

Brand Communities

Muniz and O'Guinn: 'a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand.' 3 common markers: Shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility.

Origins

- Belongingness hypothesis – humans have a pervasive drive to form and maintain interpersonal relationships, these can be established through consumption.
- Festinger: social comparison theory – group together with similar individuals and undertake behaviour that reinforces conformity.
- Zaglia: brand communities are a reaction to traditional forms of collectivism.
- And have been liberated from geography due to inexpensive and accessible communication.

A move to co-creation

- General movement in marketing away from an economics derived logic, in which firm and customer are separate and discrete, towards a view of co-creation, with customers collaborating in the innovation process and becoming endogenous to the firm.
 - Brand communities have emerged as a method through which consumers have an active role in the value creation process.
 - Supports 3 emerging perspectives in marketing:
 - Value is manifest in the collective enactment of practices, favouring investments in networks rather than consumer-firm dyads.
 - Ceding control to customers enhances customer engagement and build brand equity.
 - Firms derive added value by creatively using willing customer resources.
- Shau et al – 4 thematic categories of value creating practices in communities – work closely together to enhance the value people realize when engaged in brand communities, and promote the collective health and welfare of the social bodies centred on brands:
 - SN practices: creating, enhancing and sustaining ties among members. Highlights similarities, frequent contact enables friendships beyond brand boundaries.
 - Impression management: external, outward focus on creating favourable impressions of the brand.
 - Community engagement: badging, milestoneing, documenting.
 - Brand use practices: improved, enhanced use of focal brands, grooming, customizing, commoditizing.
 - Work together: community engagement is fostered when milestoneing is combined with badging, and is part of overall documentation. Brand use is magnified when a user grooms the brand by sharing homemade tips/advice, customizes the brand to his/her unique needs through modification, and then commoditises these techniques for collective use.