

How Brand Community Practices Create Value

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Abstract

Using social practice theory, this article reveals the process of collective value creation within brand communities. Moving beyond a single case study, we examined previously published research and data collected in nine brand communities comprising a variety of product categories, and identify a common set of value creating practices. Practices have an “anatomy” consisting of: 1) general procedural understandings and rules (explicit, discursive knowledge), 2) skills, abilities and culturally appropriate consumption projects (tacit, embedded knowledge or how-to), and 3) emotional commitments expressed through actions and representations. We find that across brand communities there are twelve common practices, organized by four thematic aggregates through which consumers realize value beyond that which the firm creates or anticipates. Social networking practices strengthen community bonds. Impression management practices focus on the external perception of the brand and the brand community. Community engagement practices encourage increased participation in the brand community. Brand use practices encourage enhanced applications. We find that practices have a “physiology,” interact with one another, function like apprenticeships, endow participants with cultural capital, produce a repertoire for insider sharing, generate consumption opportunities, evince brand community vitality, and create value. Theoretical and managerial implications are offered with specific suggestions for building brand community.

Modern marketing logic, as derived from economics, advanced a view of the firm and the customer as separate and discrete; the customer was exogenous to the firm and was the passive recipient of the firm's active value creation efforts; value was created in the factory (Deshpande 1983; Peter and Olsen 1983). A different perspective is emerging. Research across disparate management literatures from new product development, to services-dominant logic, and consumer culture theory, leads to the view that customers can co-create value, co-create competitive strategy, become active collaborators in the firm's innovation process (Etgar 2008; Franke and Piller 2004; Prüggl and Schreier 2006; von Hippel 2005), and even become endogenous to the firm (Jaworski and Kohli 2006; Kalaignanam and Varadarajan 2006; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Vargo and Lusch 2004). Despite the proliferation of such work, a consumer-centric delineation of the mechanism whereby value is collectively created has not been identified, nor has a clear typology of co-created value been developed. Our paper aims to address these issues.

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) researchers have investigated a host of co-productive activities in consumer collectives organized around market-mediated cultural products (Muñiz and Schau 2007) that eludes many aspects of marketers' immediate control and makes no direct contribution to marketing efficiency or effectiveness as conventionally defined (Kalaignanam and Varadarajan 2006). These collectives include those that are: 1) primarily experience based as in brandfests, raves or Linux "installfests" (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006a; Cova and Cova 2002; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002); 2) lifestyle based (Goulding, et al. 2005); 3) opposition ideology-based (Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel 2006); 4) brand based (Martin, Schouten, and McAlexander 2006; Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Muñiz and Schau 2005); or 5) web-community based (Szmigin and Reppel 2004). This work demonstrates that all such collectives exhibit community-like qualities as understood in sociology and address identity, meaning, and status related concerns for participants. Moreover, this work suggests such collectives provide value to

their members through emergent participatory actions of multiple kinds and that consumer collectives are the site of much value creation.

Clearly, a revolution in marketing thought is at hand. Lusch and Vargo (2006), recognizing the implications of the developments cited above, argue that co-creation will ultimately move firms to collaborate with customers to co-create the entire marketing program. This is consistent with reasoning regarding open source innovation (Etgar 2008; von Hippel's 2005). However, co-creative actions have not been clearly identified and categorized in a uniform or generalizable fashion, nor has the nature of their value-creation been revealed. We aim to contribute, using a meta-analytic approach, primarily to the former task and secondarily to the latter. If consumers are going to continue to be involved in the production of value, marketing needs to be able to consistently account for these activities.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The purpose of our research is to reveal common processes of value creation among networked firm-facing actors in brand-centered communities, a meaningful and manageable subset of all commercially-mediated collectives. We then situate these processes in the extant research. Case studies show that firm-facing actors can create use value. However, the field has yet to systematize our knowledge of these value-creating activities. To be sure, good progress has been made toward accounting for value creation. Holt (1995) illustrates the ways in which individual consumers derive subjective value through patterned interaction with a sporting event. While quite useful, Holt limits himself to discussions of individual value creating activities, primarily via production of individual distinction in cultural capital endowments (Bourdieu 1984). Outside of providing the context for this behavior, the collective is understudied. Similar observations can be made about Belk's (1995) analysis of collectors.

Others have started to rectify such shortcomings. McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002) show that participation in brandfests led to significant increases in feelings of integration into the Jeep brand community, and positive feelings about the brand and product category. These findings were robust across non-owners and newcomers as well as owners. Thus, we may infer that in addition to firm benefits, participants derive social and hedonic value from the experience. Franke and Piller (2004) show that participation in online product design leads to increases in willingness to pay and willingness to pay more (an indirect indicator of brand equity). Thus, we may infer that participants derive some sort of value in use from participation.

While studies such as these represent important advances, they do have their limitations. In neither of these or other studies we reviewed for our meta-analysis (see below) are the activities by which consumers create value dissected, dimensionalized, or generalized. While such activities are evident, they are treated idiosyncratically. No attempt has been made to link the value-creating activities in either paper with the activities in other brand community studies. This is a problem with the larger literature on brand consuming collectives, which has tended to focus on the idiosyncratic and oversell novelty at the expense of uniformity, generalizability and connections to prior work. Indeed, not only have no meaningful connections been developed, there has been no attempt to develop the common nomenclature for recurring activities and processes we offer below.

Other authors invite research centered on the value creating activities of market-facing collectives, recognizing the need for consistent nomenclature. Woodruff and Flint (2006, 194) call for “much greater focus on experiential customer value phenomena” in order to resolve the differences in typologies of value in use. Similarly, O’Hern and Rindfleisch (2007) argue that “the role of brand communities as a catalyst for co-creation is an intriguing topic for future research. Clearly, our endeavor has a mandate.

Following Vargo and Lusch (2004), we argue that value resides in the actions, interactions, and projects which the acquired resource makes possible or supports. Taking inspiration from Holt's (1995) initial foray in applying a sociological theory of practice to individual consumer behaviors, we argue for an explicit methodological application of practice theory (Duguid 2005; Lave and Wenger 1991; Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996; Warde 2005) to disentangle the forms of collective value creation in brand communities.

Practices are linked, implicit ways of understanding, saying and doing things. They comprise a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of behaviors that include practical activities, performances and representations or talk. Practices link behaviors, performances and representations through: 1) procedures: explicit rules, principles, precepts and instructions, called discursive knowledge; 2) understandings: knowledge of what to say and do; skills and projects, or know-how (i.e., tacit cultural templates for understanding and action); and 3) engagements: ends and purposes, which are emotionally charged, in the sense that people are committed to them (Duguid 2005; Warde 2005, 134). Schatzki (1996) underscores how practices create and perpetuate both collective identity and individuality. To engage in practices, individuals must develop shared understandings and demonstrate competencies that reinforce social order while allowing individuals to distinguish themselves through adroit performances.

Warde (2005), following Schatzki (1996) asserts that consuming is "a moment in almost every practice" (137). Thus, consumption follows from practices, rather than the other way around, as practices dictate what is essential for the competent and meaningful engagement of social actors in a particular consumption setting (Schatzki 1996). A focus on practices emphasizes the routine, collective and conventional nature of consumption, while accommodating the internally differentiated (across participants and groups; see discussion of staking below) and dynamic nature of consumption (see Cheng, Olsen, Southerton and Warde 2007). Further, as Warde observes,

“practices are the principle steering device of consumption because they are the primary source of desire, knowledge and judgment...recruitment to a practice becomes a principal explanatory issue” (Warde 2005, p. 145). Thus, a practice focus dovetails with the gap identified in previous research on value creation in brand communities.

To identify and categorize from a consumer-centric perspective, and in a generalizable fashion, co-creative practices, we draw upon a corpus of data across nine brand communities. We access participants in brand communities in collaborative co-creation activities specifically, as well as their emic notions of value relating to branded offerings and communal activities. We situate these practices in the extant literature, connecting the practices we revealed with those previously, if only implicitly, encountered in prior research. We then demonstrate how these practices interact to create value. This enables us to develop new theory in the domain of consumption practice. From a managerial perspective, our findings illuminate opportunities to grow, not simply exploit, “customer competence” (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000). In short, our findings reveal how to build better brand partners.

METHOD

To address the research questions identified above, we examine consumer co-creation in its empirical context. Our sampling frame consists of an array of nine brand communities across traditional product category classifications: 3Com Audrey (Internet device), Apple Newton (personal digital assistant), BMW MINI (car), Garmin (GPS device), Jones Soda (carbonated beverage), Lomo and Holga (cameras), Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (musical group), StriVectin (cosmeceutical), and Xena: Warrior Princess (episodic action television program). Collectively, these data sites represent a broad spectrum of marketplace offerings. Packaged goods, electronics (including both cutting edge and well-established technology) and entertainment are

represented. They also represent greater gender diversity than found in most prior work on brand communities. The Audrey and Newton communities are primarily male; Garmin, Jones, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (TPATH), Lomo/Holga, and MINI are fairly balanced, while Xena and StriVectin are primarily female. Table 1 (Research Engagement) describes each brand community as well as the nature of research engagement with each. It was our hope that this diverse collection of communities would increase the chances of our data resonating with that presented in the extant research, thereby facilitating the identification of common elements.

---- Insert table 1 about here ----

Our data include: in-depth interviews with community members, participant and naturalistic observation of community activities, and netnographic research within forums centered on brands. We observed forums for all of the brands included and have downloaded thousands of messages posted by brand users. Our analytic approach combines the strengths of primary data collection with those of meta-analysis and overcomes the weakness of individual case study approaches to brand collectives. In many cases, the researchers assessed the full breadth of community activities both online and in the corporeal world. In some cases, notably with StriVectin and Xena, we pursued the community across forums when several sites were implicated in community activities. Finally, our approach is appropriate as we have endeavored to move the unit of analysis away from the individual consumer and individual brand community, to the practices common across individuals and communities. Our analysis also benefits from the insights of a multi-disciplinary (anthropology, social psychology, sociology, and marketing) and bi-gendered team. These differences allow triangulation across researchers in terms of convergence and divergence in interpretation following guidance in previous research.

In addition, we also undertook a kind of meta-analysis. Using four coders to achieve inter-

coder agreement on interpretation, we identified 52 articles published in the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *Consumption, Marketing and Culture*, and *Advances in Consumer Research* that explicitly claimed to examine collective consumer behavior and/or “practices.” None of these studies expressly dealt with collective value creation and did not use the constructs of collaborative behavior uniformly or systematically, and in the case of practices, in a manner consistent with extant theoretical literature. Thus the premises of meta-analysis in the positivist literature do not hold here (Farley, Lehmann and Sawyer 1995). Nonetheless, we identified 37 articles (71%) containing sufficient material to code collective practices. However, in only 13 (35%) of these articles did we find some evidence of practices as we identify them in our current data set. We believe that this systematic analysis of published research suggests that the twelve practices we identify here are robust, since we found traces of them within data analyzed for diverse theoretical purposes.

