the Marketing & Consumer Studies participant pool of the University of Guelph. In total, 113 respondents answered the pre-qualification question, of which 71 participants were brand community members. Eleven participants were excluded due to errors (providing less than 50% of the answers or voicing only one opinion throughout the questionnaire). Cronbach’s Alpha calculations were all above the cut-off point of $\alpha=0.70$
(Nunnally, 1978), ranging from $\alpha=0.779$ to $\alpha=0.906$. The factor loadings for the second pre-test varied from low ($\lambda=0.548$) to high ($\lambda=0.908$).

The purpose of the first two pre-tests was to refine study design and measurement items of “sense of duty”. The third pre-test was conducted to rule out effects due to the variety of brand communities students could potentially belong to. In contrast to the first two pre-tests, the third pilot study was conducted with a sample where all participants belonged to the same brand community to test the final measurement items. The surveyed brand community was a John Deere antique tractor club, the Upper Canada Two Cylinder Club located in Drayton, Ontario, Canada. For this sample, no prequalifying question was required, as all respondents (N=50) were members of the aforementioned club. Cronbach’s Alpha calculations were all above the cut-off point of $\alpha=0.70$ (Nunnally, 1978), ranging from $\alpha=0.767$ to $\alpha=0.883$. The factor loadings for the third pre-test varied from low ($\lambda=0.297$) to high ($\lambda=0.970$). The very low inter-item correlations between the different components of sense of duty implied that these are distinct latent factors. Consequently, sense of duty was modelled as a second order factor composed of the latent factors new member integration, product usage and member retention (Chen et al., 2005).

5.2 Main Study

The main study was conducted at a John Deere antique tractor convention in Davenport, Iowa, USA, on March 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2012. The researcher and a volunteer asked convention participants to fill out a survey for a 1 in 20 chance to win a John Deere antique tractor replica, given that they were members of a John Deere club. 204 members of a John Deere brand community filled out the questionnaire. Twelve respondents had to be excluded from the analysis because they were not John Deere club members; rather they were John Deere employees. Thus, 192 surveys were included in the analysis.
5.2.1 Assessment of Measurement Model

To ensure individual item reliability, factor loadings should fall above $\lambda=0.707$, because it ensures that more than 50% of the construct variance are explained by the item ($R^2>0.50$; Carmines & Zeller, 1979). The initial measurement model showed sufficient factor loadings for all items, except for CSI1 with $\lambda=0.638$. However, because the scale for cognitive social identity has been established in previous literature and all other components of social identity loaded above $\lambda=0.707$, the item was retained.

Internal consistency was achieved, because Cronbach’s alpha calculation fell above $\alpha=0.70$ (Nunnally, 1978), ranging from $\alpha=0.839$ to $\alpha=0.958$. Additionally, the latent components of social identity (evaluative, affective and cognitive social identity) and of sense of duty (new member integration, product usage and member retention) were collapsed to observed variables by averaging the item loadings to increase power (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). The final measurement model with factor loadings and Cronbach’s alpha values is presented in Table 4.
Table 4: Final Measurement Model with Factor Loadings and Reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Standardized Factor Loading (Standard Error)</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Identity</td>
<td>ESI</td>
<td>0.799 (0.056)</td>
<td>0.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASI</td>
<td>0.744 (0.063)</td>
<td>0.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CSI</td>
<td>0.569 (0.067)</td>
<td>0.842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions for Community-Related Behaviour</td>
<td>ICB1</td>
<td>0.862 (0.063)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ICB2</td>
<td>0.744 (0.099)</td>
<td>0.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions for Brand-Related Behaviour</td>
<td>IBB1</td>
<td>0.926 (0.027)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IBB2</td>
<td>0.908 (0.030)</td>
<td>0.930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IBB3</td>
<td>0.823 (0.050)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Duty</td>
<td>NMI</td>
<td>0.774 (0.055)</td>
<td>0.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PU</td>
<td>0.662 (0.075)</td>
<td>0.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MR</td>
<td>0.465 (0.085)</td>
<td>0.904</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Convergent validity is established when measures of the same construct are in agreement, even though they were assessed by different means (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, items which measure the same construct should be highly correlated. Based on the correlation matrix for individual items, it is evident that convergent validity has been achieved (cf. appendix B).

