

Constitutive Marketing:
The Formation of Brand Communities in the Marketing Communications Process

Archana Kilambi

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Abstract

Constitutive Marketing: The Formation of Brand Communities in the Marketing Communications Process

Archana Kilambi

This thesis theoretically and conceptually examines the formation of brand communities through the mechanism of constitutive rhetoric. Forwarded by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) a brand community is a “specialized, non-geographical bound community, based on a structure set of social relations among admirers of a brand” (p. 412). Although research has demonstrated the conceptual tenants of brand communities, the mechanisms through which brand communities are formed and established remain largely understudied. This thesis addresses this limitation through the application of communications theory to the brand community model, and the examination of what are believed to be of the most notable and prominent brand communities – Apple, Nike and Harley Davidson.

The model forwarded in this present research represents an important avenue in understanding brand community. Understanding the antecedents of brand community, practitioners can set forth to direct and maintain their brand communities through relationship marketing initiatives, and in doing so, strengthen their brand equity. The proposed model outlines the notion that brand communities are established through persuasion and the rhetorical action of branding, and an interplay between the brand, its message and the consumer.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Literature Review	4
Interpersonal Relationships: The Consumer-Brand Model	4
Social Relationships: The Consumer-Brand-Consumer Model	8
Advertising and Brand Experience	15
Chapter 2: Research Methods	19
Chapter 3: Theoretical Analysis	22
3.1 The Marketing Communications Process	22
3.2 Advertisements As Rhetoric	24
The Brand, The Source, The Rhetor	25
The Advertisement, The Message, The Text	27
The Consumer, The Audience, The Community	29
3.3 Constitutive Rhetoric	31
Audience Response and Agency	33
Chapter 4: A Formative Model For Brand Community	37
Chapter 5: Case Analysis	40
5.1 Apple	40
“1984”	42
“Think Different”	44

“Get A Mac”	46
5.2 Nike	47
“Bo Knows”	49
Michael Jordan	51
“Pretty”	53
5.3 Harley-Davidson	56
“Get A Kick Out Of Life”	57
Love Affair	59
“The Eagle Soars Alone”	61
Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion	63
6.1 Discussion	63
Apple	64
Nike	69
Harley-Davidson	73
6.2 Limitations and Future Research	77
6.3 Conclusion	79
References	81

List of Figures

1.1 The Traditional Model of Consumer-Brand Relationships.	5
1.2 The Brand Community Model	10
1.3 The Customer-Centric Model of Brand Community	11
1.4 The Multidimensional Construct of Brand Community	14
1.5 The Revised Communication Model for Advertising: Multiple Dimensions of the Source, the Message and the Recipient	15
4.1 The Proposed Model of the Relationship between the Brand, the Advertisement, and the Audience in the Formative Process of the Brand Community	39
6.1 The Apple Brand Community, as understood via the proposed model	64
6.3 The Nike Brand Community, as understood via the proposed model	69
6.4 The Harley-Davidson Brand Community, as understood via the proposed model	73

Constitutive Marketing: The Formation of Brand Communities in the Marketing Communications Process

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Simply put, a brand is the face of a product or producer. A name or trademark, brands represent the attributes, identity, and position of a company, and how the company is to be perceived by its consumers. Where brands represent good, and goods carry meaning beyond their function and commercial value (McCracken, 1986, p. 71), brands are relevant to culture insofar as they bear communicative power to convey cultural meaning. The relationship forged between a consumer and a brand is predicated on this ability for a brand to carry cultural meaning.

Understood within the larger network of consumption, each distinct consumer-brand relationship gets interwoven and commonality of consumption is established between co-consumers. Holt (1995) states that “consumption objects become resources through which customers interact,” and that this is exercised through the sharing, and collective experiential practices embedded in the consumption process (as quoted in Schembri, 2008, p. 9). Through communal consumption, consumers, often with no previous interaction with one another, get ushered into a network centered on a brand. As forwarded by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) brand community is a “specialized, non-geographical bound community, based on a structure set of social relations among admirers of a brand (p. 412). Marked by shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility, brand communities are most likely to be formed around

brands who boast a strong image, a rich and lengthy history, and who identify a threatening competition (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412-415).

The merits of a brand community are many. Hoeffler and Keller (2002), identify that the presence of a brand community can help to build a strong brand, boasting that: "involvement in a brand community inherently involves active engagement with the brand" (p. 81). Brand communities help foster and sustain consumer loyalty, and allow for greater value creation through collaboration. Brand communities provide a sense of belonging, recognition and familial cohesiveness among consumers and brands.

Brand community members also become natural brand ambassadors, promoting a brand in their actions, and conversation. Cesvet et al. (2009) note that many of the best products and services owe their success to word of mouth communication. Consumer communication, specifically within the domain of brand communities, is becoming increasingly brand-relevant, reinforcing the ties of community, reifying values and beliefs, continually revitalizing the product, and advertising it to non-users (Muniz and Schau, 2007, p. 45). Facilitated by the internet, the voice of the brand community is gaining strength and breadth, pushing past limits of the consumer-brand relationship; this has proven results for brands such as Apple, Coca-Cola, Molson, Firefox and Volkswagen (Muniz and Schau, 2007, p. 45).

While brand communities are valued as vehicles through which brand equity can be built, sustained, and grown (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002; Muniz and Schau, 2007;

McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig, 2002; Agegesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann, 2005; Carlson, Suter, and Brown, 2007; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001), the current body of literature on brand communities does not address the formative process by which brand communities are established.

This thesis seeks to examine brand communities, and the process by which they emerge by forwarding the notion that brand community formation is piloted by a sense of determination on the part of the brand, and a calculated engagement in creating a strong image, articulating a passionate history, and identifying a competitor. An understanding of the process by which brand communities are established is an essential step in flushing out the current impressions of brand communities, and represents an interesting opportunity for development in relationship marketing efforts.

Extending the concept of constitutive rhetoric to expand the brand community model, this paper examines the concept of "constitutive marketing" – the conversion and positioning of consumers as a brand community through advertisement. That is to say, this paper explores the influence of advertising on brand experience and subsequently brand community formation. In doing so, this thesis seeks to ultimately establish a broader understanding of the brand community, and offer a platform for future studies.

1.2 Literature Review

The current body of literature on consumer-brand relationships focuses on the interpersonal relationship, as well as the social relationship. This section draws upon this

research in order to assess limitations and areas requiring further research in these theoretical conceptualizations.

Interpersonal Relationships: The Consumer-Brand Model

The interpersonal relationship between the consumer and brand is perhaps of the most common areas of research in relationship marketing. The traditional model of consumer-brand relations is didactic, as illustrated in Figure 1.1. This relationship is formed via the exchange of brand values, which are communicated in two dimensions – emotional values, such as self-portrayal and image transfer, and rational values, such as relationships. Emotional benefits are associated with brands wherein brands reinforce a consumer's *personal self-image (image transfer) or self-expression*, (Riesenbeck and Perry, 2009, p. 79, emphasis added). Rational benefits include all measurable benefits that are related to tangible brand factors, that is functional benefits or benefits that can be expressed in the *relationship of the consumer to the brand* (Riesenbeck and Perry, 2007, p. 79, emphasis added).

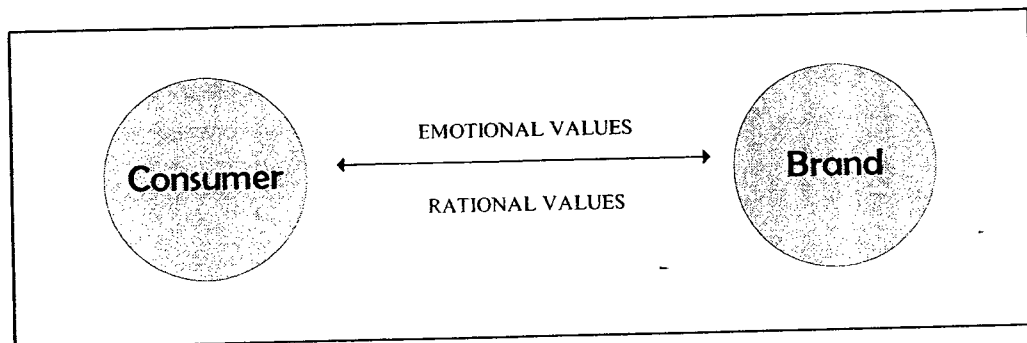


Figure 1.1 The Traditional Model of Consumer-Brand Relationships.

EMOTIONAL VALUES

In 1957, Wells, Andriulli, Goi and Seader studied the tendency of products to assume, or become associated with, particular characteristics. The authors maintained

that this particular phenomenon bears importance as “the associations which surround particular products ... influence sales” (Wells et al., 1957, p. 317). Furthermore, associations color the perceptions of brands to the extent that while certain products are preferred for quality in blind taste tests, the same products will be discarded for a competing brand when labels are identified.

Extrapolating this research to deal specifically with brands, Aaker (1997) conducted a study to examine the symbolic use of brands, developing a theoretical framework of brand personality. This personification of brands, or brand personality, refers to the set of human character traits associated with a brand, and is keystone to brand differentiation and consumer preference, perception, and purchase intention. In a study of 631 subjects rating 37 brands on 114 personality traits, Aaker concludes through confirmatory factor analysis that consumers principally recognize and perceive brands to have five distinct personality dimensions – sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness – matching the “Big Five” dimensions of human personality.

Brand personality differs from brand attribute (on the product level of valuation) insofar as that, while the latter hinges upon utilitarian functions, the former serves a symbolic, self-expressive role (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). As consumer goods, and brands, hold significance far beyond their utilitarian purposes, this cultural meaning moves first from the larger cultural landscape, to consumer goods, and finally to the individual consumer (McCracken, 1986). The movement of this meaning occurs primarily between

the consumer and the brand. At a consumer level, brands serve as a mirror of self-perception and personal values and characteristics. Dolich (1969) examined the relationship between products as symbols and self-concept with a model for psychological involvement examining both “the individual’s perception of products as symbols and [the] existence of s self-concept to which the individual relates the product symbol” (p. 80). Results of the analysis indicated that a strong relationship exists between self image and product brands, in fact, the self concept congruence is greater for most preferred brands than for least preferred brands; the self concept congruence differs whether the goods are publicly consumed versus privately consumed; and that additional difference is exhibited with congruence between real-self image with brands than with ideal-self image and the very same brands.