FINDINGS

Our first goal was to compile an exhaustive list of practices common to the brand communities studied and to situate those practices in the context of prior research. Our intent in this endeavor was multifaceted. 1) We want to synthesize and extend prior accounts of brand community. 2) We want to reconcile common practices that have appeared under disparate titles. 3) We want to dissect and dimensionalize these practices. 4) We want to systematically document how a constellation of practices coalesce to create value-added brand community experiences. Doing the aforementioned will allow us to place brand communities in both new theoretical and managerial lights.

We induced twelve value-creating practices across the nine brand communities we studied.

We assert these common practices represent value-creating dynamics present in most, if not all, brand communities. To support this assertion, as mentioned above we analyzed the extant literature on collective consumer behavior to look for instances of behavior that corresponds to these twelve practices. Table 2 (Practices and Prior Research) details the practices common in the brand communities we studied as well as those abstracted from prior research. It lists the name of the practice, a definition of the practice, a list of where each practice was evident in prior research and examples of the practice in our data. We further organize these practices by four thematic groupings: 1) social networking, 2) impression management, 3) community engagement, and 4) brand use. Empirically thematic outcomes overlap. For example, brand use engages the community and may convey impressions of individual expertise or network centrality.

---- Insert table 2 about here ----

Social networking practices are those that focus on creating, enhancing and sustaining ties among brand community members. These include: 1) welcoming, 2) empathizing and 3) governing. This trio of practices highlights the homogeneity of the brand community, or the similarities across brand community members and their normative behavioral expectations of themselves and one another. These practices operate primarily in the intangible domain of the emotions and reinforce the social or moral bonds within the community. Examples of social networking practices can be gleaned from prior research. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) describe behaviors consistent with empathizing in the following excerpt from their fieldnotes:

The club president proudly shows a letter he received from a sixteen-year-old Italian boy who is a big fan of Saab, despite the fact that he doesn't drive yet. He got the club's address from their web page. The letter says that he is a fan of pre-changed 900, especially liking the '83 and '84 3-door models. He is seeking pictures of these cars that the club members might own. This letter is big news at the meeting and is shown to everyone over the course of the evening (p. 419).

Other examples from prior research can be seen in Table 2.

Interestingly, the variety and scope of social networking practices that we witness across our nine communities challenges Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) assertion that brand communities are communities of limited liability. What we see suggests that social networking practices evolve and move past brand boundaries. Examples include TPATH fans posting open invitations to community members to life cycle celebrations; Garmin users relating road challenges and solutions to other members; StriVectin users complaining and sympathizing about aging; Lomo/Holga users encouraging one another to continue their effects trials; and Jones Soda users who support one another in their pursuit of independent music. We assert that this metamorphosis beyond limited liability is a function of the amount of time members are able to spend with one another in enduring brand communities. Daily or multi-weekly contact, sustained over several years, allows these friendships to expand beyond brand boundaries. Indeed, we have seen evidence of longtime community members remaining in the community after dispossessing themselves of the focal brand (such as when a life stage responsibility requires a Mini driver to sell their Mini and purchase a more family friendly vehicle).

Impression management practices are those that have an external, outward focus toward creating favorable impressions of the brand, the brand users or enthusiasts, and the brand community in the social universe beyond the brand community. These include: 1) evangelizing and 2) justifying. Here, members act as altruistic emissaries and ambassadors of good will. A variety of impression management practices are evident in the extant brand community literature. Kozinets's (2001) study of the Star Trek community and Muniz and Schau's (2005) study of the Apple Newton brand community provide relevant and closely related examples. Members of both brand communities engaged in impression management practices, evangelizing and justifying their devotion in order to manage stigmas associated with overt Sci-Fi fandom and reliance on an obsolete and abandoned technology, respectively.

Community engagement practices are those that reinforce members' escalating engagement with the brand community. These include: 1) staking, 2) milestoneing, 3) badging, and 4) documenting. This set of practices emphasizes and safeguards brand community heterogeneity, or the distinctions among brand community members and subsets of members. These practices are competitive and provide members with social capital. Here, brand use is secondary to communal engagement. For example, in staking, community members delineate their specific domain of participation: "The Lomo community is vast, but I operate mostly within the groups interested in architectural lomography and within that group I spend most time with the Scandinavian group and some time with the German lomographers" (Hans interview 11/18/08). Hans carefully stakes his domain of engagement. This echoes Martin, Schouten and McAlexander (2006) where female Harley community members distinguished the contours of their engagement from that of the male Harley community members.

Brand use practices are specifically related to improved or enhanced use of the focal brand. These include: 1) grooming, 2) customizing and 3) commoditizing. Unlike tool-kit models that might presume all practices of interest relate to brand use directly, it is but one set of the practices consumers engage in as part of a brand based collective. Some examples of grooming include: MINI consumers sharing homemade tools and advice (Q-tips in air vents) to better clean their cars and demonstrate their collective pride; StriVectin users who encourage wiping the tip of the tube with a clean tissue and storing it in the refrigerator; procedures for handling and storing original TPATH albums on LP; care and maintenance of Xena costumes; and home crafted "snugglies" (soft cases) for the Garmin, Lomos and Holgas. Examples of customizing include: a TPATH fan creates a custom tour poster from her first concert; a StriVectin user carefully mixes StriVectin with her foundation makeup; a Newton user modifies her Newton so that it can perform functions other than those anticipated by the manufacturer; and a Lomo fan customizes his camera

lens to achieve more artful distortion. Examples of commoditizing are: Newton, Xena and TPATH communities monitor and restrict the price of community created resources to encourage diffusion of technologies and items deemed to be community building; Jones Soda drinkers rant about corporate distribution of Pepsi and Coke products, but advocate offering Jones in Target, Walgreens and Starbucks; Garmin users stretch the useful life of firm-offered maps with local patches given as freewear, yet anxiously anticipate firm-updated map packages; and Lomo and Holga users chastise the digital camera offerings as pricey, yet encourage the resale of these “toy” cameras on eBay for upwards of \$100.

The Operation of Practices

Each practice exhibits a common anatomy which can be described as: 1) understandings (knowledge and tacit cultural templates), 2) procedures (explicit performance rules), and 3) engagements (emotional projects and purposes). Each practice similarly demonstrates a physiology or manner in which these anatomical parts function together. Practices vary in their anatomy, but in their physiology they vary across communities. Above we identified the anatomy of practices. In the following, we detail the physiology of practices, or the manner in which the three anatomical components of the practices (procedures, understandings, and emotional engagements) cohesively function. We employ the physiology metaphor to emphasize the dynamism, internal diversity and interaction between practices.

Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002, 4) propose that “a person achieves a social identity [in a community] through self awareness of one's membership in a group and the emotional and evaluative significance of this membership.” The approach to brand community membership that we develop here is different. We assert that an emergent sense of membership and identity arises from the trajectory, or development of practices that foster the exchange of collectively defined

and valorized resources. This is consistent with prior work on communities of practice (Wenger 1998). Resources may compose cognitive elements of practices like knowledge of procedures and rules, status elements like self-esteem, and emotional elements of practices like commitment and pride, but may also include such elements as services, money and accessory goods.

Physiology of Practices. Table 3 (Physiology of Practices) provides detail of the physiology of practices from a number of our commercial collectivities. Practices work together for the health and welfare of the social bodies centered on brands. They can be combined in complex ways. The effects of interaction are at minimum additive and potentially exponential. Interactions can be either intra-thematic (practices acting together within a functional theme), or inter-thematic (practices working together across functional themes). In what follows, we unpack one example of a practice physiology. Milestoning is the recounting of salient episodes in brand and community relationships. A vivid example comes from the MINI “birthing” stories that are organized by participants in “production week.”

Good job Birdman! I'm like you. I watched cameras, checked tracking, etc. You'll treasure having these for your "scrap book" or should I say Minibird's "baby book"? Jake [the car] was not on a WW ship so there were a lot less options for catching glimpses of the journey. This doesn't apply to east coast folks, but the cameras at the Panama Canal are amazing. Was able to see the *Auto Banner* cross with my MINI. Hang in there. Minibird is almost home! (5th Gear, Phoenix, AZ).

In this conversation, the experienced poster (5th Gear) empathizes, encouraging his fellow enthusiast to keep track of GPS tracking information and port camera feeds, and comments positively about the Panama Canal camera feeds that West Coast enthusiasts employ to track cargo ships such as the *Auto Banner* mentioned in the post. Tellingly, the poster encourages Birdman to produce a customized “babybook” for the car which will allow Birdman to milestone the brand relationship. Scores of these “production week” chats unfold in similar fashion over the time between ordering of an owner’s custom Mini and its delivery to the owner. By stringing together (customizing) a host of unrelated web functionalities and through email and telephone exchanges

with BMW marketing staff, participants are able to track the physical movement of the vehicle. In this way, how-to, discursive knowledge is not only shared among community members, it is made normatively expected. It becomes something members do.

---- Insert table 3 about here ----

Tacit, know-how may also be identified. Thus, participants exchange rumors (when will the ship leave port), information (confirmation that a production number has been assigned, that a vehicle has left the factory), and empathic communications about the wait (socially constructed as an anxious time) for a first viewing, and driving the new arrival. Naming and other anthropomorphizing (customization) performances are encouraged during this time. Finally, owners engage an additional individual possession ritual, final pre-delivery customizing at the MINI dealer. Following these threads over the weeks from order to delivery, it is easy to track the evolving emotional engagement as participants develop a special dialect to speak about the impending arrival and encourage one another to create commemorative “baby books” to document the new arrival. This illustrates the explicit procedures, tacit know how, representational gestures, and tailoring to circumstances that together comprise a practice physiology. We find analogous examples of tacit knowledge being used across the other eight brand communities: TPATH gestures associated with song lyrics, geocaching hints shared among Garmin users through patterned utterances (rhymes), StriVectin community members use of finger tip patting in applications, Jones Soda campaign protocols associated with voting, Lomographers develop online posting styles, etc.