Discriminant validity is said to be established when the average variance extracted for a construct falls above the correlation value with any other construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This is necessary to ensure that the measured constructs are in fact unrelated. Examination of the correlation matrix for latent factors showed that for social identity, sense of duty and intention for community related behaviour average variance extracted was lower than the correlation with those constructs (cf. Table 5). Thus, these constructs are correlated. However, previous studies
examining these constructs suggest that they are distinct (Dholakia et al., 2004; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). In support of this argument, Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) found three markers of community (sense of belonging, rituals and tradition, sense of duty) in their exploratory research.

A possible explanation for this finding is common method variance (Richardson et al., 2009). That means that the constructs can be correlated because they were assessed at the same time by the same means of data collection. Common method variance can bias results and therefore has to be accounted for. Thus, in the SEM model a common method factor was introduced, loading on cognitive social identity, affective social identity and member retention.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix for Latent Variables (incl. AVE on the off diagonals)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>ICB</th>
<th>IBB</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>0.556</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICB</td>
<td>0.749</td>
<td>0.651</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBB</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td>0.322</td>
<td>0.786</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.545</td>
<td>0.712</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To summarize, the initial measurement model was modified by collapsing the latent components of social identity and sense of duty in observed variables and by introducing a common method factor to account for common variance in social identity and sense of duty.

5.2.2 Assessment of the Structural Model

The hypothesized model fits the data well, since almost all goodness of fit statistics are within the acceptable range (CFI=0.968, TLI=0.952; RMSEA=0.067, SRMR=0.041). For incremental fit indices, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1980) and the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973) should fall above 0.95 (Hu & Bentler, 1992). For absolute fit indices, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RSMEA; Steiger & Lind, 1980) should
be lower than 0.08 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) should fall below 0.05 (Hair et al., 2006).

The chi-square statistic was significant ($\chi^2=67.442; df=36; p=0.0012$), which indicates poor fit. However, the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size. For larger sample sizes, chi-square tends to be significant, even if other indices indicate good model fit. This thesis’ sample size is considered large with almost 200, so a significant chi-square is not considered to be an issue of poor model fit (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993).

**Figure 2: Brand Community Model**

The brand community model was modelled using bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals (MacKinnon et al., 2004). All reported regression paths are standardized.

As for overall model results, three regression paths were not significant (cf. Figure 2). Suggesting that intention for community-related behaviour was not significantly related to any other construct in the model. Concerning mediation related results, only one indirect effect was significant (SI $\rightarrow$ SD $\rightarrow$ ICB $\rightarrow$ IBB: $\beta=0.427; p<0.001$).
5.2.3 Hypothesis Testing

In the following section the results of the hypothesized model are discussed with regards to the specific hypotheses presented in chapter 3.

\( H_1: \) Social identity will have a positive effect on sense of duty.

This hypothesis was supported based on the positive relationship between social identity and sense of duty (\( \beta=0.812; \ p<0.001 \)). Thus, increased identification with the brand community leads to a higher sense of duty toward the community.

\( H_{2a}: \) Sense of duty will have a positive effect on intention for community-related behaviour.

Sense of duty and intention for community-related behaviour were not significantly related. Thus, this hypothesis was not supported (\( \beta=0.340; \ p=0.163 \)).

\( H_{2b}: \) Sense of duty will have a positive effect on intention for brand-related behaviour.

This hypothesis was supported (\( \beta=0.683; \ p<0.001 \)). Brand community members who feel a stronger sense of duty toward the community also have more purchase intentions.

\( H_3: \) Intention for community-related behaviour will partially mediate the relationship between sense of duty and intention for brand-related behaviour.