RATIONAL VALUES

Through three in-depth case studies and an extensive literature review, Fournier (1998) establishes the brand as an active member of the consumer-brand relationship, characterizing the different genres of relationship that consumers form with brands, based on their environments, experiences, and needs. In this conceptualization, the brand becomes more than a symbolic and passive touchstone for consumers, and becomes an active and contributing member of the didactic relationship (p. 344). Fournier postulates that while brands are inanimate objects imbued personality either through their associated with spokesperson (Billy Cosby and Jell-O), through complete anthropomorphization (Pillsbury Doughboy), or through personal association; a brand is not a vital entity, but

instead contributes to the consumer-brand relationship in that relationships themselves are purposive, structuring meaning and adding value to one's life (Fournier, 1998, p. 345). Fournier articulates several brand relationships, through all of which meaning is added to the lives of consumers in functional, utilitarian, or emotional means, parallel to traditional relationship models. In brand relationships, brands are engaged in an interpersonal relationship none too different from traditional human-to-human relationships, treated with the same social expectations and governed by the same norms of propriety.

Aggarwal (2004) concludes after three experiments that any violation or adherence to these presupposed, established relationship norms influences the overall evaluations, choices, and appraisal of brands by consumers. That is to say, if brands are unable to fulfill the functional requirements of a relationship, then consumers will reevaluate their relationship amending and cutting ties where necessary.

Taken together, these studies in interpersonal relationships represent an important scope of research regarding the link between the consumer and the brand. Introducing the concept of consumption on a mass scale, the notion of the social relationship between the brand, consumers and co-consumers emerges as an extension on the traditional model of consumer-brand relationships.

Social Relationships: The Consumer-Brand-Consumer Model

What is great about this country is that America stated the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All cokes are the same and all the Cokes are good. Liz Taylor knows it, the President knows it, the bum knows it, and you know it.

Andy Warhol, 1975

Holt (1995) identifies that consumers consume in one of four streams – consuming as experience, consuming as integration, consuming as classification, and consuming as play. In a study confirming the theory of consuming as play, Schembri (2008) articulates that through consumption practices, consumed objects become the vehicles of interaction (p. 9). Establishing common ground through their rational attachment to the brand, and sharing emotional experiences, consumers are bound together as nodes in a brand community network. Similar to the interpersonal relationship between a consumer and a brand, the brand community sits at the crossroads of emotional and rational values, but builds upon the didactic relationship by integrating multiple consumer-brand relationships in its schematic.

THE BASIC MODEL OF BRAND COMMUNITY

As previously stated, a brand community is a “specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structure set of social relationships among admirers of a brand” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 412). Akin to Marshall McLuhan’s “global village” (1962), the brand community plays a specific and vital role in a brand’s value and legacy, and is marked by the same qualifiers and qualities as traditional communities:

a shared consciousness, rituals and customs, and a sense of moral responsibility. In an introductory exploration into the concept, Muniz and O'Guinn engage in ethnographic research to legitimate the existence and conceptualization of the brand community. The authors suggest that brand communities are of "a particular strip, and of their time" (p. 415), indicating that they are neither everlasting nor equal across brand barriers. Additionally, the authors conclude that brands available for public consumption with a strong image, a history, and a fierce competition are most likely to develop communities around them. Extending the concept of the brand relationship from an interpersonal to a mass, or social, level, Muniz and O'Guinn demonstrate how the brand community carries an important significance and function for a brand. "Brand communities reveal the socially situated nature of brands as something more than a summation of attitudes or impoverished critical stereotypes" (p. 428).

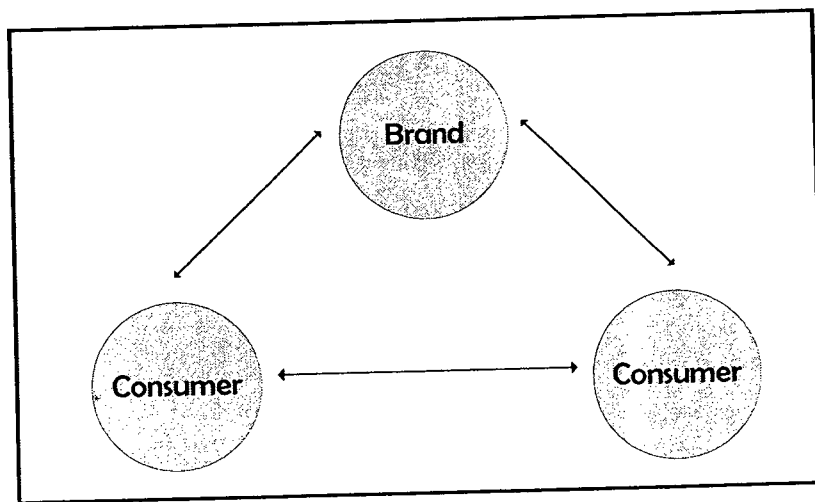


Figure 1.2 The Traditional Brand Community Model

The traditional brand community model (Figure 1.2) illustrates the relationship forwarded by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001). At its most basic level, the brand community

involves two individual consumer relationships with a brand, and the interaction of these consumers with one another. Expanded further, this model could broaden to include multiple consumers, and their relationship to the brand, and to one another. Although the traditional model is forthright in its articulation of the relationships between the brand, consumer and co-consumer, it is elementary in that it does not elaborate on the messages, perceptions, and context of the community and its members. In short, the traditional model of brand community does not propose the involvement of marketers in the process of brand community formation.

THE EXPANDED AND REVISED MODELS OF BRAND COMMUNITY

Building upon the basic model of brand community, recent studies have enriched the concept of brand community in practice. Where Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) look linked the consumer and brand to the co-consumer, and concentrated on the characteristics keystone to brand community, recent studies have developed a more through examination of the concept in light of potential mediators, moderations and contextual shifts.

Introducing a consumer-centric model for brand community, McAlexander, Schouten and Koeing (2002) present a means by which marketers can strengthen their brand communities by facilitating shared consumer experiences and flattering the dynamic characteristics of brand community. As depicted in Figure 1.3, the brand community model is expanded to include relationships between the focal consumer and product, as well as the focal consumer and the marketer. McAlexander et al. further explain that the elements in this revised model dynamic in nature, operating in flux to

generate shared consumer experience. In understanding the relationships of the five elements to one another, brands can highlight and lowlight messages from each channel to optimally manage their brands communities.

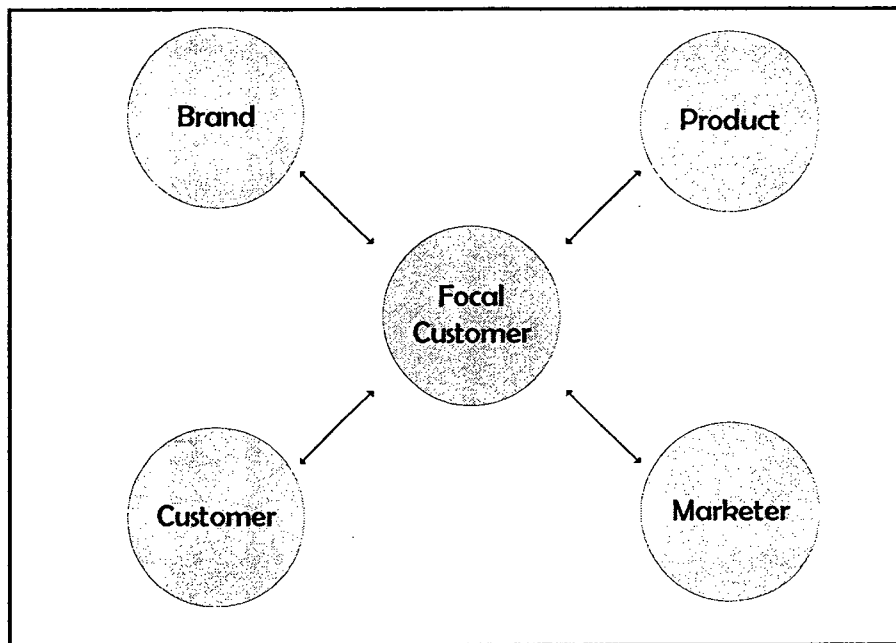


Figure 1.3 The Customer-Centric Model of Brand Community, McAlexander, Schouten and Koeing (2002).

As depicted in Figure 1.4, Devasaagayam and Bluff (2008) enhance McAlexander et al.'s (2002) dynamic model by clarifying the multidimensional concept of brand community. In their empirical investigation of the multidimensional conceptualization of brand community, the authors hypothesized a three-dimensional model of brand community membership, including spatial (physical or virtual), temporal (synchronous or asynchronous), and exchange (relational or transactional) characteristics. According to the proposed model, members of a physical brand community are defined as those who meet in a predetermined physical space, versus the virtual brand community who interact online. The authors further that the freedom of interacting virtually broadens the temporal

dimension of membership and that this development allows for both real-time synchronous activity and asynchronous participation that occurs at a member's leisure. Finally, the exchange dimension articulates that brand community membership can be transactional, denoting a low frequency of participation, or relational, implying a more frequent participation. The study concludes that based on the multidimensionality of brand communities, brand community management must be mindful of brand and member characteristics in their strategic endeavours.

Further research has delved into the social implications of brand communities. In a study of European car clubs, Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann (2005) demonstrate the social influences of brand communities in leading to either positive or negative consequence on an individual consumer level, as well as the moderating effects of a brand knowledge and community size on these outcomes. In brief, the study exemplified the "importance of purposely selecting, initiating, managing and controlling interactions among consumers when facilitating brand communities" (p. 30). Carlson, Suter and Brown (2007) extend these findings and in a study of the psychological sense of brand community. Examining the psychological relationships individuals engage in with the brand and its other community members, the authors conclude that brand-related constructs, such as identification with the brand, can also moderate brand commitment by individual consumers.

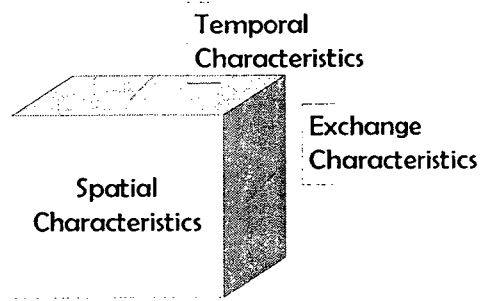
Brand community is an evolving and dynamic concept. The current literature on brand community has established a rich and thorough examination of the concept in

practice. One major limitation, however, is that the studies do not address the question of how brand communities are called into being. The purpose of this research is, therefore, to establish a conceptual framework for the constitutive process of brand community creation.