Intra-thematic interactions are the most common where the practices within a set focused on a thematic function work together toward their thematic goal (e.g. social networking or brand use). For example, community engagement is fostered when milestone (seminal brand

events) is combined with badging (symbolic representation of the milestone) and is part of the overall documenting of the use journey. Our data reveal that in the case of a brand enthusiast's first TPATH concert, a milestone is created (first concert). That milestone is celebrated and a badge is created or purchased (tour t-shirt). The accumulation of experiential milestones and their related badges help the brand user to document their use journey in a narrative format. Each badged milestone becomes a chapter in the story. Similarly, brand use is magnified when a user grooms the brand, customizes the brand to their unique needs, and commoditizes the grooming or customization technique for collective use. Garmin users have grooming practices to keep the device's face clean and safe (ranging from carefully prescribed cleaning regimes to the creation of fabric "snugglies"). When the grooming routine and customization are commoditized, it/they can enhance brand use within the entire collective. Since the practices are normatively expected, users feel compelled to adopt them. Commoditization makes doing so easier.

Inter-thematic interactions, or practices that work together across themes, abound. Inter-thematic interactions are evidenced when evangelizing (impression management practice) yields to welcoming (social networking practice) or when the positive word of mouth inspires outsiders to join the brand community. Another example is when badging behavior inspires the creation of a brand community badge that can be commoditized, or sold to members and nonmembers alike, as in the purchasing of Jones Soda bottles with customized labels. Here, we have a badge that is commoditized and inspires more brand community engagement or brand use.

Practices Operate like Apprenticeships. Practices can be seen as apprenticeships (Lave and Wegner 1991); their effects evolve over time. Members move to deeper membership through an enhanced grasp of rules and projects, heightened emotional engagement, and the adoption of new practices. They learn the needed understandings, the correct procedures and the appropriate emotional engagements. Recall the milestone practices surrounding Mini birthing stories

discussed earlier. Members learned when a vehicle has left the factory and when an auto-carrying ship has left port. They learned how to use the resources available to track the car's progress from factory to delivery. Finally, they learned what activities they were expected to engage in during this time and how they were supposed to feel. As Osterlund and Carlile (2005) so aptly note members "do not merely learn about practices, they become practitioners" (97).

Welcoming is the first practice to which they are exposed. Consequently, it is easily adopted and recent members can enact this practice with newer members. With the addition of more and increasingly complex practices, members' standing and legitimacy increases. Hence, new members may adopt the practice of milestoneing to demonstrate membership in the brand community and participation in specific rites of passage. In this way, members are recruited to new practices (Warde 2005). Additional practices are acquired as members determine the fit between their skills and the community's repertoire of practices. In this way, members transition from apprentices to journey-people.

The first step in an apprenticeship within the TPATH community often involves the first recording a fan buys and the first concert the fan attends. Threads on the TPATH forums are dedicated to the first song that made you a fan, the first album you bought, the first concert you attended and the first time you realized you were a fan. These seminal experiences are evidenced in threads dedicated to TPATH experience firsts and, as witnessed above, the discourse surrounding these milestones inspires greater engagement; tales of concert attendance begets more concert attendance and subsequent storytelling.

In the Xena community, fans note their first participation in a Xena event: the first time they bought Xena gear (costumes, props, and paraphernalia), or the first time they created and shared Xena-inspired art. As Zoey reveals,

The first time I went to the Xena section of the SCA [Society for Creative Anachronism] festival

was phenomenal. I had cobbled together a costume that I was initially quite proud of, but then I saw what the others had... authentic medieval gear including weapons and outfits that looked like they came right off the set. I had to have that too to belong.... Beautiful strong women in Xena clothes. It's addictive (interview 07/05/99).

Here, Zoey describes her awe at the first Xena event she attended as well as her desire to purchase more authentic Xena-wear and attend more events. Similarly, Mandy describes how her Xena engagement escalated in tandem with others who started at the conventions when she did,

The first convention I went to was a fan-run subtext-oriented but main-friendly [run by fans who support the lesbian reading of the show but welcome those who adhere to an action adventure reading]. I actually went with a boyfriend. We wore clothes we had in our closet... a mishmash of western leather clothes made to look medieval. Don't ask me how. But the thing is, most other people were dressed like that... stuff they had already. Not vintage or even authentic replicas. The elaborate costumes came over time. One person ups the bar and we all really dig it and compliment them and then we all start upping the ante... Now, you can't really show up in something you just had in your closet. No one would take you seriously (interview 02/10/2001).

Mandy describes how this practice began as a casual nod to medieval attire and became a quest for authenticity and even vintage costumes through competitive, escalating engagement in brand practices. She shows that practices develop; hedonic engagement evolves and deepens over time. Mandy's description of the evolution of the practice echoes Warde's (2004) assertion that "[p]ractices have a trajectory or path of development, a history" (139).

Similarly, badging offers a vivid illustration of the emergent sense of membership and identity that arises from practices. Contrasted with Bagozzi and Dholakia's (2006) perspective on identification with brand communities (wherein identification is conceptualized as an antecedent individual difference variable); badging is clearly an emergent property of membership. The greater the length of membership and level of engagement, the more detailed and intricate the efforts at badging became. For example, in the MINI community, the number and complexity of badges is related to the length or intensity of affiliation. What is noteworthy though is that badging behaviors codify the expression of that identity, suggesting the proper behaviors to be a true member (also see Muniz and O'Guinn 2001 on legitimacy), as well as the proper idiom for

expressing that membership.

The aforementioned tendencies illuminate the factors influencing the customer's willingness to engage in creating value for the brand and firm (Kalaiganam and Varadarajan (2006). Consumers become habituated to learning more from the community while mastering an increasingly complicated set of skills. This has important implications for the development of customer competence (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000), as it demonstrates that customer competencies are not static. Through apprenticeship, they evolve. In addition, observing members documenting a customization or cleaning/grooming practice, demonstrates that this evolution is organic and endemic to the community with a distinct trajectory. This is not to say that the marketer cannot affect the development of practices. Rather, it illustrates that, when left to their own devices, communities will foster and develop skills of potential value to the marketer. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) suggest that one of the challenges to co-opting customer competence stems from the diversity of customers' sophistication and knowledge. The apprenticeship aspect of practices suggests that vibrant communities can be relied upon to mitigate this problematic diversity.

The Effects of Practices

Practices Endow Participants with Cultural Capital. A competitive spirit underlies much brand community behavior (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). All practices, especially community engagement practices present opportunities for individuals to differentiate themselves through adroit performance (Bourdieu 1984; Holt 1995). Members compete to display their competencies: brand devotion, knowledge and history. MINI drivers compete for the best racing times, narrowest gap between custom tires and wheel well, or shiniest finish.

I'd like to thank K*, and M*, and R*, and C*, and C*, and H* for teaching me so much in the last 18 months... thanks to your help (and a bit of work and many \$\$\$ spent by me) I won Best Foreign

Car today in Blimey's first car show!!! I'll post pics and a writeup later on my blog - but couldn't wait to share the news and THANK YOU folks for helping make it happen. I got lots of kudos from other car owners on detailing, paint polish, style, theme, etc, and I didn't know squat about any of that until I started hanging out with you folks (V-P Tarheels Mini).

Similarly, TPATH fans compete on the basis of knowledge and number of concerts attended; Audrey and Newton users compete to demonstrate novel and wide-ranging use of the device; Xena fan fiction authors compete for awards on the Athenaeum website and strive to have the most intricate and accurate costumes. Competition enables members to distinguish themselves from one another and create a social hierarchy that members reference strategically. Consider this posting from the Lomo community: "Lomo wizard! You're good man, but check mine and Avery's out!! We got some sweet effects in the urban set we did. Surely, you'll admit we're in the game!!!!" Photography becomes a competitive, non-contact, sport.

It is through practices that brand fans become brand devotees. In addition to developing explicit and tacit performative skills, they also develop local cultural capital resources that differentiate them in terms of status within the community (Holt 1995). Consumers who achieve status within the brand community are reluctant to give it up.

I'm into the whole scene, but the truth is I stay in the scene because I'm really known for my authentic costumes and my swordsmanship. I mean people know me because of it and they seek me out to see what I've made lately or what moves I developed... it's theatrical and I guess I have "fans." ... Sure I sell some of what I make but it doesn't really make money or cover costs. I have a very expensive Xena habit and what I make on the costumes doesn't scratch the surface (Sondra, interview 07/18/02).

Sondra's status within the Xena community is a source of pride; she stays engaged because she garners the admiration of others in the brand community.

These tendencies reveal the "micropolitics of consumption" (Holt 1998, 22), the ways in which cultural capital pursuits are enacted in everyday brand community life. Members of brand communities accrue cultural capital via the accumulation of an increasingly diverse set of increasingly intricate practices. They work to maintain it. These tendencies also suggest an overall

positive trajectory of cultural capital (Holt 1995) in brand communities, with members safeguarding what they have accumulated.

Practices Produce a Repertoire for Insider Sharing. Practices provide participants with an almost inexhaustible source of shared insider jargon and modes of representation. Consider the possibilities arising from the practice of customizing. The following post is responding to a request for information about uneven ride in a MINI that had been “lowered”:

...progressive rate springs are more sensitive to load than linear rate springs - load being your weight. Also, never use the fenders as a measuring benchmark; front fenders are used to 'take up' build tolerances. The rear fenders are typically much more accurate as these are part of the uni-body... In the rear, measure from any of the three bolts that are used to adjust toe on the rear trailing arm. Up front, use the inner ball joint - front part of the control arm. And, while measuring, you can use the outer ball joint up front and the lower rear damper bolt to measure across the car - an X pattern - to determine squareness (6th Gear, No ID).

The practical activity of measuring and adjusting springs is embedded within a complex set of customizing activities designed to augment the car’s coolness factor by decreasing the distance between the tires and the wheel well thereby accenting the wheels. Other related threads are devoted to discussions and pictures of this distance and of wheel/tire sizes and configurations. The “show me your wheels” thread contains over 4500 posts of photos of wheels. One post in this thread brags “Almost No Clearance” in the caption to one photo, evoking admiration from multiple posters, .e.g, “msfit .. that is just ridiculously hot! now i really want the kdw2's” (2nd Gear, Queens, NY); “yea, drop it to 40's and never 'rub' again; PM SENT !!” (6th Gear; EastSide). Often this linguistic play takes the form of exchanges of photos accompanied by short lists of product attributes, e.g., “Gram Light 57S 17x7.5 with Dunlop SP Sport Maxx 215/45... 40 mm offset, rubs with M7 springs...” (4th Gear, same as yesterday).

In the StriVectin community a lot of insider information trading involves the use of StriVectin in conjunction with other products.

People are impatient for results. They don’t realize that StriVectin isn’t that effective as a stand

alone application. I need to tell them all the time, “You need to reinforce its effects by using skin-friendly products in general. It’s not a miracle.” You need a whole routine that supports it. ... StriVectin only works if you modify your whole beauty regime. I’m constantly reminding people in the forums, especially those who claim it isn’t working (interview, 06/21/2006).