This hypothesis was not supported. Intention for community-related behaviour and intention for brand-related behaviour were not significantly related (\( \beta=-0.170; \ p=0.349 \)). Therefore, the partial mediation of the relationship between sense of duty and intention for
brand-related behaviour through intention for community-related behaviour was not significant 
($\beta=-0.058; \ p=0.599$).

\[H_{4a}\]: **Sense of duty** will partially mediate the relationship between **social identity** and 
intention for **community-related behaviour**.

This hypothesis was not supported. As explained above, the relationship between social
identity and intention for community-related behaviour as well as between sense of duty and
intention for community-related behaviour was not significant ($\beta=0.473; \ p=0.054$). Therefore,
the partial mediation of the relationship between social identity and intention for community-
related behaviour by sense of duty was not significant ($\beta=0.276; \ p=0.158$).

\[H_{4b}\]: **Sense of duty** will fully mediate the relationship between **social identity** and
intention for **brand-related behaviour**.

Based on the positive results of $H_1$ and $H_{2b}$, the mediation effect was significant and this
hypothesis was supported. The relationship between social identity and intention for brand-
related behaviour was fully mediated by sense of duty ($\beta=0.555, \ p=0.002$). Table 6 summarizes
the hypothesis testing results.
Table 6: Hypothesis Testing Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hypothesis</th>
<th>path</th>
<th>path coefficient</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$H_1$</td>
<td>SI $\rightarrow$ SD</td>
<td>$\beta=0.812$</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{2a}$</td>
<td>SD $\rightarrow$ ICB</td>
<td>$\beta=0.340$</td>
<td>$p=0.163$</td>
<td>not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{2b}$</td>
<td>SD $\rightarrow$ IBB</td>
<td>$\beta=0.683$</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_3$</td>
<td>SD $\rightarrow$ ICB $\rightarrow$ IBB</td>
<td>$\beta=0.058$</td>
<td>$p=0.599$</td>
<td>not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and SD $\rightarrow$ IBB</td>
<td>$\beta=0.683$</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.001$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{4a}$</td>
<td>SI $\rightarrow$ SD $\rightarrow$ ICB</td>
<td>$\beta=0.276$</td>
<td>$p=0.158$</td>
<td>not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and SI $\rightarrow$ ICB</td>
<td>$\beta=0.473$</td>
<td>$p=0.054$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{4b}$</td>
<td>SI $\rightarrow$ SD $\rightarrow$ IBB</td>
<td>$\beta=0.555$</td>
<td>$p=0.002$</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.4 Assessment of Rival Models

Since intention for community-related behaviour was not significantly related to any other construct in the hypothesized model, different rival models were investigated. The rival model, which is more parsimonious and fits the data equally well as the hypothesized model is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Rival Model
Like in the hypothesized model, the goodness of fit statistics for the rival model were in the acceptable range (CFI=0.963; TLI=0.946; RMSEA=0.072; SRMR=0.047), with a significant chi-square statistic ($\chi^2=73.334; \text{df}=37; p=0.0003$).

The relationship between social identity and intention for community-related behaviour was not significant, even if the regression path from sense of duty to intention for community-related behaviour was removed, using bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals. Thus, the regression path between social identity and intention for community-related behaviour was removed in the rival model. In the model by Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006) this relationship was fully mediated by social desire. Consequently, there was no direct relationship between social identity and intention for community-related behaviour. This relationship existed only fully mediated by sense of duty ($\beta=0.676; p<0.001$).