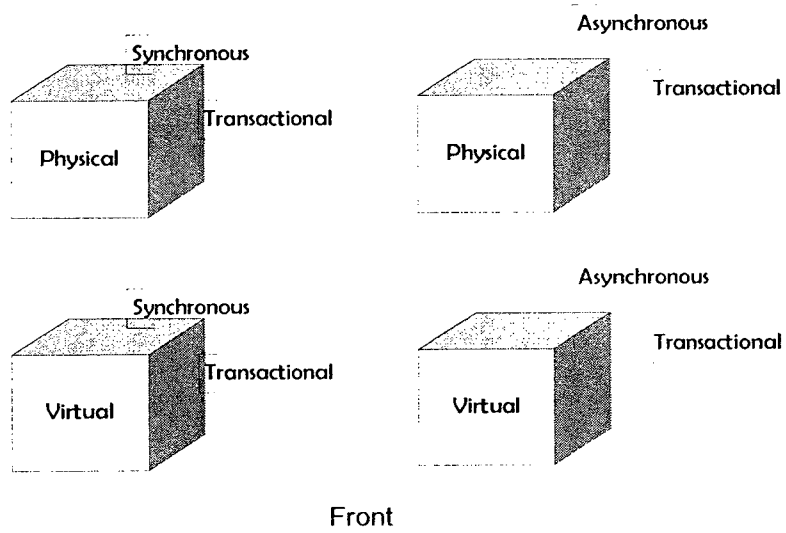
Practically, this study lends an example of how brand communities can be garnered and maintained through advertising rhetoric, and presents an interesting opportunity in marketing efforts. This study finds this particular avenue of research as important, in that it offers marketing practitioners a perspective of brand community from its onset, and from a brand-instigated perspective. In that it demonstrates the theoretical steps towards directing brand community formation, this study can be seen as a preliminary guideline and model of application for brands who wish to engage in brand community formation.

Where the current body of literature has looked into the brand community in progress, and the outcomes of brand community, this thesis seeks to address the inputs and factors that contribute to brand community. It is hoped that this research will help lay the groundwork for future studies that will empirically develop this formative process, and offer marketers viable steps in establishing brand communities.

Dimensions of the Brand Relationship



Building Blocks of Brand Community



Building Blocks of Brand Community

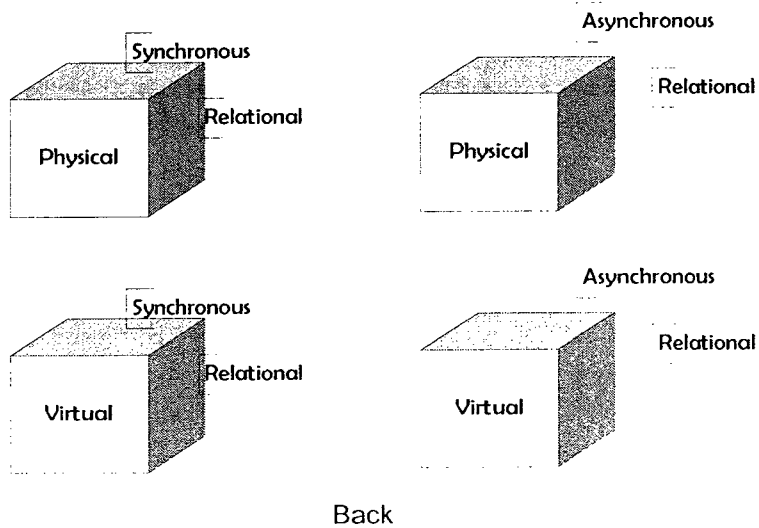


Figure 1.4 The Multidimensional Construct of Brand Community, Devasaagam and Bluff (2008)

Advertising and Brand Experience

Advertising carries an influence on brand experience, and in doing so informs brand community. Therefore, in order to better understand the formative process of brand community, the advertising must be understood as a mode of communication that carries transformative capabilities.

The Revised Communication Model for Advertising put forth by Stern (1994) describes the mechanisms of advertising in a multidimensional, interactive process. Understanding advertising as “a network of different messages depending on different codes and working at different levels of signification” (Eco, 1987, p. 425), Stern’s model (as illustrated in Figure 1.5) conceptualizes advertising messages as texts crafted artfully by rhetor, and envisions consumers as an active audience of agents engaged in the production of meaning.

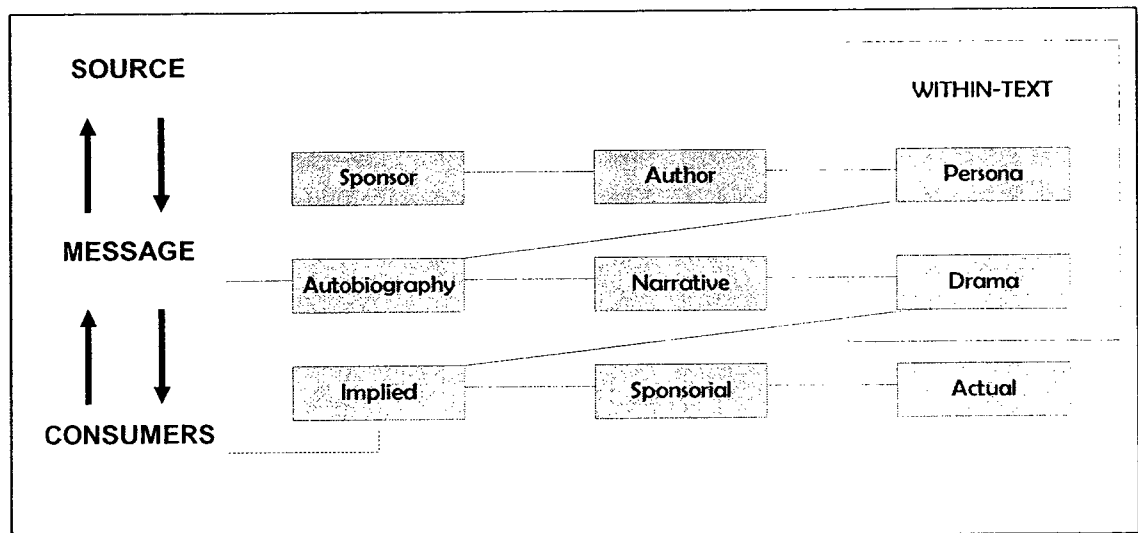


Figure 1.5 The Revised Communication Model for Advertising: Multiple Dimensions of the Source, the Message and the Recipient, Stern (1994)

Within this model, the source is split from a singular entity to a triad composed of a sponsor, author and persona. According to Stern (1994):

- The sponsor is the source of the advertisement, he who bears the financial and legal responsibility for the articulated content;
- The author of a message is the creative backing that encodes the information content of a message through the use of cultural codes and inviting modes of communication; and
- The persona is the implied author of a text, and is not a real entity; rather, the person is created for the text to communicate the text, and exists within it as a manifestation of whom the sponsor wishes to be portrayed as.

Stern's (1994) model understands the message communicated by the source as a discourse, activated by the audience in their allegiance to its codes and ability to decipher them. Stern articulates that the message can deploy the persona in one of three fashions: autobiographical (employing a first-person persona), narrative (third-person persona), or dramatic enactment (characters acting out events independent of a narrator). The mode of communication used to disseminate a message, as well as the medium, can both contribute to the adoption and viability of the myth within the target audience; Kaid (2002), for example, conducted an experimental research examining Internet versus television exposure in the 2000 United States presidential elections and found that exposure medium had a significant effect on respondent choices specifically in the varied strength it exerted in stimulating information seeking and political activity and Meirick (2002) found that ads that were comparative in nature provoked fewer source derogations and more counterarguments when compared to negative ads in an electoral, political advertising context.

The consumer put forth in this model is also conceptualized as three distinct opportunities, each accentuating agency and ability to create meaning through participation in, and interpretation of, the discourse. The multidimensional “reader-recipients” include the implied consumers (constructed, imaginary recipients whom the persona ideally addresses), the sponsorial consumers (sponsors who filter message content before it is disseminated), and the actual consumers of the real-world target market (Stern, 1994). Once a consumer engages in attitudes and behavioral actions supposed for the implied consumer, they become an interactive consumer, aligning the three personas and responding to messages in real-time (Stern, 1994).

The current study seeks to expand on Stern’s (1994) interactive advertising model, paying particular attention to the transformation of the actual consumer to the implied consumer. By building the knowledge of brand community around this framework, this study hopes to garner an understanding of the source, and its power to shape the identity of the consumer through the message. In doing so, this thesis hopes to fill the current gap in brand community literature. The brand community has been examined primarily from a performance perspective, creating a limited knowledge of the evolution and inception of brand community. While literature on brand community and current market practices evidence the importance of the social relationship with brands, the fundamental tenants upon which brand communities are built remains largely understudied. Highlighting and narrowing in on the relationship of the actual to implied consumers, specifically vis-à-vis the co-consumer, this study hopes to demonstrate how through effective advertising brand communities are constructed.

Chapter 2: Research Methods

Social texts do not merely *reflect* or mirror objects, events and categories pre-existing in the social and natural world. Rather, they actively *construct* a version of those things. They do not just describe things; they do things. And being active, they have social and political implications.

(Potter and Wetherell, 1987, as cited in Daymon and Holloway, 2002, p.141)

In order to fully assess and comprehend how a community is formed, qualitative research in the form of theoretical and case analysis will have to be undertaken. Once said has been established, as has been with interpersonal brand relationships, the concept and understanding of brand community will be strengthened, with directions for future research and increased applicability in the brand valuation process.

Including literature from communications theory and the social sciences, and applying it to the already established literature on brand communities, through theoretical analysis, relationships between concepts can be explored in order to generate a theoretical basis for the understanding of brand community development. Developing both inductively and deductively, through analysis, propositions can be developed in more detail and will stimulate explanatory power. Of primary interest in the application of communications theory, are models developed on rhetoric and rhetorical action.