Clara admits that whatever results she identifies are from an entire consumption set not just one product. She says that she shares the most effective uses of StriVectin with other community members and recommends complementary purchases. As these examples illustrate, jargon does the boundary work typical of dialects and provides a creative repertoire for insider sharing. This linguistic repertoire of representational forms and the trading it facilitates foster and recreate the community. They also create consumption opportunities.

Practices Generate Consumption Opportunities. Via practices, members generate, reify and perpetuate consumption behaviors and patterns. Consider the practice of documenting. Documenting captures and formalizes a consumption practice. However, in so doing it provides a template on which other members can build. One person performing (and documenting) a modification invites others to perform the same and other modifications. In this way, documenting serves a constructive function by establishing scaffolding on which others can build and develop further practices. Similarly, engagement in the milestones, memories of milestones and the retelling of milestone memories inspires more consumption. Within the TPATH community, it is a common practice to commemorate first concerts with anniversary concerts, as in fans that first saw TPATH in 1985 make a point of attending TPATH concert dates in 2005 to mark the 20th anniversary of their first TPATH concert. Interestingly, these anniversaries are consumption anniversaries, not significant band dates or dates that even have other social importance to the fan. Likewise in the Jones Soda community, consumers discuss their experiences with the Jones promotional vehicle and their decision to follow it to another location. These kinds of conversations perpetuate and extend consumption behaviors.

Grooming practices lead to new consumption, dictating what is appropriate in caring for the brand. Additional (and community sanctioned) supplies must be purchased and used in the approved manner. In the TPATH community, TPATH image and logo adorned clothes are valued and the community discusses care and laundering of these items to extend the clothes' life while retaining the precious meanings associated with tours, etc.:

It's a tricky thing... you want to wear the t-shirts [with band images and tour info] because you were there. You sort of relive it or at least vividly recall the concert when you pull the shirt out of your closet, but you know that every wear brings the shirt one more step closer to destruction... I wash mine in Woolite. It drives my wife crazy. If she doesn't pull it aside and put it in the gentle cycle, I get pretty pissed off... We have a system now, we wash them [concert t-shirts] with her lace delicates, but not with any hooks and clasps – we can't risk holes! (Kyle, interview 05/18/2000).

Kyle's determination to wear his memorabilia means he has to be careful when washing it because cloth gives out over time and both wearing and washing garments contributes to their destruction. His devotion brings about consumption of a specialty detergent, Woolite, and risks domestic conflict as he insists that his wife employ special washing procedures. Documenting often functions as a manual of discursive how-to-consume information. This becomes important to community reproduction when the behavior is complex. By simplifying or encouraging complex behavior and actions, practices allow members to become more deeply engaged with the brand and community. Thus, practices serve to institutionalize consumption behaviors. Here Warde's (2004) assertion regarding the primacy of practices is most evident. Consumption, indeed, follows from practices rather than the other way around. Practices continually create and perpetuate new opportunities for consumption.

Practices Evince Brand Community Vitality. It has long been understood that numbers of posts, replies, and hits provide evidence of participant interest in online sites. Our analysis would also suggest that the existence, number and diversity of practices that can be assessed on brand-related websites offers an additional method for assessing brand community vitality. For example,

NAM, Newton, and the Shipper Seasons Xena websites evince full-fledged practices in terms of the tripartite definition outlined at the outset of the paper. Procedures, understandings and hedonic engagement, not to mention specialized vocabularies, are all evident. By contrast, at the various Jones Soda sites there is considerable evangelizing on the guestbook and badging and customizing via the creation of personalized labels, cap and banner quotes. However, little evidence of the development of special symbols or language, or of performances specific to the Jones community can be found. Instead, such elements are borrowed from broader subcultures and various musical genres. Further, in contrast to the hundreds of threads consisting of scores of posts and responses evidence on the Mini, Newton, and Xena sites, at Jones Soda sites there are few threads (see table 2). Posts and replies across the various forums rarely exceed a handful, nor do site moderators actively intervene, a source of some frustration among posters. Thus, the music forum is marred by the presence of apparently unpoliced spam. Little evidence of emergent community leaders at the Jones sites in contrast with NAM (e.g., DIY mechanics) or Xena (e.g., prominent fan fiction authors) is to be seen either.

Based on these observations, we assert that more practices evince brand community vitality. We postulate that stronger brand communities will present a more diverse constellation of practices than weaker brand communities. Furthermore, the practices of stronger brand communities will be more complex and require more insider knowledge than the practices of weaker, less cohesive brand communities. Finally, hosting of online and real world interaction spaces appears as an antecedent to vitality. These assertions await testing in future research.

Practices Create Value. By now it should be clear that consumers create value through their participation in brand communities and specifically in the enactment of practices. Through these twelve practices, consumers affect the entire marketing mix. Each practice serves to enable brand use and encourage deeper community engagement. Practices need to be known in order to be

repeated and must be repeated to become part of the value creation repertoire. By providing opportunities to demonstrate competencies, practices allow members to accrue cultural capital through adroit performance which creates value for the consumer. Specifically, evangelizing creates value by enlarging the brand community and its human resource base, while simultaneously enhancing the brand perception outside the brand community. Empathizing creates value by providing affective resources within a sympathetic social network. This support system acts as a significant switching cost for consumers who come to depend on it. Grooming creates value by preserving the brand's performance and appearance. Customizing creates value by offering unique yet reproducible solutions to user challenges. Milestoning and badging create value by providing a motif with which to build brand meanings associated with the use journey. And so on.

Practices structurally add value by making actions reproducible and repeatable thereby allowing more consumers to derive greater value from the brand. Consider an example from the Audrey brand community. There, since the brand is no longer supported by the marketer, the repeatability of actions takes on an added urgency. Members must provide sufficient detail:

This page explains how I got a Korn shell running on my Audrey. It was a pain in the neck, but now the work is done and it ought to be easier from this point on. This is an overview of what I did: 1. Get an Audrey flash ROM image on disk from someone who knew someone who apparently serviced Audreys, and had a Compact Flash card that was used to restore Audreys to their original state. Without this image, I would have probably gotten nowhere. 2. Using the QNX RTP, dump the contents of the Audrey file system to disk. 3. Add pterm, ftp, and a clever web page to my local copy of the Audrey file collection. 4. Regenerate the embedded file system. 5. Put the file system back on the Audrey image, and flash it back to the Audrey. 6. Let the Audrey auto-update itself back to the 1.02.08.01 final version. 7. Run the shell and explore!

While this description presumes considerable how-to, know-how and literacy, it is a detailed accounting that others should be able to replicate. Without such description, few (if any) consumers would be able to realize any value from the Audrey brand.

We argue that value underlies all practices and that engagement in practices is an act of

value creation. This insight is intrinsic to explanations of value in traditional society (Mauss 1990/1925). Simmel (1990/1907) suggested (echoed in Miller 1987; 2005) that it is exchange or interactivity, which is at the origin of both the “rarity and utility” (p. 82) upon which modern economic value rests (Ramirez 1999, 51). In other words, “the actual values which firms endeavor to manage are thus neither purely subjective...nor objective... be they exchange or utility values. They are interactively established” (Dean et al., 1997). We also argue that the consumer who engages in practices is both an operant and operand resources (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Based on the fundamental insight that services are the co-production of value via situationally contingent actions between customer and supplier, we argue that it is of greater value to focus on the array and density of common activities that are productive of value.

A Process Model of Brand Community Practices

We summarize our insights with a process model of brand community practices shown in Figure 1 (“Brand Community Process Model”). The model can be read something like the following: 1) The incisive practice of welcoming provides a bridge for newbies to enter the social field occupied by the brand community. Welcoming is easily enacted, paving the way for the acquisition of subsequent (and more complex) practices. 2) The impression management practice of evangelizing may draw the newbie to the community, while the practice of justifying may provide the newbie social “cover” for indulging his or her interest. Each of these practices is readily assessed at newamericanmotoring.com where newbies’ tentative post expressing interest in the community or the MINI automobile is simultaneously received with a hearty welcome; reinforced with statements about how wonderful both the MINI and the MINI community are (justifying), and followed up with additional emails encouraging further engagement. 3) Community participants’ interests in brand use practices such as customizing or grooming evoke

further engagement through socialization of knowledge, and the practice of empathizing (“you can do it”). 4) Success then leads to milestoneing (“I did it”), and the other community engagement practices. 5) Together, engagement with these practices creates an insider repertoire of discursive, tacit, and performative knowledge, as well as normative engagements and jargon that 6) enables those who know the jargon to gain cultural capital through the marking practice, which in turn 7) contributes extra-market value to the consumer; 8) concomitantly builds holistic brand community vitality, and which finally 9) contributes value to the firm via the commoditizing practice.

--Insert Figure 1 about here--

DISCUSSION

Using extended ethnographic methods, we unearth twelve practices common to an array of brand communities, thus providing a catalogue that generalizes beyond particular activities documented in case-based studies. We then situate these practices in the extant brand community literature and deconstruct them to better reveal their mechanics. Practices have a common “anatomy” and varied “physiology” evincing discursive knowledge, explicit procedures for doing; know-how and tacit elements, taken-for-granted knowledge of worthy projects; and affective commitments to brand-centered practices, as well as intra and inter-thematic linkages. We find practices evidence remarkable consistency in a range of product category classifications. Practices foster consumption opportunities and create value for both consumers and marketers. Our study offers insights into collaborative consumption and value creation in brand communities, organizes our current knowledge of collective brand-based actions, and suggests what is needed to support collaboration.

Theoretical Contributions

Prior literature has not systematically analyzed collective value creation, used consistent terminology (“practices” and “collective action”) or methods for uncovering insights (prolonged research engagement, participant observation, netnography, interviews, etc.). Still, across disparate and noncomparable studies, we find considerable evidence that the practices we catalog here occur in the data sets of other published papers in marketing and consumer research. Likewise, previous studies concerned with the production of value in brand communities have tended to focus on the idiosyncrasies of individual communities (Kozinets 2001; Leigh et al 2006; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Our examination of collective value creation in brand communities is distinguished from the current accumulated knowledge of brand based collectives in three important ways: 1) we move beyond the prior literature’s examination of brand community single case study or even a comparative brand community studies focusing on the idiosyncratic to achieve taxonomy of common collective actions that are present across communities centered on a wide range of products and services; 2) using practice theory we catalogue the collective actions in our data and prior published studies, which have three integrative anatomical parts (understandings, procedures and engagements); 3) we offer ways in which collaborative value creation can be fostered and nurtured in the marketplace via practices in brand communities; and 4) Our process model provides a unifying framework for diverse work from the user innovation, technology and knowledge exchange, and consumer culture theory traditions. The former has narrowly focused on customization practices, the latter on customization and cultural capital, and the latter on the brand use and social engagement practices. Our model suggests aspects of practice that each research stream has ignored and might fruitfully incorporate in future research.