Additionally, the regression path between intention for community-related behaviour and intention for brand-related behaviour was removed, because this relationship was not significant in any regression direction. These two constructs were allowed to covary as an Mplus default, but this did not yield significance either. Consequently, the relationship between intention for community-related behaviour and intention for brand-related behaviour remains unclear. The theoretical basis for this relationship was a recent study by Algesheimer et al. (2010). They showed that participation in a brand community increased purchase behaviour. However, only a correlation between brand community participation and purchase behaviour was observed. This relationship has not been tested in SEM. Further, Algesheimer et al. (2010) observed actual behaviour, in contrast to the current study which measured intentions. Behavioural intentions and actual behaviour might differ in this case. Future research might investigate this relationship closely in an experimental setting to detect the nature and direction of the relation.
In an overall comparison, more regression paths and mediation effects were significant in the rival model than in the hypothesized model. The mediation paths were estimated using bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals (SI $\rightarrow$ SD $\rightarrow$ ICB: $\beta=0.676$; SI $\rightarrow$ SD $\rightarrow$ IBB: $\beta=0.468$; $p<0.001$). Sense of duty fully mediated the relationship between social identity and intention for community-related behaviour ($\beta=0.676$; $p<0.001$). Sense of duty also fully mediated the relationship between social identity and intention for brand-related behaviour ($\beta=0.468$; $p<0.001$).

Drawing on the model results, the rival model fits the data equally well and it is more parsimonious than the hypothesized model. Thus, this rival model provides a better representation of this study’s data than the hypothesized model. The findings show that sense of duty is in fact a decisive mediator of brand community behaviour.
6 Implications

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

The main research objective was to incorporate sense of duty in a brand community model as a mediator of brand community behaviour. The results show that sense of duty fully mediates the relationship between social identity and intentions for community-related behaviour as well as between social identity and intentions for brand-related behaviour. This finding suggests that the more the individual members feel obliged to help other members and support the group, the more they will participate in brand community activities or meetings as well as buy products of the respective brand. Theoretically, this implies that sense of duty is a decisive mediator for behaviours in brand communities. Additionally, this indicates that social identity, i.e. feelings of belongingness, awareness of membership and emotional engagement with the brand community, are not enough to trigger brand community as well as brand-related behaviours. The individual member has to have a sense of duty toward the community to generate these behaviours. As such, future research on brand communities should include sense of duty.

A second theoretical contribution is the finding that sense of duty is a multi-dimensional second order construct. For this study, the findings from an exploratory study by Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) were used to develop a scale for sense of duty which consisted of the components “new member integration”, “product usage” and “member retention”. The pre-tests showed that the different components of sense of duty are distinct, non-correlated constructs. Thus, sense of duty is a second order construct, whose components are themselves latent variables. Each component is distinct, but equally important to the entire construct. From a
theoretical perspective, this is finding implies that sense of duty is a more complex phenomenon than a first order factor.

Consequently, the main research objective was successfully achieved. The findings enhance the understanding of the psychological processes underlying brand communities by exploring the role of sense of duty in brand communities.

6.2 Managerial Implications

There are several managerial implications. First, the results show that sense of duty mediates behavioural intentions. Hence, it is an important factor in brand communities because it induces behavioural intentions. Especially the ability of sense of duty to prompt buying behaviour is of interest to marketers. Brand communities already share a passion for the brand. What should be enforced among members is a sense of duty toward the community.

Second, sense of duty was found to be a multidimensional, second order construct. Thus, it has more than one facet and each component is equally important to the entire construct. Specifically, sense of duty toward the community includes feeling the urge to integrate new members, help other members to learn to use the product and to keep the community alive by retaining members.

As a result, sense of duty should come from within the community, but can be encouraged by marketers. For example, in marketer-initiated brand communities marketers can recruit members to give workshops on product usage. Alternatively, marketers could hold award ceremonies for the brand community members who integrate new members or who help other members to use the product. Further, marketers could remind members that new members should be integrated, that they should stay in the community and that they should help each other in
learning how to use the product. However, according to social identity theory (Ellemers et al., 1999), those initiatives by marketers could have adverse effects, because they act as an outside party. Thus, it should be decided on an individual basis which initiative might be most effective at engendering sense of duty.