A close analysis of the work in communications and rhetorical studies of Charland (1987) will be beneficial to such an analysis. In his 1983 doctoral thesis, Charland developed the concept of constitutive rhetoric in the examination of the “People Quebecois,” a collective created by an outside body. Central to Charland’s theory is that a constitutive rhetoric is the process of constituting a collective subject, through the

positioning of the collective subject as transhistorical, and offering the collective the illusion of freedom, while in reality constraining them to the narrative which calls them into being (Charland, 1987). Charland's studies concludes that in order for constitutive rhetoric to operate as an effective power, audience members must first be successfully interpellated, and second must adhere to the action necessitated by the tautological logic of the message.

Once a formal understanding has been hypothesized through theory building and literature review, an intensive investigation of specific brands will seek to substantiate the proposed theoretical concepts. An in-depth focus via a case study will help to increase the knowledge of the practical applicability and viability of the theoretical model, as well as will breathe life into the proposed concepts by calling upon reality.

Case selection will be based on and employ a practical method. The current analysis is exploratory, and thus will be best served by a case wherein strong brand communities are in existence, and whose advertising materials are accessible and contemporary. Current literature calls out to the Apple, Nike, and Harley-Davidson brand communities as exemplars in the field, as all were borne of humble beginnings but rose beyond their starting point with the help of robust brand personalities, and strong advertising campaigns.

In the examination of each brand, advertisement analysis will be employed to discover the processes and developmental mechanisms of brand community. The case-

based analysis will be rooted in the history of advertisements, as advertisements are social texts that point to the language and rhetorical practices which placed the Apple, Nike and Harley-Davidson brand communities into motion, and sustained their existence.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Analysis

In order to understand the implications and potential applications advertising on brand community formation, it must be first placed within the context of the marketing communications process. To that end, this section outlines the marketing communications process, and its three its three key components - the source, the message and the audience. The theoretical analysis further develops the understanding of advertising as rhetoric and the concept of constitutive rhetoric, to highlight where and how persuasion occurs in advertising.

3.1 The Marketing Communications Process

The marketing communications process involves a sender encoding a message and transmitting it through media channels to an intended recipient. The message is then decoded by the receiver, who responds to it and communicates this response back to the sender in the form of feedback. In this model, the sender is the business, firm or organization; the encoding process, the practice of putting thought in symbolic form; the message, the set of symbols that a sender transmits; the media, the channel by which the message is delivered to the receiver; decoding, the process by which the receiver understands and assigns meaning to the message; the receiver the market, either individuals or businesses; the response the initial reactions of the receiver (awareness, purchase, attitude towards the message); and feedback the parts of the response that are communicated back to the sender, to later be appropriated in future endeavors (Kotler, Armstrong and Cunningham, 2002, p. 546).

Keystone to the communication process is the message, the mechanism by which the sender communicates with the receiver. For a message to be effective, the sender's encoding process must mesh with the receiver's decoding process. Therefore, designing a message involves identifying the target audience; the target audience will effect the communication's decisions of what will be said, how it will be said, when it will be said, where it will be said and who will say it (Kotler et al., 2002, p. 547).

Marketing research is the most effective means for gathering information about a target audience.

Marketing research is the function which links the consumer, consumer and public to the marketing through information – *information used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; generate, refine and evaluate marketing actions; monitor marketing performance; and improve understanding of marketing as a process*

(McDaniel and Gates, 2004, p. 5, emphasis added).

Through surveys, experiments, and observation, the information garnered through marketing research is hinged upon description and prescription – gathering statements of fact on consumer preferences, trends, and needs, and outlining the best practices for firms in light of described marketplace opportunities. In that marketing research takes a proactive, consumer-oriented approach in identifying and characterizing a target market, advertisers generally assume a thorough, extensive knowledge of an unchanging and unified body of consumers who will be informed by the advertising message and act only upon their own volition and their attitude towards the ad.

Research in marketing communications has highlighted this concept, in its exploration of consumer attitudes and information processing. Previous research has

examined consumer responses to humour in advertisements (Cline, Altsech and Kellaris, 2003), effects of campaign theme consistency (Braun-LaTour and LaTour, 2004), consumer responses to tropes in print advertising (Toncar and Munch, 2001), attitude towards ad as affected by context and ad similarity (Pelsmacker, Guens, and Anackaert, 2002), and the role of spokes-characters in creating trust and positive brand attitudes (Garretson and Neidrich, 2004); however, the current body of research not examined the internal dynamics of advertising in identity formation and the constitution of collective bodies.

As much as an advertisement and product offering is tailored to an identified target market, the message can also in a sense 'create' or 'call into being' the target market for whom the message was intended. This is insofar as a message can carry a function that extends beyond its informative role. Advertising is not communication for communication's sake, and when understood as more than simply everyday speech, the effect of advertising expands beyond that imbedded in the traditional communication model. Advertising thus must be conceptualized in an expansive framework which draws upon its constitutive capabilities, its capacity to communicate cultural meaning, and to its ability resonate ideological tenants within the minds of consumers.

3.2 Advertising As Rhetoric

Rhetoric, as an area of study, is concerned with how humans use language to reach an agreement that permits coordination effort. In its most basic form, rhetorical communication occurs wherever persuasion occurs; wherever one person engages another in an exchange of symbols to accomplish some goal (Hauser, 2002, p. 3).

Rhetoric is pragmatic in its attempt to coordinate social action, and influence human choices on specific matters that require attention.

Advertising is a rhetorical event insofar as it is a commercial message, sent from a sponsor to a consumer through a medium, with the specific intent of influencing purchase decisions or instigating thought on matters of consumption. The following theoretical conceptualization outlines the source, the message, and the audience as agents in rhetorical action, in order to understand their full range and roles in the marketing communication process.

The Brand, The Source, The Rhetor

The role of the rhetor is to forward a particular argument, and at the base level, audiences serve to legitimate the rhetor and his claims, ideology, and desires. Without the sound backing of an audience, a rhetor's address, his beliefs, are little more than hearsay. Life jackets for rhetorical concepts, audiences provide the ground upon which arguments sink or swim. Therefore a rhetor accrues his leadership by sourcing it in an audience which is developed specifically for his argument. To be created as a leader, the rhetor must first create his audience; as Chiam Perelman (1969) describes: "for argumentation to exist, an effective community of minds must be realized at a given moment" (p. 14).

To ascent to power, a rhetor first seeks to construct an image of himself, his character, who or what kind of person he wishes to expose himself as. This, the implied

author, is what Black (1970) labels as the “first persona”. Black explains that implied author of a discourse is a production, and artificial creation: “a persona, but not necessarily a person” (p. 111). Playing a role, the author creates a two-dimensional version of himself, with an ethos and dianoia. The ethos represents the rhetor’s moral character and the dianoia his intellectual virtue. Both of these elements are shaped first and foremost by ideology¹, but are taken to new heights by the rhetor. To identify the first persona, one need only look to a rhetor’s discourse, in effect a *roman à clef*, containing traces and tokens of authorship. It is through this creative process that a rhetor proves himself as credible and virtuous – failure to establish these aesthetics translates to a failure to persuade.

After establishing himself as the first persona, in almost a god-like task, the rhetor then seeks to ‘invent’ his audience in his image. The rhetor constructs his audience so that they will be perceptive to his claims, and will positively appraise his leadership and convictions. This audience conceptualization is what Black calls the “second persona” it is the implied auditor of a rhetor’s address, an express understanding of who he wants his audience to be. In the marketplace of ideas, effective rhetoric and argumentation demands that the rhetor positions himself according to the laws of supply and demand, anticipating the unforeseen and the compelling needs, expectations and prior knowledge of the audience so that he may provide for them accordingly.

¹ Black understands ideology Marxists terms as “the network of interconnected conviction that functions in a man epistemically and that shapes his identity by determining how he views the world” (Black, 1970, 112).

In advertising, the source – an organization or business – engages in marketing research in order to identify opportunities for new products, or new product development. In doing so, the firm is establishing themselves vis-à-vis their intended consumer or target market. This initial identification of a target market serves as a skeleton upon which the organization can develop a persona of itself, or whom it wishes to be (or its product to serve) in the eyes of the audience. Once this action is completed, the organization constructs the message to deliver this product to the market. Creating the second persona, the message exudes characteristic principles and practices to be assumed and exercised by the audience.

The Advertisement, The Message, The Text

Audiences can't be constructed out of thin air, or of a rhetor's pure imagination. Fundamentally, all members of an audience already know and understand themselves as a collective. Nonetheless, being self-proclaimed isn't enough to substantiate an audience as a veritable group; an audience must be hailed by an outside source to be legitimated. Persuasion depends wholly on commonality of thought, and a shared encoding and decoding process between the rhetor and the audience.

The human world is a weave of mythic significations, a text; all apparently unorganized phenomena are actually instances of structural patterns and relations. The rhetor's creative liberty is exercised in his formulation myth, the explicit use of the image of a people to create of individuals an audience. A collection of individuals is transformed into 'a people', an audience, through the mechanism of cultural meaning as

manifested in myth. Myth works by allowing a particular image to reinforce preconceptions, prejudices and thought patterns – and making them appear to have universal validity. Myth functions when an image is fused with a value system, a signifier with a signified, and becomes the identity and foundation of the audience in rhetorical situations. As myths are constantly rising and falling, so too are conceptualizations of the people. As Michael Calvin McGee states in his *In Search of the People: A Rhetorical Alternative* (1975) the audience are a process, and not an end in themselves. An articulated myth gives meaning to, and justifies ideological, spiritual, and emotional commitments; it "presupposes a people who legislate[s] reality with their collective belief" (p. 67).

Myth provides the parameters of audience membership, and represents those who adhere to a moment as generations in and of themselves. Their identity is contained in the definition of myth – the ideology, the axioms, the common threads of interest and being – and transgresses the usual qualifiers of age, geography, gender, or income. 'The people' remain linked in very the myth which conditioned their creation. The rhetoric of the myth serves not to simply to persuade the audience, but rather to create and identify them. The enactment of the myth is the establishment of the rhetor's audience. It calls into being a reflexive audience, existing only by ways of the myth and only insofar as they myth lives in their system of beliefs. The people are thus not a pure product of the myth, but a response to it, filtering the myth through their experiences before turning it into conviction. The myth stresses a rethinking of the current situation, it permits a judgment, it allows for individuals to band together around a certain cause.