Our study resolves some limitations in prior research. For example, Bagozzi and Dholaki (2006) find that only a tiny fraction of the variance in brand identification is accounted for by

social identity value. We would suggest this is because social identity value is only a fraction of the values realized in brand communities. Similarly, Algesheimer et al. (2005) show consumers' relationship with the brand is often a function of a host of individualistic factors. The practice perspective in our work suggests that such uninspiring findings may derive from a focus on individual differences and subjective utilities. By contrast, our findings show how knowledge is transferred from insiders to initiates, that is, how “people come to an understanding of what is required by the practice and their role within it” (Warde 2005, 148). Our research suggests that through apprenticeship in specific practices and learning of intra- and inter-thematic relationships, newcomers are created as members via their progressive appropriation of practices (Duguid 2005:112; Reckwitz 2002, 256-257). More specifically, our research goes beyond the study of knowledge exchange (Anand, et al. 2007; Østerlund and Carlille 2005) to the creation of value via customer engagement. This is an aspect of practices not explored in the extant literature on practices and is only hinted at in user innovation research (Franke and Pillar 2004). We believe that this is a significant and beneficial contribution from a managerial, as well as an academic, perspective.

Our research supports three emerging perspectives in marketing scholarship: 1) value is manifest in the collective enactment of practices which favor investments in networks rather than a dyadic firm-consumer relationship; 2) ceding control to customers, allowing consumers to have strategic input as some firms have done profitably (Cova et al. 2007) enhances consumer engagement and builds brand equity; and 4) consumers can be operant resources, capable of forming partnerships in order to enhance the value provided by the firm. Firms derive brand value by creatively utilizing available and willing customer resources (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Collaborative value creation effectively fulfills consumer desires in an array of products. Our research shows that healthy brand communities have a presence in all practice areas and a depth

within practices that allow for prolonged engagement. The most successful brand communities continuously evolve encouraging collaborative brand engagement and practices that stagnate are modified or replaced by practices that are vibrant and dynamically enacted.

Managerial Implications

Our research demonstrates that if firms give consumers the opportunity to construct brand communities and the freedom to modify their products they will do so. Therefore, we argue that companies should provide customers with the opportunities and materials with which to welcome, badge, document, milestone, evangelize, and so forth. In essence, we argue that if more practices lead to a stronger brand community, marketers should strive to encourage greater diversity in practices since these multiple opportunities to cultivate these markets.

Our findings illuminate opportunities to grow, not simply exploit, “customer competence” (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000), and thereby build more co-creative (Vargo and Lusch 2005) brand partners. This research re-affirms the importance of encouraging practices among brand communities (Bullet point 2007; Prospero 2007). More significantly, it suggests how. Companies wishing to encourage co-creation should foster a broad array of practices, not merely customization, as is the current focus of open source and toolkit based approaches (Etgar 2008; Franke and Pillar 2004; Prügl and Schreier 2006; von Hippel 2005).

Currently a set of books, the Twilight saga by Stephenie Meyer, well illustrates the art of collaborative value creation by inspiring the development of collective practices. Unlike the Harry Potter series that also strongly resonate with young adults, Meyer and her publisher have at every stage of their promotional campaign encouraged collaborative product use. While not necessarily being aware of the full potential we find in our study, they encourage the practices we have identified. An official website equipped with forums invites welcoming, evangelizing and

justifying among readers. By setting up sub-communities like Twilight Mothers, the brand encourages staking and social differentiation among the fanbase. Through threads where fans are asked to share a broad range of thoughts on politics, spirituality and philosophy the official website encourages empathizing. Through creating a set of escalating patterns of engagement in the brand and the site, the corporate host creates and inspires milestoning, badging and documenting. Through fan fiction contests the brand supports customizing. Through tips on how to store signed or first run copies the publisher is inspiring grooming. In fact, the only practice the Twilight brand is not openly advocating is commoditizing. The brand community has gone off site to pursue commoditizing with Twilight inspired jewelry and artifacts for sale on eBay and paid distribution of Twilight newsletters that promote fan-run events that often charge a fee.

Our findings suggest that there are specific recipes for managers to follow to foster brand community. One simple managerial tactic is seeding practices. For example, a firm may find that they have a brand-centered community that has evolved brand use practices, but few if any social networking practices. To ensure the health of the brand community, our research suggests that the firm foster or sponsor social networking practices to build and sustain the community and to inspire further co-creation. Thus, it appears that sometimes northamericanmortoring.com starts production week threads that attract new members to the NAM community. Given that practices are emergent and become self-perpetuating in organic brand communities like Newton, Xena and others, marketers should be able to encourage their development. Agents of the marketer could initiate basic practices in a brand centered forum, documenting any modifications they make. Or, as in the MINI community, aftermarket providers could be encouraged to offer up various brand-centered customizing (racing modifications), grooming (detailing techniques), and documenting practices (e.g., transportation tracking utilities). Such approaches should be predicated on conditions of transparency, rather than furtive lurking and “Astroturf” creation. In other words, the

marketer's agents need to disclose their affiliation to reduce the likelihood that consumer market distancing/commoditizing practices would exclude the marketer or keep the marketer at arm's length. Alternatively, the marketer could simply provide a forum for users to interact and encourage that users modify the product. This appears to be the approach being used by the makers of the Pepperpad, who have allowed one of their employees to manage a forum dedicated to hacking the device (Pepperhacks.com 2007).

In a more complex move, marketers could foster community engagement by encouraging the practices we document as interacting to promote such engagement. We demonstrate that milestoneing, when combined with badging as part of the documenting of use, lead to increased community involvement. Marketers could encourage this tripartite constellation of practices by giving away branded journals in which consumers can record their experience. To facilitate brand use practices like customizing, firms could create a website that allows consumers to tweak the brand logos to suit their own color schemes or to include owner name or initials.

This research provides guidance for new product development. New product development requires two types of information: information on customer desires and information on how to best satisfy them (Thomke and von Hippel 2002; von Hippel 2005). A focus on practices reveals both. The development of a practice frequently follows the identification of thwarted desire: a way to combine StriVectin with make-up; a way to identify all Starbucks stores in an area (Garmin); a channel to express one's independent musical vision (Jones Independent Music); or a way to give the Mini that showroom shine that off the shelf options do not provide. The emergence of the practice reveals the desire. The evolution of the practice reveals information on how to satisfy that need. Firms might wisely condone the most successful consumer-created after market practices, perhaps going so far as to release official branded versions of the formulas devised via repeated community testing, perhaps Beta-testing them through the community. Firms might also want to

co-brand with the community in these efforts.

Von Hippel (2005) divides consumer “needs” into: deep and complex, high fidelity, and shallow and cursory, low fidelity needs. O’Hern and Rindfleisch (2007) criticize traditional market research for providing only low fidelity information. Monitoring brand community practices is a way to overcome this limitation. As practices develop, they have the potential to evolve from solving low fidelity needs to high fidelity needs. Thus, a focus on practices, particularly with a long-term orientation, allows marketers a better vantage on high fidelity needs. In much the same way, community participants’ needs develop from the relatively low fidelity needs of the newbie to the high fidelity needs evident among “6th Gear” MINI members, experienced XENA content creators, or Audrey, Newton and Garmin software developers. Other companies like Harley-Davidson that have experienced some stagnation in brand value might use such insights to identify unexploited value-creating activities to build out under-served markets (see Martin, Schouten, and McAlexander 2006 for an example). Finally, companies like L’Oreal that have developed a more conversational model of relating to customers segmented on their degree of creative involvement could perhaps find ways to structure and develop “content” for these conversations through the practices framework (Dias 2008).

Future Research

While we have located twelve practices common to nine brand communities and found evidence of these practices lurking in prior literature, we hope that we might inspire researchers to return to the data sets (e.g., British SportsCar, P3, Star Trek and Harley-Davidson) we assessed, or collect new data to unpack the operation of a broader set of practices as they appear in a wider array of brand communities. Such research might help us understand more about the necessary and sufficient conditions for brand community vitality, and deepen our theoretical understanding of

how value is created. When can firms successfully encourage value creating practices to achieve strategic goals? Which practices or constellation of practices are most likely to yield significant value, and under what conditions? Refining our understandings of value creating practices in existing brand communities might prove useful in creating novel marketing strategies that further leverage the collaborative tendencies of marketplace actors.