Third, in this study, the behavioural constructs were not significantly related. A possible explanation is that this study only surveyed members that belonged to an offline brand community. For marketers, this implies that in an offline community, a sense of duty should be emphasized and fostered. In contrast, in an online context, Algesheimer et al. (2010) found that the more members participated in the online discussion, the more they bought. Thus, in an online context, community participation should be encouraged by marketers, e.g. by providing the necessary infrastructure for online discussions.
7 Limitations & Suggestions for Future Research

There are several limitations in this thesis. First, the sample collected is not representative of all brand communities. The findings are restricted to offline brand communities which are built around the common enthusiasm for antique farm machinery. As such, generalizations to online brand communities and other brand communities are limited (cf. chapter 2.5.2). Future studies are needed to investigate, whether online and offline brand communities have the same underlying psychological processes.

Second, the relationship between community-related behaviour and brand-related behaviour is not clear. Although prior research has found a relationship (Algesheimer et al., 2010), neither regressing the constructs in either direction nor having the constructs covary yielded significance.

A possible explanation for this contradictory finding is that the brand community might have influenced the findings. The brand community under study is centered on a common passion for antique farm machinery. For this brand community, values like preserving and restoring John Deere products might influence members’ outlook on buying behaviour. Part of this brand community’s purpose is to restore antique farm machinery and celebrate tradition, rather than buying new products.

Furthermore, the items that measure brand-related behaviour state the time horizon “in the near future”. However, the life cycle of antique farming machinery is long, resulting in infrequent purchases. Consequently, the measurement items might not have sufficiently captured brand-related behaviours.
It is also possible that this result indicates that the behavioural constructs in this brand community model do not capture the complexity of brand loyalty facets in brand communities. It is possible that brand communities only induce affective loyalty (Oliver, 1999). This, however, would not be captured in the current study, since the scale for brand-related behaviours only measures action loyalty. Therefore, future research should extend the scale for brand-related behaviours by incorporating other important brand loyalty components, e.g. cognitive, affective, and conative loyalty.
8 Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis enables a deeper understanding of the psychological processes underlying brand communities. In this thesis, a holistic model of brand communities is developed which incorporates social identity, sense of duty as well as intentions for community-related and brand-related behaviours.

Overall, the findings support the conceptual model. Furthermore, the results show that sense of duty is a decisive mediator of brand community behaviours. Sense of duty is divided into three distinct components: new member integration, product usage and member retention. Moreover, this research indicates that community-related behavioural intentions are not significantly related to purchase intentions.

The academic investigation of brand communities is still in its early stages. Considering the importance of brand communities for marketers, future studies should extend the brand community model developed in this thesis. This thesis’ limitations pinpoint these areas of future research.
9 References


Steiger, J. H., & Lind, J. C. (1980). Statistically based tests for the number of common factors. *Annual Spring Meeting of the Psychometric Society, Iowa City, IA.*


Appendix A: Final Questionnaire for Main Study

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Brand Community Study

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Katharina Goellner, MSc. student in Marketing & Consumer Studies, and Dr. Tanya Mark, assistant professor in Marketing & Consumer Studies and advisor of the aforementioned student, at the University of Guelph sponsored by the College of Management and Economics. This research is part of a thesis project.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, or would like to receive a copy of the study results, please feel free to contact Katharina Goellner via e-mail at kgoellne@uoguelph.ca or Dr. Tanya Mark via e-mail at markt@uoguelph.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is designed to investigate how brand community members communicate with each other and participate in the brand community. A brand community is a group of people, who share an admiration of and a strong commitment to a brand, such as a product fan club, a discussion forum, a product blog, or a sports fan club. They discuss topics about the brand or meet for discussions and other activities. These activities either take place online, at meetings, rallies, workshops, events, etc.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: On the following pages, you will be asked to answer a survey. Please fill out the questionnaire and submit your answers to the researcher. In total, the study will take approximately 10 minutes.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks to this study.
POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no foreseeable benefits for participants.

Science and society can potentially benefit from this study by gaining insight in how brand community members communicate and how brand communities function.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

If you complete the questionnaire, you will be entered into a draw to win one (1) of eleven (11) John Deere replicas worth about $33. The odds of winning this prize are about 1 in 20. Participants will not receive direct payment.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.