Myth is exercised in the cultural significance of advertisements. Advertising images draw upon socio-cultural meanings to create identity, and reframe these meanings as inherent to the products (Goldman, 1992). Advertising is, in some fashion, a metaphor, likening one thing as equivalent to another, fusing an arbitrary signifier with a signified articulating the cultural codes and myth the message seeks to exploit. An advertisement is thus an extrospective equation, replacing an item within one domain from an item in another, and organizing our system of beliefs by saying *this* is like *that*. Marchand (1986) identified that:

If the metaphors, syntactical patterns, and verbal and visual “vocabularies” of our common language establish our parameters of thought and cut the furrows along which our ideas tend to flow, the advertising has played a significant role in establishing our frames of reference and perception
(p. xx)

This effect of establishing frames of social and cultural reference and delineating the boundaries for identity and discussion is particularly strong given the repetitive nature of advertisements. Zajonc (1968) demonstrated that as brand exposure increases, so do affective favourable reactions, and Cox and Cox (1998) found that consumers evaluated brands more positive after multiple exposures to advertisements.

The Consumer, The Audience, The Community

Publics are not fixed or pre-given, but rather arise from a rhetorical experience. While rhetorical messages are designed with an audience in mind, audiences need to be considered in two senses – the imagined audience and the actual audience (Herrick, 1998). The imagined audience is Black’s second persona, the intended recipient of the

message, the person(s) the rhetor has in mind when constructing the message. This concept of the audience is akin to Stern's (1994) concept of the implied consumer, an audience cast in a role constructed in the within-text imagination for the source. The second sense of audience is the actual audience, or actual consumer. This is the physical group that encounters the message. This concept is slightly divergent from the actual consumer (Stern, 1994), insofar as the actual consumer is understood as the individuals who comprise a pre-selected target market, and the actual audience stretches beyond this definition to include all those who hear a message.

Rhetorical persuasion and identification will occur for only those publics who transcend from actuality to their imagined selves. As a collective, publics exist rhetorically, presupposed by three conditions: that they are active, that they emerge, and that they are rhetorically competent. Publics are active in that they are recognized only by ways that they manifest attention and action to public issues. A public emerges insofar as it is constituted, insofar as individuals engage in a discourse - making appeals, sharing opinion, and assessing public messages. Finally, rhetorical competency is defined as the capacity to participate in the rhetorical process; in absence of this and the two aforementioned traits, membership to a public is excluded (Hauser, 2002, p. 86).

3.3 Constitutive Rhetoric

Where advertising is rhetoric, the actions elicited by and through rhetoric must be articulated in order to frame the influence of advertising on brand community formation. Rhetoric is articulated in order to elicit recipient responses, and according to Hauser (2002), is exercised in different genres of actions:

- Situated Action: A rhetorical event is a specific manifestation of language use at a specific time;
- Symbolic Action: Rhetoric involves the actions of humans seeking agreement on their interpretations of specific experiences or conditions;
- Transaction: Rhetoric involves an exchange in information;
- Social Action: Rhetoric is social engagement in that it involves at least one person attempting to communicate with at least one other person;
- Strategic Action: Rhetoric is intentional and calculates what can and cannot be done to achieve a goal under prevailing circumstances; and
- Constitutive Action: Rhetoric constructs reality, situational truths and can frame a world of actions and consequences for its audience.

(p. 86)

Generally, advertising as rhetoric is understood as situated, symbolic, social or strategic action, while also involving transaction. An advertisement involves a specific use of language at a particular time, requires the decoding and interpretation of an audience, offers an exchange of information between the brand and its audience, and is intentional in its imperative to sell a product or service. In brand community formation, however, advertising needs to be placed within the schematic of constitutive rhetoric. As a constitutive action, advertising involves the interplay of the brand, the advertisement and the audience.

Constitutive rhetoric is the process of composing a collective subject. This collective is established through the positioning of the subject as transhistorical, and through

offering the audience the illusion of freedom, while in reality constraining them to the narrative which calls them into being (Charland, 1987). In order for constitutive rhetoric to operate as an effective power, audience members must first be successfully interpellated, and second must adhere to the action necessitated by the tautological logic of the message.

Audiences are “*toujours déjà la*” (Althusser) interpellated through a process of identification with a textual position. To enter a rhetorical narrative is to identify with Black’s second persona, this identification occurs through a series of ideological associations arising from the narrative structure of the message (Charland, 1987). Ideology pervades a place, like a spirit inhabiting a body, “it makes a body hop around in certain ways; and that same body would have hopped around in a different ways had a different ideology happened to inhabit it” (Burke, 1941, p. 6).

Once constituted as a collective, the narrative activates the audience to act and motivates them towards certain ends. As articulated by McGee (1967), ideology is material, existing both in the realm of ideas and practices; animating subjects to act upon it and structure their material world around its very principles and images:

Constitutive rhetorics are ideological not merely because they provide individuals with narrative to inhabit as subjects and motives to experience, but because they inset “narrativized” subjects-as-agents into the world...In particular, the constitution in action of a motivated subject that orients those addressed towards particular future acts.
(Charland, 1987, p. 143)

Interpellating subjects and calling them to action, the discourse of advertising constitutes viewers as 'deficient' in some quality, attribute, or value, which is happily remedied through the consumption of material objects. The constitutive action of an advertisement occurs in the transition of a consumer from the implied to the actual, from the real-world body of individuals receiving a message, to the implied audience of that message.

[The implied reader] differs from an actual reader in that he is created by the work and function, in a sense, as the work's ideal interpreter. Only by agreeing to play the role of this created audience for the duration of his/hear reading can an actual reader correctly understand and fully appreciate the work.

(Sulieman, 1980, p. 8)

Constitution occurs with identification. In actualizing the roles prescribed in the implied audience, the actual consumer enters in, and forges, a community centered on the consumption of goods, and the cultural meaning embedded therein. Consumer goods carry and communicate cultural significance, and advertising is a mechanism for, and instrument through which cultural meaning is transferred from consumer good to the individual consumer (McCracken, 1986).

Audience Response and Agency

Although an advertisement calls an audience into being by appealing to the very principles that they themselves see as universal, the identity articulated does not define and describe the audience to a 'T'. It reveals but only one face of this diverse and changing group. At any given moment, in any random system, in any single location, several myths exists around which are huddled several generations, several incarnations of an audience. Therefore, a single myth cannot alone define an audience. As myths

function through tensions, changes, and oppositions, the audience needs to be understood as a node in the entire rhetorical framework. Furthermore, once composed as an audience, the bed of individuals becomes a testing ground for a brand- or product-centered myth. Audiences are thus a reflexive, referential system; this is where the agency of an audience is introduced. Placing themselves in a network of communicative relationships (with one another, with organized structures, etc.), the audience appropriates the image of itself contained in the rhetors description, testing attitudes and beliefs within its mechanism before adopting them.

An audience will routinely evaluate texts differently, based on their own ideas, assumptions, and values. While an audience will, more often than not, understand the denotations of a text, it will value these denotations based on different perspectives and interpretation. A rhetorical address is then seldom a hypnotic act of creation, and audiences are not immediately branded once they accept the advances of a rhetor. Condit (1989) defines the traditional audience reading as 'polyvalent' – "describ[ing] the fact that audiences routinely evaluate texts differently, assigning different value to different portions of a text and hence to the text itself" (p. 108).

Any audience member can read a text via the dominant understanding, a negotiated reading, or an oppositional reading and will couple this reading with the power of collective coherence to carry out their whims and wills. A dominant, hegemonic or preferred reading is one wherein the reader shares the text's code and accepts and reproduces it as natural. Conversely, a counter-reading or oppositional reading involves

the reader understanding the dominant code, but directly negating the preferred reading based on a personal social situation or level. Audiences, through the access to oppositional codes, the proliferation of other available texts, and conditions of the historical context, retain the ability to shape their own readings, and hence their own social life and identity.

Nevertheless, texts are seldom 'intertextual polysemy' or open completely to unstable, multiple and contradictory meanings - there are limits. The limits of polysemy are unearthed when the audience is conceptualized in a rhetorical fashion -- tied to a context, and specific conditions of being.

The ability of audiences to shape their own readings, and hence their social life, is constrained by a variety of factors in any given rhetorical situation. These factors include audience members' access to oppositional codes, the ratio between the work required and pleasure produced in decoding a text, the repertoire of available texts, and the historical occasion.

(Condit, 1989, p. 103 – 104)

The texts themselves also exist within a web of meaning, in relation to the whole system. The meanings imbued in text are tied towards the dominant readings. Consumers are involved in the meaning-making process; however, advertisements help shape their subjectivity. Advertisements are articulations of the dominant, echoing points of view, ideological frameworks, and ways of life. The numerous links to cultural themes and the complex socio-cultural codes embedded in advertisements transform the message into an act of constitutive rhetoric for a select group of subjects, forged an identity by way of their interpellation and hailing through the dominant reading of the advertising message and consumption of the product.

Understanding the concept of audience agency and multiple readings of a text, constitutive rhetorical calls for the recommencement and reapplication myth in an effort to have texts routinely reevaluated by those formerly reading a text in an oppositional or counter-reading, or introduced to new generations and grades of audience.

Chapter 4: A Formative Model For Brand Community

Where the consumer-brand relationship was flushed out borrowing literature and theory from the social sciences and psychology, this study similarly turns to these fields in order to conceptualize its model of brand community formation. It is hypothesized that a brand community is more than simply a natural assembly of interpersonal brand relationships, but rather a source-initiated and controlled unit, held together by a series of messages that sit at the locus of the collective.

The first step in calling a brand community being, and offering it direction, is establishing a character for the brand itself. An image of what the brand stands for, this conceptualization is then forwarded to the consumer. Brands create personas, for themselves and their implied audiences, who embody the messages and myths that define the brand.

P₁: In order to direct the formation of a brand community, brands must first seek to outline a persona for themselves (First Persona) and for their implied audiences (Second Persona).

Once personas have been established for the brand and its audience, these dispositions and roles need to be communicated to the audience in order for recognition and identification to take place. The process of identification (and identity formation) for a collective is hypothesized to be similar to that of interpersonal brand relationships. That is to say, not unlike the didactic relationships created between a brand and a consumer, it is hypothesized that the consumer-brand-consumer relationships of brand communities are also established through persuasion and the action of branding.

Advertising is a “conduit through which meaning constantly pour form the culturally constituted world of consumer goods” (McCracken, 1986, p. 75). Where it is understood as serving as a reference body for cultural meaning, practices and norms, as well as consumer expectations, it is hypothesized that persuasion is exercised through this marketing communication effort.