Table 1 – Research Engagement


Brand Community	Research Engagement	Description
3Com Audrey	20 months of naturalistic observation	3Com is an Internet-only device released in October of 2000, based on the Palm operating system. It is designed to be a simple and elegant way to access the Internet, check email and sync with Palm Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs). The Audrey had a rushed release, tried to carve out a new product category, and failed to connect with consumers (Kanellos and Wong 2001). After a little over seven months on the market, 3Com June of 2001 and offered full rebates to purchasers. 3Com no longer provides any support for the Audrey. Numerous Audreys and there are several user forums where users can find assistance in repairing and extending the functionality of their Audreys.
Apple Newton	6 years of naturalistic observation 2.5 years of participant observation 82 in-depth member interviews	The Apple Newton (PDA) was introduced in 1993. The Newton had a rushed release, tried to carve out a new product category and failed to connect with consumers. Newton was far from bug-free. These widely reported problems, coupled with a high price, discouraged most potential adopters. Despite these barriers, a strong and fiercely-loyal brand community formed around the Newton (Wagner 1998; Muniz and Schau 2005). The Newton lost its lead in the emerging PDA category to the Palm Pilot in 1996 and was officially discontinued by Apple in February of 1998. Since it was discontinued, users have come to rely on themselves, as well as the larger community, in order to keep their Newtons operating. Numerous websites sell new and hacked Newtons and there are several forums where users can find assistance in repairing and extending Newton functionality.
Garmin	3 years naturalistic observation 10 months participant observation 4 in-depth member interviews	Garmin produces a variety of global positioning system (GPS) devices, including the Nuvi, Quest and Streetpilot lines. These devices allow users to pinpoint their exact location in real time and plot directions to any geographic destination. They have a worldwide community consisting of users and company employees. The community manifests online and offline. The community is truly global in nature with multiple languages used on the message boards. The offline community is more travel based where people interested in certain destinations or dwelling in certain destinations meet to exchange use experiences and travel experiences.
Jones Soda	3.5 years naturalistic observation 8 in-depth member interviews	Jones Soda is a carbonated beverage firm that solicits customer co-creation from a community of devoted fans. The firm gives its 12-24 year old target consumers input into product innovations (flavors), packaging (labels, cap quotes), promotions (stickers, web content, price points) and advertising. Through the Jones Soda website, consumers are asked to rate suggested new flavors and are invited to submit photos and copy that would fit in advertisements and on the packaging. A mobile Jones promotional vehicle arrives at events like the X Games, malls and school campuses to give away promotional material and have consumers try and rate Jones soda products. The promotional vehicle stocks flavors of interest (new and experimental) and actively solicits consumer feedback. As of 2005, Jones Soda used nearly 4,400 consumer generated photos in its marketing (Business Week 2005).
Lomo and Holga	4 years naturalistic observation	Lomo and Holga are cheaply made cameras, Russian and Chinese, respectively, with inexpensive lenses and few adjustable options. Users simply point and shoot. The international origins, inexpensiveness, and simplicity of these cameras have made them both the subject of active community followings, most centered on one joint community (www.lomography.com). Lomography has come to stand for a lo-fi, no-rules and no-pretense school of photography that stresses creativity and spontaneity. Members create modifications and additions for the cameras, enabling them to do things the manufacturer never intended. The Lomo and Holga brand communities have over time merged creating one dual brand community, based around these toy cameras.
MINI Cooper	1year of naturalistic observation	The BMW MINI was introduced in North America in 2002. It is a retro brand distinguishable from nostalgic brands (Morris MINI) by the element of technological updating (BMW). It is “a brand new, old-fashioned offering” (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003, 20). The brand is introduced and sustained with a marketing communications campaign that creates an iconoclastic, high style, high cultural capital image for the brand that builds off the retro, populist narrative associated with the old British Morris MINI. Through numerous local chapters and its elaborate website, the North American community promotes chat, discussion of all aspects of the various MINI models, frequent group road trips and rallies, customization of interiors and exteriors, and racing, and facilitates both lateral recycling of parts and supplies and limited after market sales by qualified vendors.
Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers	23 years naturalistic observation 12 years participant observation	Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers is a Grammy Award winning rock act with a career spanning over three decades. TPATH successfully leveraged the music video art form, earning an MTV Music Video Award and a place on various compilations of the most influential music videos. Their ‘Greatest Hits’ album was certified 10xplatinum in 2003, while their debut release continues to sell globally; new fans emerge across generations and around the world. In 2006, ABC contracted with TPATH to use their song ‘Runnin’ Down a Dream’ to promote the NBA

Table 2 – Practices and Prior Research

Category	Practice	Description	Instances in Prior Research	Data Example
Social Networking	Welcoming	Greeting new members, beckoning them into the fold and assisting in their brand learning and community socialization. Welcoming occurs generally into the brand community and locally as members welcome one another to each practice Welcoming can also be negatively valenced as in discouraging participation in the brand community and/or a specific practice.	Muniz and Schau (2005): Newton users welcoming new users to the fold and pointing them to important community resources. McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002): Jeep owning parents introducing son as the “next generation of Wrangler owner” (43). Schouten and McAlexander (1995): discouraging potential Harley drivers who present community members do not feel are consistent with the brand image, or “prospect status” (49).	Strivectin: “the forum is very inviting. When I posted a novice question, I had about separate answers and welcoming messages all verifying the Strivectin is safe and that it works. They all said to treat skin early is a way to win the battle [of aging]. I felt better immediately to see others reaching out” (Tracey 10/19/06). Garmin: “Hello Newbie Jake! So glad you chose a Garmin!” (sakiking 03/17/06) Lomo: “Welcome Fran! Meet me in chat and I’ll give you a guided tour of the site” (imprezme 01/29/05).
Social Networking	Empathizing	Lending emotional and/or physical support to other members, including support for brand related trials (e.g., product failure, customizing) and/or for non-brand related life issues (illness, death, job). Empathizing can be divisive if the emotional support is in regards to intragroup conflict.	Muniz and O’Guinn (2001): Saab drivers helping stranded Saabs via moral responsibility McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002): Long-time Jeep drivers helping neophytes make a difficult stream crossing. Leigh, Peters and Shelton (2006): MG “gurus” act as mentors to newer owners (489). Mathwick, Wiertz and deRuyter (2007): Experienced users mentor novices (843).	StriVectin: “Aww Taylor, don’t fret. Aging is natural, but StriVectin makes the lines go away leaving only the wisdom☺” (tanwnee 8/16/2006) Garmin: “I often tell users ‘The Garmin is a great product, but it takes time to really use it well – to tap into the inherent logic of it. Stick to it. The more you use it, the better it works for you’” (Tim interview 10/13/06). Jones: “People get nostalgic for the old days when Jones was ‘our little secret.’ I remind them that Jones hasn’t sold out, just more people ‘get it’ now. It’s hard to lose the secret to let go of the club” (Mel 09/21/06).
Social Networking	Governing	Articulating the behavioral expectations within the brand community.	Mathwick, Wiertz and deRuter (2008): Asserting the norms of volunteerism, reciprocity and social trust in the P3 community (834-35). Schau and Muniz (2007): TPATH fans insist on group norms related to drug references and claiming intimate contact with the band.	Jones: “We don’t condone flaming. Keep the criticisms constructive and try to add in positive comments where you can” (sassymay 08/22/08). StriVectin: “The community is fueled on support and creating a positive environment. People come her because they need that. It’s up to everyone to maintain the goal” (Whitney 06/18/07). Xena: “We have our disagreements... for sure... but we keep

			Schouten and McAlexander (1995): articulating the “principle of brotherhood” (51).	our dirty laundry inside and wash it gently” (Karina 11/08/06).
Impression Management	Evangelizing	Sharing the brand “good news,” inspiring others to use and preaching from the mountain top. It may involve negative comparisons to other competing brands. Evangelizing can be negative (annoying, off-putting) if extreme.	<p>Muniz and O’Guinn (2001): Saab and Mac enthusiasts telling others of the virtues of the brand.</p> <p>Muniz and Schau (2005): Newton users preaching the gospel of Newton to the uninitiated.</p> <p>Muniz and Schau (2007): Newton users creating ads to attract new users.</p> <p>McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002): Jeep owners enthusiastically talking about the “love” for their vehicles with “missionary zeal” (44).</p>	<p>Mini: “In another MINI forum that I used to visit a lot, there were a few people who had had major accidents in their MINIs and I was shocked at just how tough and safe these little cars are. A lot of people see how small it is and think 'death trap' but they weigh more than most small cars and are amazingly rigid and protective from what I've seen - thankfully not first hand” (1st Gear, TX).</p> <p>Garmin: “If you’re thinking about a plug and play GPS, the Garmin has the most intuitive interface, the most map updates available – both factory upgrade and user patch – and the very best voice options. Here on the boards we have some of sweetest user patches” (05/21/05).</p> <p>TPATH: “When I find someone unfamiliar with their work, I usually burn them my personal greatest hits compilation. Like a primer of essential TPATH songs. It works. I convert them to fans by exposure” (Lana 08/05/02)</p>
Impression Management	Justifying	Deploying rationales generally for devoting time and effort to the brand and collective to outsiders and marginal members in the boundary. May include debate and jokes about obsessive compulsive brand-directed behavior.	<p>Kozinets (2001): Star Trek fans rationalize their devotion and attire based on having fun, supporting social mission of the series or value of collecting (74, 75, 80, 81).</p> <p>Giesler and Pohlmann (2003): Justifying file sharing in Napster because boycotting the music business is what “any real music fan” would do (97).</p> <p>Muniz and Schau (2005): Newton users tout the advantages of the Newton over all other PDAs (i.e. handwriting recognition) as a reason to continue their use of the Newtons even after abandonment.</p>	<p>Garmin: “OK \$800 and all that time and people say ‘why?’ and I say I save time being on time, not stressing, finding everything I want. I’m far more efficient.” (Mackie 11/19/2006)</p> <p>Lomo: “Well there are those who insist I’m not a photographer or even an artist. They see toy cameras as inconsequential, I guess. I tell them that it is art. Maybe its not for everyone, but its my art eye on the world” (nusan 06/21/05).</p> <p>TPATH: “I travel to see Tom. He doesn’t tour that often and I don’t want to miss it. It’s pretty pricey if I end up flying and grabbing a hotel, but what if I didn’t go and he never played another date! (Rita 07/28/02).</p>
Community Engagement	Staking	Recognizing variance within the brand community membership. Marking intragroup distinction	Schouten and McAlexander (1995): outlaw sensibilities and the upscale bikers are at odds within the Harley community (58).	Garmin: “Whether you’re a runner, a trekker, a geocacher, a builder, or just an everyday driver, Garmin is there to support you. Generally the runners and trekkers use Garmins in similar

		and similarity.	<p>Martin, Schouten and McAlexander (2006): claiming distinct and multiple femininities within the Harley “hyper masculine” community.</p> <p>Sherry et al (2004): cheerleader vs. football fan spectator roles.</p>	<p>ways: protective handhelds or wrist mounts, surface maps, timing and distance monitors. Drivers look for specific addresses, driving directions and need auto mounts. Geocachers use handhelds to hunt down coordinates and look for caches. Builders link up to other software to design home elevation plans and map the infrastructure distances” (Guy 03/17/07).</p> <p>Xena: “Once you’re into the Xena-verse you can identity with the mainstream or the subtext. Mainstream read an action adventure narrative. The subtext reads a lesbian love story” (Pauline 05/29/04).</p>
Community Engagement	Milestoning	Milestoning refers to the practice of noting seminal events in brand ownership and consumption.	<p>Muniz and O’Guinn (2001): Saab drivers relaying tales of their cars’ odometers hitting 100K.</p> <p>Leigh, Peters, Shelton (2006): MG owner telling story about purchasing first MG following a midlife crisis and depression (488).</p> <p>Arnould and Price (1993): River rafters on the Yampa River touch “kissing rock” to ensure safe passage over the dangerous rapids (34).</p>	<p>TPATH: Threads on the TPATH forums are dedicated to the first song that made you a fan, the fist album you bought, the first concert you attended and the first time you realized you were a fan. Doug details his concert milestone, “I first caught TPATH at the Forum in LA in 1985. It’s a huge venue and the parking lot scene was wild. People had the tailgate parties before and after the concert. The security didn’t even try to sho us out. I added my story to the thread and some people responded that they were there too.” (Doug 06/18/02).</p> <p>Garmin: “I got my Garmy for Christmas 2005. I thought it was cool, but until I took my first real road trip, it was basically a confirmation of my positioning. After the road trip it was my partner in navigation” (Nick 12/05/06)</p> <p>Mini: “The odometer hit 100k miles and I loved my Mini more than ever!” (Scoopmama, 4th gear, 08/15/07).</p>
Community Engagement	Badging	Badging is the practice of translating milestones into symbols.	<p>Leigh, Peters and Shelton (2006): MG owners displaying photos of trips to national events, and other driving related activities (487).</p> <p>Kozinets (2001): Star Trek fan recounting the first time she donned “Bajoran earrings” and did not care about looks from others (74).</p> <p>Schouten and McAlexander (1995): Body modifications that commemorate brand use</p>	<p>Xena: “You’re a real Xenite after you go to your first convention or post your first fan art” (FriedaBeMe 01/18/06).</p> <p>Mini: </p>