Your information will not be shared with any other party and will be kept in a locked cabinet for 6 months at which time the data will be destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research, if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Research Ethics Coordinator
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: (519) 821-5236
This study is designed to investigate how brand community members communicate with each other and participate in the brand community. A brand community is a group of people, who share an admiration of and a strong commitment to a brand, such as a John Deere fan club.

On the following pages, you will be asked to fill out a survey. **If you are a member of John Deere fan club, please fill out the questionnaire and submit your answers to the researcher.**

1. Please list the **John Deere fan club** you are a **member** of (be as specific as possible):

   ______________________________________________________

2. In the last 3 months, with **how many members** of your John Deere fan club did you interact (e.g., talk to during meetings) during each session?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 - 10</th>
<th>11-20</th>
<th>more than 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. In the last 3 months, **how often** did you interact with members of your John Deere fan club (e.g., events, or meetings)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>daily</th>
<th>weekly</th>
<th>every two weeks</th>
<th>monthly</th>
<th>every two months</th>
<th>less than every two months</th>
<th>not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **How long** have you been a member of your John Deere fan club?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>less than 1 year</th>
<th>1-3 years</th>
<th>3-5 years</th>
<th>5-10 years</th>
<th>more than 10 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. For the following set of questions, please circle your answers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not much</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what degree does your self-image overlap with the identity of your John Deere fan club as you perceive it?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you express the degree of overlap between your personal identity and the identity of your John Deere fan club when you are actually part of the club and engage in club activities?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. For the following set of questions, please circle your answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not much</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How attached are you to your John Deere fan club?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How strong would you say your feelings of belongingness are toward your John Deere fan club?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Thinking about your feelings toward the club, do you agree or disagree, where strongly disagree is 1 and strongly agree is 5, with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am a valuable member of my John Deere fan club.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an important member of my John Deere fan club.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Thinking of **club activities**, do you agree or disagree, where strongly disagree is 1 and strongly agree is 5, with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I plan that our club does activities together or meets sometime in the near future.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We plan to do activities together my John Deere fan club sometime in the near future.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Thinking of the **brand “John Deere”**, do you agree or disagree, where strongly disagree is 1 and strongly agree is 5, with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I plan to buy John Deere products in the near future.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would actively search for John Deere products in order to buy their products.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan to buy other products of John Deere.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Thinking of **when new members join the club**, do you agree or disagree, where strongly disagree is 1 and strongly agree is 5, with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whenever new members enter the club, I try to make them feel welcome.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it is the right thing to include new members in activities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Thinking of **fellow club members and their John Deere products**, do you agree or disagree, where strongly disagree is 1 and strongly agree is 5, with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel compelled to help other club members to learn how to use their John Deere products.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I hear about a fellow club member having a problem with their John Deere products, I offer help.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Thinking about the **Upper Canada Two Cylinder Club**, do you agree or disagree, where strongly disagree is 1 and strongly agree is 5, with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I hear that a fellow club member wants to leave my John Deere fan club, I encourage him to stay.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it is the right thing to encourage fellow club members to remain a club member.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for completing the survey!
DEBRIEFING FORM

Thank you for participating in this study! Your time and effort are much appreciated!

In recent years, brand communities have grown more and more in number and also in interest for marketers. The purpose of this research is to gain deeper insight in the psychological processes underlying a brand community by developing a brand community model. Therefore, a well-grounded framework and the respective scales are extended by incorporating the construct of “sense of duty towards the brand community”.

Further Reading:

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study or would like a copy of the results when the study has been completed, you can contact Katharina Goellner at kgoellne@uoguelph.ca.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CSI1</th>
<th>CSI2</th>
<th>ASI1</th>
<th>ASI2</th>
<th>ESI1</th>
<th>ESI2</th>
<th>ICB1</th>
<th>ICB2</th>
<th>IBB1</th>
<th>IBB2</th>
<th>IBB3</th>
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<th>PU1</th>
<th>PU2</th>
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