P₂: Advertising messages are imbued with myths, articulating ideological framework, brand personality, character traits, and cultural meaning.

When an audience identifies with the myths and ideas forwarded in a given message, they will be called to action to assume this role through consumption. This process confers and identity to consumers, who are then assembled as a collective with co-consumers of the same mindset.

P₃: In identifying with the message, audiences assume the role of the Second Persona, and are established as a collective – as a brand community - with those who engage in the same act.

Called into being and persuaded by the cultural meaning adopted through the rhetoric of marketing communications, individuals emerge as a collective in a consumer culture flourishing only when the proper tools are at their disposal.

P4: The process of constitutive rhetoric in advertising is iterative and cyclical, insofar as without habitual maintenance, brand community development and growth will be stagnated.

Based on this study's propositions, Figure 4.1 depicts the proposed links between the source (brand), the message (myth) and the consumer (audience) in the developmental process of the brand community.

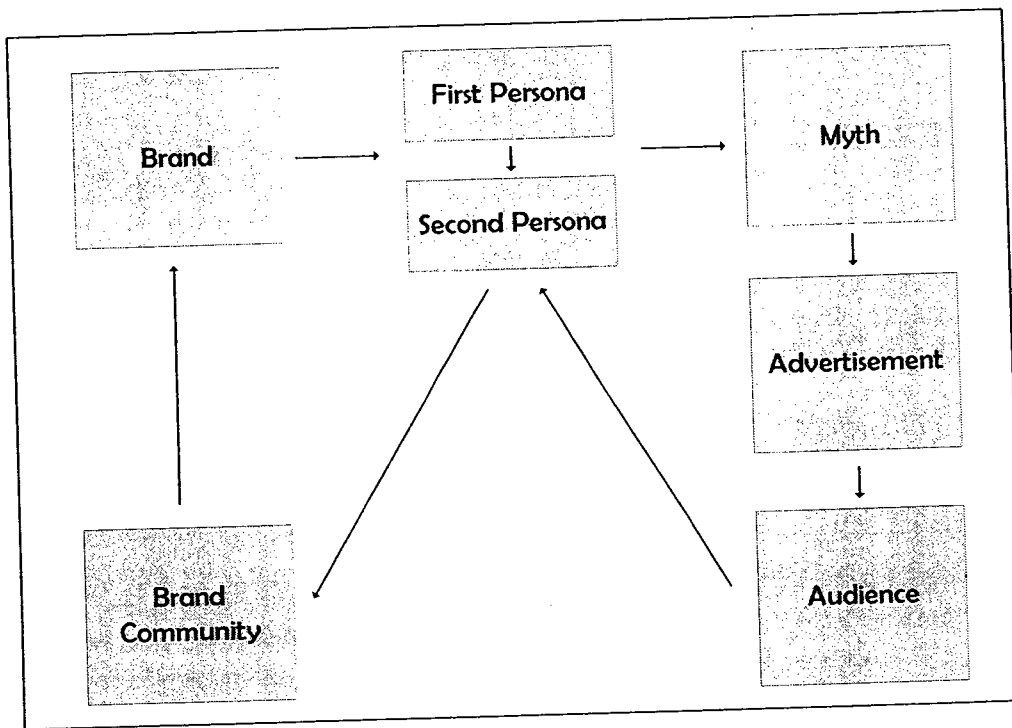


Figure 4.1 The Proposed Model of the Links between the Brand, the Advertisement, and the Audience in the Formative Process of the Brand Community.

Chapter 5: Case Analysis

Transforming from a “computer company” to a “lifestyle electronics solutions provider” (Cesvet et al., 2009, p. 120), Apple is the embodiment consciousness of kind, dialogue, and communal connectedness; Nike talked the talk, and walked the walk, turning “a brand promise into a branded experience with word of mouth and conversation bursting at the seams” (Jaffe, 2007, p. 206); and Harley-Davidson motorcycles have a “unique emotional connection to the soul of its rider” (Supple, 2002, p. 5), a feeling which resonates within the brand community, and is shouted from the hilltops each time they mount their bike.

Apple, Nike and Harley-Davidson are engines of conversation. Understanding the importance of community, a shared sense of identity and ritual ahead of the rest, Apple, Nike and Harley-Davidson have set benchmarks and have raised the bar for future advertising endeavours.

The following section outlines the advertising history of each brand, demonstrating to the communicative legacy it established. Calling out specifically to flagship campaigns, this section demonstrates the instances where brand persona and myth were forwarded in efforts that helped develop loyal brand communities.

5.1 Apple

The Apple product line is more than just “Conversational Capital” (Cesvet et al., 2009); it is a brand brought to life, and a veritable religion to many of its consumers

(Muniz and Shau, 2005). The Apple brand community is marked by all the “key factors” about which brand communities are most likely to form – image, history, and competitors – however, the emergence of this brand community is best understood as less of a serendipitous moment, and more of a calculated exercise in constitutive rhetoric.

Apple has perhaps the highest brand loyalty of any computer manufacturer. Brandfests like Macworld (San Francisco), and the European Apple Expo consistently draw participants maintain the physicality of the brand community, and store openings the world over are events in and of themselves drawing thousands of patrons². The Cult of Mac has even entered the world of parody, and amongst other mentions has been featured on an episode of the long running Fox animated sitcom, the Simpsons³. The episode jests at the very elements keystone to the Mac brand community, and leaves nothing unturned; from the God like status of Steve Jobs, to the 1984 commercial, and the status associated with the white headphones that accompany iPods, the episode illustrates the heart and soul of Apple brand community.

Those both within and outside of the Apple brand community are familiar with the founding myth of Apple, as described by Cesvet et al. (2009):

This hallmark of independent thinking and reinvention was started by two young men with no money, but plenty of good ideas. When Mac users sit down in front of their computers, they do so in the context of that root narrative. Somewhere in the back of our minds, we hope that we are as creative, inventive and free as Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak.

(p. 92)

² There are over 200 Apple retail stores around the world, each attracting mass crowds at their opening. For example, in 2004, the Apple Store in Osaka, Japan drew a crowd of 5,000 on opening day (Japan Consuming).

³ Episode 427 – 2007 “Mypods and Boomsticks”; original air date November 30, 2008

The development of the Apple brand community began with the powerful “1984” television ad in the mid-eighties. Despite hardships in the late 80s and early 90s, the brand community continues to build and grow through to today. Each decade is marked by a distinct ad campaign, piloting the Apple brand, its founding myth and its implied consumer.

“1984” (1984)

The “Cult of Mac” can be traced back to January 1984, when Apple first urged the world to “Think Different”. The sixty-second “1984” Macintosh ad was a defining and historical event, both for the company and for advertising in general. Broadcast only once during Super Bowl XVIII, the ad launched a personal computer, and constituted a community of non-expert computer users who abandoned the technological imperative driving capitalistic socio-economic progress.

The advertisement, directed by filmmaker Ridley Scott, alludes to the George Orwell novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which tells the story of a single man rebelling against a dystopian regime ruled by the repressive, totalitarian, “Big Brother”. Scott’s “1984” ad follows the same heroic plot line; centered on an unnamed heroine representing the new Macintosh regime, the ad employs a rhetoric of freedom and demonstrates a revolutionary disband from the conformity of the technological, capitalistic, and rigid Big Brother.

The ad opens with a woman running through a dark hallway to a monotonous beat. A simplistic and almost Cubist sketch of Apple's Macintosh computer is emblazoned on the heroine's white shirt, and her red shorts set her apart from the uniformly dressed, herd of grey-clad workers marching in unison, hypnotized by Big Brother who addresses them from a theater-sized screen. Echoing statements like "one whim, one resolve, one course" to a crowd entranced by a Debordian "society of the spectacle", the commercial establishes a pre-Mac world with little choice, and unequivocal conformity. Then, breaking through the monotony and homogeneity, the unnamed heroine tosses her hammer with the strength of an Olympic athlete to shatter the screen, and by extension the old regime. As the screen explodes, the room is lit and the crowd awakened as an off screen narrator proclaims the revolution:

On January 24th
Apple Computer will introduce
Macintosh.
And you will see why 1984
won't be like "1984".

The success of the "1984" advertisement reached well beyond the product offering. Of course, the Macintosh was the first commercially successful personal computer system to feature a mouse and boast a graphical user interface, but the methods used to communicate the added value and beyond-product offering were unparalleled.

While the advertisement laid the tenants for the Apple brand, and the community to flourish under it, many users did not share in the dominant reading of the myth, and the brand saw a decline in 1985. Riding the coattails of success for the "1984" ad, during the 1985 Super Bowl Apple aired "Lemmings". This ad featured a line of PC users,

blindfolded, and following one another off of a cliff, while a morose rendition of “Heigh-Ho”⁴ is whistled in the background. Light is shed as the “Macintosh Office” is introduced, and the narrator offers the users agency in stating: “You can look into it, or go on with business as usual.” The advertisement raised a great deal of controversy, and certainly did not sustain the original success of the “1984” spot. Audience members did not engage with the ad, and their oppositional reading was reflected in the first quarter sales earnings for Macintosh. With revenues at only 10% of the projection (Hornby, 2006), and reports of internal power struggles, the founders and idols of the Apple myth, Wozniak and Jobs, left the company and their budding community of followers.

“Think Different” (1997)

In 1997, the Mac market share was barely at 3% (Levy, 2009, p. 92). While the initial foundation for the brand community had been laid, the loss of continuity from the initial articulation of myth and the loss of the myth’s founders did little to build the Mac market share, or strengthen the brand community. Ads such as the “What’s on your Powerbook” campaign (1990-1995), and “Crowd Control” (1995) became more product-centered, articulating, for example, that Macs were easier to use than the Windows 95 operating system. While identifying a competitor, the ads failed to reiterate the Apple Myth, and thus did not further the momentum of the brand community, leaving its initial adopters in the waiting shadows.

⁴ From the 1937 Disney film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*

With the return of Steve Jobs at the helm of the Apple organization in 1997, the company began to once more “Think Different”. Continuing the theme of Jobs’ keynote speech the 1997 Macworld Expo, the campaign was launched with a television advertisement that was iconically Mac. The “Crazy Ones” featured images of influential figures throughout the century – Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King Jr., John Lennon, Muhammad Ali, Mahatma Gandhi, Amelia Earhart, Alfred Hitchcock, Martha Graham, Jim Henson, and Picasso, among others – and reinforced how, not unlike these individuals who changed the world in their respective industries, Mac users “think differently.” Reinstating the trend of revolutionary right established in 1984, the ad included narration by Richard Dreyfuss proclaiming:

Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.