			and brand milestones.	 <p>Jones:</p>
Community Engagement	Documenting	Detailing the brand relationship journey in a narrative fashion. The narrative is often anchored by and peppered with milestones. Documenting includes the MINI birth stories of the car assembly and distribution; customization efforts; grooming practices.	<p>Muniz and Schau (2005): Newton users sharing tales and tricks of battery rejuvenation.</p> <p>Leigh, Peters and Shelton (2006): recounting stories about the level of one's own effort to put into restoration of their MG (488).</p>	<p>Audrey: "This page explains how I got a Korn shell running on my Audrey...: 1. Get an Audrey flash ROM image on disk from someone who knew someone who apparently serviced Audreys, and had a Compact Flash card that was used to restore Audreys to their original state. Without this image, I would have probably gotten nowhere. 2. Using the QNX RTP, dump the contents of the Audrey filesystem to disk. 3. Add pterm, ftp, and a clever web page to my local copy of the Audrey file collection. 4. Regenerate the embedded filesystem. 5. Put the filesystem back on the Audrey image, and flash it back to the Audrey. 6. Let the Audrey auto-update itself back to the 1.02.08.01 final version. 7. Run the shell and explore!" (posting).</p> <p>Mini: "This is how to install the front control arm (wishbone) bushings without dropping the subframe. I used powerflex bushings Tools; Jack and stands, edium pry bar (about 18 inches long), 10mm socket, 13mm socket, 13mm ratcheting wrench, 16mm ratcheting wrench, BMW tool 31 5 150 (and 27mm socket or wrench), Support the front as high as possible on stands and remove the wheels. Remove the two bolts that hold the outer ball joint to the hub with the 13mm socket...." (5th Gear, No ID).</p>
Brand Use	Grooming	Caring for the brand (washing your MINI) or systematizing optimal use patterns (clean skin before applying StriVectin).	<p>Leigh, Peters and Shelton (2006): MG owners trying to restore cars to original authentic, "showroom quality" (485).</p> <p>Schouten and McAlexander (1995): the elaborate rituals revolving around cleaning the Harley bikes (51).</p> <p>Muniz and Schau (2005): Community members discuss the manner in which the Newtons' batteries should be handled.</p>	<p>Garmin: You have to keep the smudges off. Use a dry cloth. Never use water. Keeping Garmy clean is priority one" (jimbean 09/18/2007).</p> <p>Newton: "I have heard some people using contact cleaner spray, and after taking apart the Newton spraying it so that it gets in the switch... I can't say how long this will work and if it will react with the plastics or not (given time). But I know that some people were successful with it. Personally I would try disassembling the switch and try cleaning the contacts." (Dan interview)</p> <p>Mini: "I try to wash at least once a week with a quick detail</p>

				spray during the middle of the week to keep my Zaino shining. I'm looking to add Hydro into the mix starting with my next wash. Newt, [thread initiator] prepare yourself for an onslaught of posts suggesting that you should keep your car away from those car washes 😊” (posting).
Brand Use	Customizing	Modifying the brand to suit group level or individual needs. This includes all efforts to change the factory specs of the product in order to enhance performance. Includes fan fiction/fan art in the case of intangible products.	Kozinets (2001): Star Trek fan editing and contributing to fan magazine (71). McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002): Taking doors off of Jeep Wrangler for an open air feeling (50).	Newton: “My thinking is this: a simple modification to the application 'Calls' should allow the "Newton" to dial a number (Under "Place Call: Using" – current choices are Modem, Speaker, and Telephone) and then keep the line open (like when sending a fax) until the user hits the 'Hang Up' button on the bottom of the screen. Once the line is open, the only hard part should be sending live audio. I mean how hard is that?; we can hear live audio from the receiving end of the call when faxing” (posting). StriVectin: “I mix it into my foundation and then it stays on my skin all day nourishing. I can feel it tightening” (dawnecko 2/10/2007).
Brand Use & Incisive (moving from the outside, through the boundary to the core)	Commoditizing	Distancing/approaching the marketplace. A valenced behavior regarding marketplace. May be directed at other members; e.g., you should sell shouldn't sell that. May be directed at the firm via explicit link or via presumed monitoring of the site; e.g., you should fix this; do this; change this.	Kozinets (2001): Criticisms of Star Trek merchandizing and commercialization (79, 80, 81). McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002): Jeep Camp participants impressed at company's respectfulness, not giving hard or soft sell (49).	Newton: “It looks like Phil is going for the die-hard pay-any-price type, instead of really contributing to the Newton community. I'm sorry, but \$50 for a product that'll only be truly -useful- to a small fraction of a percentage of the Newton community is price gouging, particularly when it could be a lot more useful to a lot more people, simply by lowering the price significantly. At \$10 like Louis' wireless driver, the ATA driver could become ubiquitous. A real contribution to the community.” Xena: “There are those of us who simply cannot let go of our favorite show. Luckily for us, some very enterprising folks took the story and ran with it. Now, we have several more seasons to enjoy with much more satisfying endings. My favorite virtual season is the Subtext Virtual Season. These episodes pick up a few months after FIN and leave no doubt about the relationship between Xena and Gabrielle. http://www.xenacast.com/xc/virtualseasons.htm/

Table 3 - Physiology of Practices

Practice	Procedures	Understandings	Emotional Engagements
Definition	<i>Explicit rules, principles, precepts and instructions, what is sometimes called discursive know-that knowledge.</i>	<i>knowledge of what to say and do; skills and projects, sometimes called know-how (i.e., tacit cultural templates for understanding and action)</i>	<i>ends and purposes, which are emotionally charged, in the sense that people are attached to or committed to them</i>
Welcoming 3Com Audrey	The community must actively recruit and retain users because 3Com has abandoned Audrey. Welcoming potential and new users to the fold is an important practice. The procedures for welcoming are laid out in the Audrey community: lead the newbies to the FAQs. This is where a newbie “ought to start.”	Audrey users understand that in order to inspire continued user developments the community must attract new users. Converting the newbies to committed use involved welcoming them and making the newbie feel that they are valued in the community.	Engagement in welcoming practices is a community building exercise, correlated to product development as a larger user mass excites innovation. Welcoming is a positively valenced emotional engagement.
Empathizing Newton	The Apple Newton is a product in a state of marketplace abandonment for 9 years, and in real danger of attrition, or parts breaking and the whole not working. It is facing extinction. This threat inspires empathizing practices. For Users’ stories of battery miracles are empathizing practices because they mitigate the threat of extinction. Users recite the rites to be used in cases where the battery has “died” providing solutions and emotional support for those who experience the battery failure.	The understanding is that there is some intervention that cannot be fully-explained. There is a spirituality embedded in the technology where if the correct rites are performed the battery may indeed come back to life. It is understood that the procedures are not failsafe, or that the user must supply efficacy or faith for a successful outcome to be achieved. It is also understood that this can only be accessed by fellow users support; battery miracles depend on the collective to support one another in performing the rites.	The engagement rests on the need for the battery as an underlying necessity for product use: “no juice, no use.” It also depends on the ability of users to support one another in the rite and the mustering of faith or efficacy. Newton users believe they own and use the best technology available and that it takes a village to keep the Newtons operating.
Evangelizing Xena	Spreading the word takes the form of Consumer Generated Content (CGC). Procedures include development of tertiary texts (Fiske 1987), stories that fill in narrative gaps. For example 48 episodes of “shipper seasons” deal with the Xena-Ares relationship, 36 episodes of “xwm” seasons fill out the lesbian sub-text; fiction “challenges” invite writers to imagine alternative endings or points of view; genres such as “uber” take essential	Fan authored “episodes” and other tales must be open-ended and generally employ soap opera conventions, e.g., hooks and bubble episodes (anachronous and asynchronous tales; dream sequences); feminized narrative forms are emphasized; realism is stressed in the in relationships not in the where or when of events (thus, Hercules, Jesus, and Romans coexist). Understandings include consistency with show plot lines and relational	Engagement includes authoring stories that enact value commitments and personalities of the key figures; a proactive version of the passive identity work identified in research on soap operas (Evra 1990). Commitments to costuming, conventions, and celebrating the post-Xena careers of key stars is also part of the Xenaverse.