Employing the narrative deployment of persona (Stern, 1994), the ad renewed the Apple ideological framework and coupled with a new line of product offerings, saw the Apple name soar in the mass market. The “Crazy Ones” ad marked not only a revitalization of the existing Apple brand community, but witnessed a new generation of users who were bright eyed, bushy tailed and ready to take a stand against the capitalist way of thinking, and doing. A turning point for Apple, the commercial was remarkably popular, and restored Apple’s reputation. This shift was carried with the “Switch” campaign (2001), and continued through to the current “Get a Mac” publicities.

“Get a Mac” (2006 to present)

The newest ad campaign perpetuates what ‘1984’ established twenty years prior. The buzz surrounding the Mac-vs-PC spots stems from more than simple recency. The ads thoughtfully build upon the persona of the Mac user initially pronounced in 1984, and reaffirm the user’s role, status and imperative.

Each ad within this campaign follows the same, minimalist template, and reinforces the same mantra of nonconformity and elitism. The ads begin with Justin Long, portraying the hip, laid-back, urban professional Mac and John Hodgman, standing in as the nebbish and more formal PC, introducing themselves – “Hello, I’m a Mac”, “And I’m a PC”. The ads then delve into an “us-versus-them” strategy, that ultimately witness the Mac triumphing as the victor, and closing with the pristine white Mac Computer with the logo prominently set as the screensaver image.

The series portrays as bumbling, and ineffective, where as Mac is presented as cool and humble, with a quick wit and genuine concern for his counterpart. The ads within the “Get A Mac” campaign umbrella include comparisons on networking abilities, applications, spyware, and installation procedures. In one such ad, for example, both the Mac and PC are in counselling session, because the PC feels inadequate – he is more susceptible to viruses, and isn’t ready to use “right out of the box”. When asked to say something nice about the PC, the Mac offers that “PC is a wizard with numbers, and dresses like a gentleman”, when asked the same question about his friend, PC is unable to retort anything beyond a petty insult. The level of banter continues in the Wall Street

Journal edition of the series, in which Mac and PC explore expert reviews, and discover that only Mac is distinguished in the eyes of the technological glitterati.

In an ad discussing bundles, even the merits of the iPhone and its compatibility with multiple operating systems are dealt into play. The ad opens with PC dancing on the left hand side of the screen, the iconic white iPhone headphone in his ears.

MAC: Hello, I'm a Mac.

PC: And I'm a PC.

MAC: Oh, hey, iPod! Nice,

PC: Yeah, it's just a little something to hold my slow jams.

MAC: Oh yeah?

PC: Yeah, and it works so seamlessly with iTunes.

MAC: You should check out iMovie, iPhoto, iWeb because they all work like iTunes, you know, iLife (suction noise) comes on every Mac.

PC: iLife, well, uh, I I I have some very cool aps that are bundled with with me.

MAC: Well, like whatdya, whaatdya got?

PC: Calculator

MAC: That's cool, anything else?

PC: Clock. Clock.

MAC: Sounds like hours of fun.

PC: Yep, yep.

MAC: Or at least, minutes.

Expressing both product-level and brand-level attributes, this ad serves as a maintenance tool for the Apple brand community, reinforcing the original mythic claim and current market demographics that Mac users are creative, well-educated, and can obtain the perfect balance between work and life (Fried, 2002).

5.2 Nike

“It’s not just a shoe, it’s a community.” (Hesseldahl, 2009). First broadcast in 1988, the iconic slogan “Just Do It” fashioned a community of consumers, and resonated with an athletic audience as more than a simple ‘power line’ (Cone, 2008). Quick, bold, and concise, Just Do It serves as the ultimate connective device and is the perfect summation of Nike’s personality and persona (Hunsberger, 2008)

“When Nike breathed its first breath, it inhaled the spirit of two men” (Nikebiz, 2009). The history of Nike begins with the story of two “visionary Oregonians” – Bill Bowerman, a track and field coach, and one of his runners, Phil Knight. Who envisioned an organization that brought “inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world” (Nikebiz, 2009). Of this vision, and a commitment solidified by a handshake, Nike rose from its humble beginnings to become a veritable sportswear legacy, providing value to athletes of all levels of ability and potentials.

The Nike Company Overview announces that “if you have a body, you are an athlete”, an observation made by Nike co-founder Bill Bowerman that exclaims the “endless possibilities for human potential in sports” (Nikebiz, 2009). In that very vision, Just Do It was penned as a connective device and decisive call to action. The eight-letter phrase “sp[oke] to the restraint and inhibition in everyday life that keeps people from the experience of transcendence” (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 19), and served as an immediate appeal for a body of consumers ready to take on the challenge of achieving their personal best.

Inducted into the American Marketing Association Hall of Fame (1991), Nike is not only exemplary of advertising excellence, but also of a brand that successfully created a community around itself, its image and its history. So successfully branded, Nike no longer even requires a nominal mention in its advertising, as its name has become synonymous with the emblematic “Swoosh” and the Just Do It mantra it implies. The American sportswear and equipment supplier’s logo, perhaps of the most instantly recognizable symbols around the world, has even entered the symbolic realm of body art. Nike enthusiasts, employees, and athletes have inked themselves the iconic Swoosh, the tattoo representing their alignment with, adherence to, and adoption of the Nike value system and persona.

First introduced in a television ad featuring 80-year-old distance runner Walt Stack (“Revolution”, July 1988), Just Do It has propelled Nike from market underdog to market leader. In the 20 years of the Just Do It era, Nike has moved consumers to exercise, and demonstrated that exercising is best done with Nike products.

“Bo Knows” (1989)

In 1986, Nike revenues hit the “landmark billion-dollar mark” (Nikebiz, 2009), yet the company still trailed competitor Reebok in the market share battle with a score of 3.1% to 18.27% (Goldman and Papon, 1998, p. 4). Enter Just Do It, a simple three-word phrase that helped forward Nike to the winner side of the shoe war and established a strong community of loyal Nike enthusiasts.

First airing during the 1989 Major League Baseball (MLB) All-Star Game, the “Bo Knows” campaign forwarded the newly minted “Just Do It” mantra in a hip hail to athletes of all abilities and disciplines. Featuring professional baseball and football player Bo Jackson⁵, the ad promoted a Nike Cross-training shoe, and was targeted at athletes who weren’t afraid to take on, and excel at, new and multiple things.

The advertisement itself proclaims Jackson as an “athletic authority” pinning him up against athletes considered the best in their domains, and each ceding to Jackson by proclaiming: “Bo knows.” Opening with a short clip of Jackson playing baseball with fellow MLB player Kirk Gibson, the ad also includes endorsement from football’s Jim Everett, the NBA’s Michael Jordan, professional tennis player Jon McEnroe, and the Great One of the NHL, Wayne Gretzky. The ad ends playfully as Jackson is presented on stage with musical legend Bo Diddley, who contrary to the sports legends before him addresses Jackson by saying “Bo, you don’t know Diddley.” Fading to black, the ad closes with an image of the iconic swoosh, and Just Do It verbiage.

Subsequent ads in this series depicted Jackson playing soccer or cricket, cycling, surfing, weightlifting, auto racing and horse racing, always laying down the fundamental principle that “Bo Knows”, and that Bo knows because Bo uses Nike Cross-trainers, and espouses the Just Do It attitude. Playful in nature, this ad set the tone of Nike, and of Nike campaigns. Just Do It, with its celebrity power and tongue-in-cheek attitude curbed the distance between the worlds of top athletes, and at world of the weekend warrior.

⁵ Bo Jackson (1962 -) was the first athlete in the modern era to play professional baseball (Kansas City Royals) and professional football (L.A. Raiders) in the same year.

“Bo Knows” was more than a collection of celebrities shepherding their flock of fans towards the Nike brand. The rhetoric behind the campaign demonstrated grit, passion and determination, serving as an appellation not nearly as overt as a simple “hey you”, but yet clear and uncomplicated in nature. Supplying the bedrock for the Nike brand community, Just Do It was as ambiguous as it was contained, conveying attitude and direction but allowing for individual interpretation and a sense of empowerment. Through “Bo Knows” the maxim became “cemented in consumers’ minds as a rallying cry to get off the couch, and play sports”, calling them not to rationalize the claim, or question the action, but to just act, to Just Do It (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 19). The Nike brand became the brand of the champion, and not surprisingly given the origin of its name⁶, the brand of victory. To be a Nike athlete was to overcome challenges, and to succeed in life and in sport. The Nike athlete gave it their all, regardless of ability, strength or prowess. The Nike athlete ignored their minds, the aches and pains, to go for the gold, and Just Do It. Nike was about personal prime, personal goals, and personal achievement, and after “Bo Knows,” the Nike athlete was the athlete to be.

Michael Jordan (1997)

In 1996, Nike dominated the athletic shoe industry, as one of the top of the four firms that controlled 72% of the one billion pairs of shoes sold; and accounting itself for nearly 60% of the shoes carried in major retail chains (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 4). Phil Knight, Nike CEO, called out to the 40% annual growth the brand had experienced

⁶ In Greek mythology, Nike is the Goddess of Victory.

by laying credit to the brand equity: “The 99% increase in sales of US athletic appear is testament to the powerful brand equity we’ve created” (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 4). Through this equity and character, Nike’s brand community flourished and helped nourish the Nike brand amidst media scrutiny and public criticism regarding Nike’s labour treatment issues and child labour claims.

As Nike continued to work in the back office, setting standards for manufacturing facilities which included minimum age, air quality, and mandatory education programs, Nike continued to build its brand community with campaigns that capitalized on the Just Do It spirit. Sustaining the momentum, drive, and position obtained through campaigns like “Bo Knows,” in 1997, Nike embraced adversity and challenge, in the NBA playoff commercials that showed Nike consumers why they really wanted to “Be Like Mike”.

The 1985 “Jordan Flight” commercial demonstrated why Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls was revered as a basketball God, and was worthy of hero worship – as Jordan glides in slow motion, airborne towards the basketball net, jet engines rev in the background demonstrating his power. Nearing the end of his flight, the frame freezes on Jordan suspended in the air, in the iconic image that has become synonymous with his name. Set on this background, the copy boasts: “Who said a man was not meant to fly?” Come 1997, Nike brought their angel back down to earth in a playoff commercial demonstrating that even NBA MVP Michael Jordan, was human.