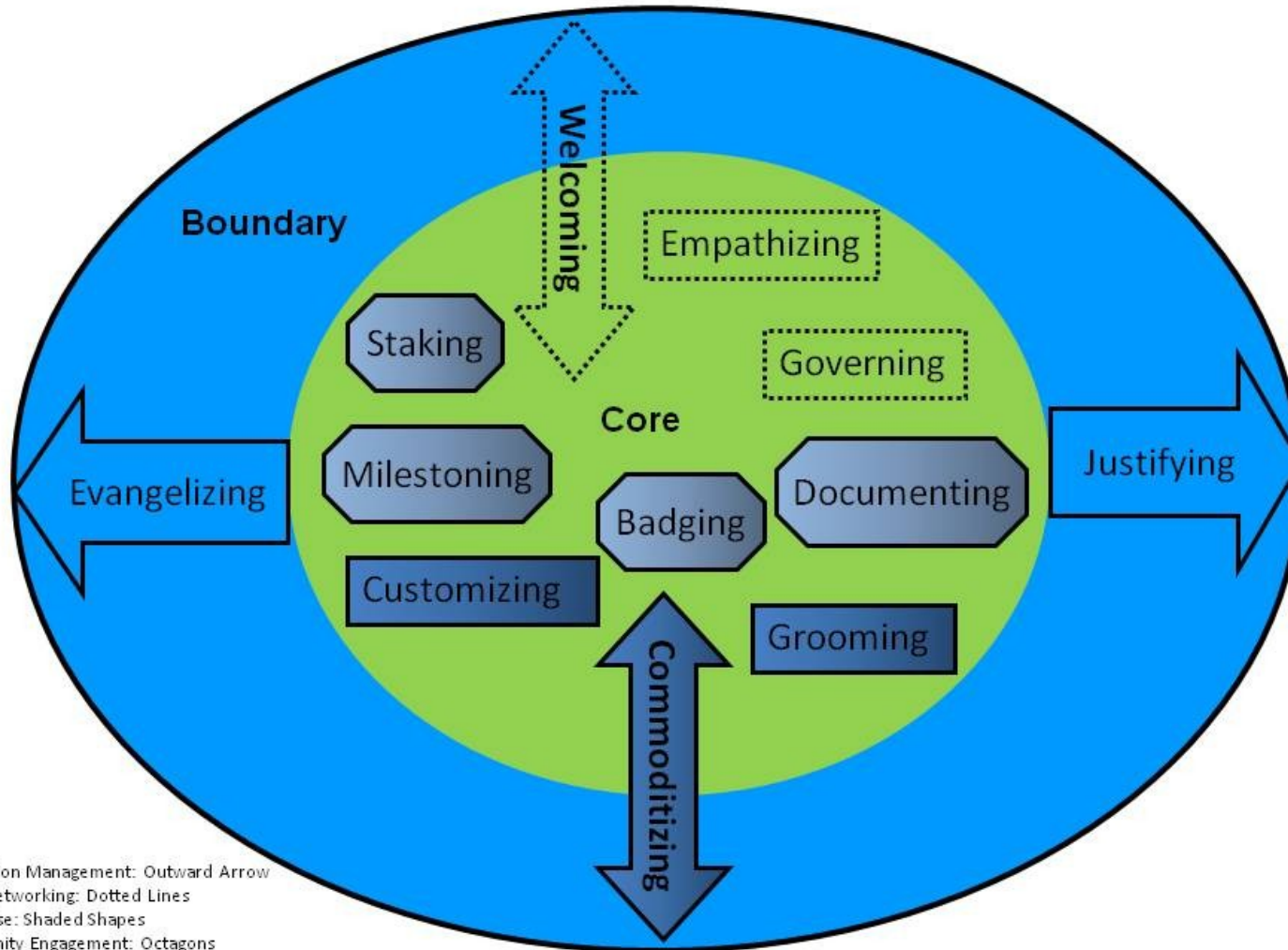
	<p>character elements and transplant them to other times and places. Post-show “seasons” production details are explained on-line. Feedback is solicited. Consistency with show plot lines and relational entanglements tend to be worked out on chat page discussions of favorite episodes, and assessments of the true meaning of events and relationships.</p>	<p>entanglements. Characters conform to Jungian principles. For example, Xena/Ares = anima/animus or union of duality; bad Xena/good Xena and Livia/Eve = shadow/self duality.</p>	
<p>Justifying Lomo and Holga</p>	<p>Procedures include proving the ability to perform in more mainstream, photographic genres. Users of Lomo and Holga justify their devotion to the toy camera by demonstrating that they can/ do use more technologically sophisticated cameras, but find merit in the quiriness of the Lomo and Holga effects. Lomo and Holga users often post galleries of their lomography and their more traditionally oriented photography interlinked.</p>	<p>Understandings include the presentation of traditional skills to justify the use of their time and effort on a toy camera that was originally intended for novices to capture images. The idiosyncratic image effects are deemed to be more artistic and credible and time and effort outlays more justifiable because the photographer is trained and competent in the traditional methods.</p>	<p>The emotional engagement rests on the freedom to abandon objective realism. The ability of the photographer to seek the surreal imagery and the fantastical elements of the images. It is a spiritual in nature as the effect is idiosyncratic and unpredictable and the outcome is otherworldly.</p>
<p>Milestoning TPATH</p>	<p>TPATH fans are encouraged to explicitly mark their concert events anniversaries and there is a protocol for concert story-telling. The concert stories are real life events and the concert must be explicitly interwoven into the fan’s larger life narrative. Unlike documenting which focuses on the use journey, milestoning focuses on an episode of use and how it is situated into the consumer’s life.</p>	<p>The understanding here is that TPATH is not just a band with catchy music, but provides the soundtrack of fans’ lives. TPATH events anchor the life narratives of fans. TPATH fans who engage in this milestoning practice, have an understanding of how to convey their concert stories. They have a jargon, a phrasing, and a manner of interweaving lyrics into life events.</p>	<p>The emotional engagement involves bringing TPATH into the fan’s life in an intimate and compelling way. TPATH music is clearly distinguished from background music as a central component in the life stories of fans.</p>

<p>Badging MINI</p>	<p>Badges provide symbols of experiences associated with the brand or the collectivity. North American Motoring community badges (illustrated in table 3) are consistent in shape and style. Knowledge of how to make them is shared online. Badges refer to car colors, to model, to geographic club or to real world performances, such as driving a particular rally route in the Rocky Mountains or South Carolina.</p>	<p>Badges are displayed horizontally. Group badges are supplemented by personal emblems. These typically include a humorous or ironic cartoon of car and owner's handle. Northamericanmotoring.com also generates individual badges that vary from "neutral" to "sixth gear," and that are understood to represent depth of engagement with the community.</p>	<p>Rally badges reflect achievements. "Justacooper" badges reflect a "little engine that could" ethos. Regional club badges speak to more general consciousness of kind and moral commitment.</p>
<p>Documenting Xena</p>	<p>Documenting shares the individual story of the journey of brand collectivity engagement. Documenting focuses on the trajectory of the brand experience and brand relationship. Procedures include recounting a confessional tale about engagement. Family ties play a role in socializing participants in their initial viewing: mom and daughter; older sister and younger sister; perhaps a romantic partner.</p>	<p>Tacit elements concern the content of the confessional tales: tales of rejection of Xena and eventual acceptance and tales of errancy and return to Xena. Engagement with Xena is associated with maturity. Engagement also entails appreciation of the complexity of the Xena character and of Xena and Gabrielle's multi-layered relationship, or Xena and Ares profoundly ambivalent relationship. The emotional ambiguity of the story is not appealing to all.</p>	<p>For women Xena is often named as a role model. For men and women alike, the notion of falling in love with a beautiful "kick butt" woman provides a platform for emotional engagement.</p>
<p>Grooming StriVectin</p>	<p>Discourse surrounds how to care for the product itself while it is in the consumer's care. These are not mandated or suggested by the manufacturer. For example, consumers are advised to extract the cream from the tube with a clean implement other than a finger tip, most often suggested as a make-up sponge. After the bottle is opened, consumers advise one another to be sure to clean the tube tip before recapping to avoid cream debris/residue on the tube. Consumers even suggest the tool to be a Q-tip straight from the box to avoid germs.</p>	<p>The knowledge the consumers share concerns the affect of dirt (Mary Douglas' notion of "matter out of place") and germs on the active ingredient in the cream. It situates the product into the cleansing and skin care category (highlighting medicinal and curative associations) as opposed to a beauty cream. The skin surface should be clean and dry before application and the product itself should be extracted by clean, some even suggest sterile, implements.</p>	<p>The procedures and understandings position the use of the product into a scientific understanding and perhaps enhance the consumer's perception of effectiveness. The emotional engagement rests in the consumers' faith in science as a solution, where a restorative cream, fountain of youth, is scientifically going to improve the skin's appearance (Tissiers-Desbords and Arnould 2005).</p>
<p>Commoditizing Garmin</p>	<p>Detailed instructions are posted on the importance of protecting the Garmin in transit or between uses. Toward that end, there is a practice of consumer produced "snugglies," or</p>	<p>The understanding here is that the Garmin's face is anthropomorphized and within the community described as fragile. This is not a manufacturer assertion. Unlike eye glasses</p>	<p>The emotional engagement stems from the sense that Garmin assists the user in locating themselves and their destinations, and protecting the user from becoming lost, from danger and embarrassment, and in turn the user protects its screen when it is</p>

	<p>protective pouches/sheath, for the Garmin. The snugglies should be made of soft, smooth material that cannot scratch the Garmin's display face. Microfiber fabrics, like those made to clean eye glasses are most preferred. Instructions for how to sew these fabrics are explicitly laid out. These snugglies are deemed by the community to be far superior to any Garmin accessories on the market. Consumers who successfully produce snugglies are encouraged to sell these online within the community. Interestingly, these user-created sheaths are even suggested for use with the Garmin accessory units or carrying cases.</p>	<p>which consumers liken the Garmin display to be, the Garmin's screen is touch-driven, or made for tactile manipulation. As such, it is not objectively fragile or easily scratched. Within the community, Garmin's screen is vulnerable and must be protected with after market, user-generated snugglies.</p>	<p>not in use or is in transit. The emotional relationship is made reciprocal through the anthropomorphism and creation of gentle protective sheaths.</p>
<p>Customizing Jones Soda</p>	<p>There are explicit rules for entering the label contest including instructions for what images are acceptable (i.e., no pornography or other illegal behavior depicted and size and resolution parameters). All photograph submissions must include a model release and a photographer release in order to be entered in the contest. Each submission has a 6-month active voting period before it is archived. Images may be reposted. Votes are tallied and adjusted for computer and IP address, meaning you cannot vote multiple times for a submission. In contrast, photographs for customized labels do not require the legal releases, but must conform to the size and resolution parameters.</p>	<p>The contest participants understand that they publicly post their submission on the official Jones Soda site and must garner the support of the community to win placement on a Jones Soda label. They campaign for their images on the site through agreed upon cultural templates, i.e., inserting a Vote Jones button that directs voters to your submission in an email you distribute to your friends, posting a message on the Jones forums including the Vote Jones button, or setting up a personal website/blog that contains the Vote Jones button. Although it is not formally stated, the Vote Jones button is tacitly understood to accompany all vote solicitations. This button indicates the official status of the label submission and ensures proper content for potential viewers (no pornography etc.). There is no mechanism in place to prohibit promoting your submission without the Vote Jones button. In contrast, the customizable label submissions do not get vetted through a community vote, nor must they be posted in any publicly accessible domain.</p>	<p>Contest participants vie for a community distinction of having a "label run" where their label is featured on a publicly distributed Jones Soda bottle for a specified duration. This "prize," although it contains no cash award, nor even a product, is a highly desired community distinction. Those with labels chosen for public distribution become part of the coveted "rare Jones Soda bottles," that consumers find of the street, collect and trade. Emotional engagement is palpable in the contest and on the forums where consumers query others to see if their label has been spotted, discuss label winners, and trade spotted bottles. In contrast, the customizable labels are charged with a different emotional engagement, whereby consumers create the labels, knowing they will have 12 bottles with their labels. They anxiously await delivery and plan the gifting/ use of their bottles. Some purchase runs for special occasions adding the personalized labels to weddings, graduations, birthdays etc.</p>

Figure 1 – Brand Community Process Model

Brand Community Process Model



Impression Management: Outward Arrow
 Social Networking: Dotted Lines
 Brand Use: Shaded Shapes
 Community Engagement: Octagons
 Incisive Practices: Double Arrows

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