I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career.
I've lost almost 300 games.
26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed.
I've failed over and over and over again in my life.
And that is why I succeed.

Reminding its community that even the greats are only doing their best, Nike reaffirmed its mission and character in this humbling ad.

The Nike motto is reiterated in the second ad within this playoff series, where Jordan waxes philosophical on a weight room bench:

Challenge me
doubt me
disrespect me
tell me I'm older
tell me I'm slower
tell me I can no longer fly
I want you to

Building upon the person of the diehard, never quit athlete ready to take on a challenge and surpass it, the ads of the 1991 NBA Playoffs created a continuum in Nike's efforts to build a solid brand community of a team of determined and diverse athletes. Nike athletes are high in moral, and high in ability. Reinvesting in the architecture of the athletic persona they created years prior, this ad articulates that greatness is fuelled by the challenge, and urges athletes of all levels to walk the walk, and talk the talk.

"Pretty" (2006)

"Pretty" (2006) continues in the Nike trend to demonstrate the multifaceted character of its athletes, all the while calling upon cultural code and significance to illustrate its message.

The day in the life of Russian tennis player, Maria Sharapova, the ad opens with Sharapova getting ready in front of a mirror, as the radio announces her chances of winning, and marvelous serve. As she exits her Waldorf-Astoria hotel room, the instrumental to the “I Feel Pretty”⁷ begins. En route, Sharapova passes hotel staff, paparazzi, fellow competitors, game officials and onlookers, each of whom sing a line from the song:

I feel pretty,
Oh, so pretty,
I feel pretty and witty and bright!
And I pity
Any girl who isn't me tonight.

I feel charming,
Oh, so charming
It's alarming how charming I feel!
And so pretty
That I hardly can believe I'm real.

See the pretty girl in that mirror there:
Who can that attractive girl be?
Such a pretty face,
Such a pretty dress,
Such a pretty smile,
Such a pretty me!

I feel pretty,
Oh, so pretty,
I feel pretty and witty and bright!
And I pity
Any girl who isn't me tonight.

The soundtrack is punctuated as Sharapova delivers a powerful unanswered return on her opponents serve. The crowd silence by awe, Sharapova positions herself for the next rally

⁷ “I Feel Pretty” is a song from the second act of the musical “West Side Story”, based on the book by Leonard Bernstein, with music by Arthur Laurents and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim.

as the ad ends with the Swoosh and “Just Do It” superposed in the bottom left-hand corner.

Following the traditional Nike style and personality, Pretty demonstrates how in her public life, Sharapova is “pretty, witty, and gay”, yet always at the top of her game. The epitome of a Nike athlete, Sharapova is brawn and beauty.

5.3 Harley-Davidson

It takes a community to raise a brand. Perhaps the founding of a brand community wasn't explicit in the development of Harley-Davidson, however, the act of consumption bled into the complexion of community through careful tending and manicuring of the Harley-Davidson image, history and consumer base.

“Harley-Davidson Inc. is a global leader in fulfilling dreams and providing extraordinary customer experiences through mutually beneficial relationships with our stakeholders” (Harley-Davidson, 2009). At every touchstone and in every measure, Harley-Davidson exudes a sense of community and a responsibility to it. The Harley Owners Group (H.O.G.) encourages riders to “express [themselves] in the company of others”, and events on the local and international levels solidify the bond between members, driving them towards the imperative of “making the Harley-Davidson dream a way of life.” (Harley-Davidson, 2009)

“Harley-Davidson owners aren't just loyal. They *love* the brand” (Haig, 2003, p. 77). Harley-Davidson connects with its users crafting their history as a continuing story.

It's a story no one on earth could have made up. Four young men experiment with internal combustion in a tiny wooden shed. Not only does the shed not burn down, but the motorcycle they build goes on to serve over 100,000 miles, under five owners. And that's just the beginning.
(Harley-Davidson, 2009)

Establishing a connection between 1903 and today, Harley-Davidson confirms that that which was established by William S. Harley, Walter Davidson, Arthur Davidson and William A. Davidson in Milwaukee, Wisconsin was just the dawn of the Harley era.

Selling individualism through camaraderie and brotherhood, As articulated by Sonny Barger in *Hell's Angels* (2000), the myth urges for participation, and calls Harley riders to action with the promise of power, and the joy of the ride.

What it's really about with Harley-Davidson is the sound..everybody loves that rumble....Most Harley riders don't care about high speed, they'd rather have that low-end torque, the one that gurgles down in your groin and gives you the feeling of power. The Japanese bikes, while they *have* the power, they don't quite have the *feeling* of power.
(as cited in Haig, 2003, p. 77)

The advertising archives of Harley-Davidson span over 100 years, and have sustained the brand through times of war and economic turbulence in the 20th century. While there have been advertisements created for radio and television, the Harley-Davidson stronghold continues to be through printed media. In the true spirit of brand community, Harley-Davidson claims this targeted reach is in an effort to "advertise directly to its potential buyers" (Wright, 1983, p. 219).

"Get A Kick Out Of Life" (1925)

Harley-Davidson's earliest know advertisement, which appeared in the January 2, 1905 issue of *Cycle and Automobile Trade Journal* (Supple, 2002, p. 4) is pure facts.

31/4 B.H.P 3 1/8 x 3 1/2
MOTOR CYCLE MOTORES
One-Piece Cylinder, Lugs
cast on casing ready to
clamp in frame.
Harley-Davidson Motor Co.
315 Thirty-Seventh Street
Milwaukee, Wis.

Hardly embracing the American, and now Harley, spirits of freedom, individualism, and adventure, the ad called out to the basics, introducing an "economic alternative to the

motorcar and speedier conveyance than the bicycle” (Supple, 2002, p. 5) in terms of the base value and transactional worth of the item. Lifestyle, persona and character were not introduced until later, where fun finally trumped facts.

The emotional and the arousing overshadowed the rational as consumers were introduced to a good that could grant them a feeling like none other in the world. The ads that began to build and foster the “sense of Harley” in consumers first emerged in 1925. Campaigns such as “Get A Kick Out of Life” resonated with Harley’s market, advocating freedom, espousing individuality and relishing the American dream.

“Get A Kick Out Of Life” is a two-page print ad which establishes a solid relationship between the Harley-Davidson dealer and the Harley-Davidson rider. On the backdrop of a photograph where a Harley rider and employee stand in front of a dealership, the stage is set for exactly who the Harley-Davidson brand is:

You’ll find your Harley-Davidson dealer a regular fellow. HE is the sort of man you like to know and do business with. He’s an old rider and knows just what you want. He is equipped to take care of your needs – and to see that you get every mile of service out of the machine that we build into it at the factory.

Drop around to your dealer and say “howdy,” and then let him give you a ride with the 1925 model. If you can’t get to see him right away, mail him the postcard. You’ll get the 1925 catalogue in a hurry, that tells all about the new Harley-Davidson.

Your dealer is your kind of man – get in touch with him today.
HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR CO.
MILWAUKEE
U.S.A.

While still “talking business”, the advertisement reaffirms the spirit of the Harley rider, and the mechanism behind Harley. The post-card continues the Harley image,

boasting the simple copy of “Get a kick out of Life with a Harley-Davidson”, and depicting a carefree couple riding on a motorcycle and sidecar, enjoying the countryside. The combination of the two components marvelously constructs the Harley persona, and demonstrates how consumers can develop and actualize this carefree, down-to-earth lifestyle and vantage point.

This trend in key claim and communication priority continues throughout the first half of the 20th century. Harley advertisements reiterated the thrill of the escape, American pride, and in doing so, laid the early tenants of development for the brand community. In part, these efforts helped bolster the organization through economic hardships - not only did Harley-Davidson engage in military production during the First World War, but they were also the sole US motorcycle manufactures to survive the fiscal downturn during the Great Depression. (Harley-Davidson, 2009)

Love Affair (1973)

In 1963, reported sales had dropped to an “all-time post depression level,” however Harley-Davidson’s momentum was not stagnated nor halted by this drop (Supple, 70). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, fun became the standard for Harley-Davidson ads, revitalizing the business with the same medicine that got it thriving. The catchy phrases like “Stand out in ’60 with a new Harley-Davidson” (1960), “For a funderful you in ’62. For work, for school, for play” (1962), and “Ride the road to real adventure” (1964) demonstrated once more pride in the emotional over the rational.

Simple and basic, as per the Harley-Davidson standard, the “Widen Your Fun Horizons” (1963) ad is set at sundown, on a quiet road, sandwiched between two trees. Two couples leisurely ride side-by-side, under ad copy that invites “two-up touring” by encouraging motorists new and old to “widen [their] fun horizons with Harley-Davidson in ’63.”

While the Harley ads hinged upon good times and easy riding, the period also witnessed the merger of Harley-Davidson with the American Machine and Foundry (AMF) in 1969. Stripping Harley of its independence, the merger did not unwind the precedent set by earlier advertisements – autonomy and fun were still the Harley-Davidson passwords. In the 1970s, the decisive call to action embedded in Harley-Davidson print ads ushered consumers to “Pull the trigger” (1971) and hold on tight to the power of Harley, while underscoring the uniqueness of the brand, in declaring that “Only one man could have done this” (1977).

In the 1973 “Love Affair” ad, the Great American Freedom Machine™ was once more featured in use, with a couple riding along a highway.

Love affair.
Mile after mile after mile.
The Harley-Davidson FLH-1200.
The wide-tracked wonder built to obey your wanderlust.
New full-flow oil system.
Exclusive hydraulic discs front and rear. Incredible suspension.
Strength. Stamina. That’s the Harley-Davidson FLH-1200.
120 cc’s of motorized magnificence.
Just for the fun of it. For you.
Take on the highway.
Mile after mile after mile.
Harley-Davidson FLH-1200.

The Great American Freedom Machine.

Golden words like “wanderlust”, “strength”, “stamina”, and “fun” call to the satisfaction of needs at the esteem and self-actualization levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, whereas talk of “hydraulic discs” and “120 cc’s” deal to a utilitarian fulfillment. With copy that weaves product-level attributes, and elements of brand persona, the ad is a heady cocktail of interpellation that seeks to entice current consumers and a new generation of Harley rider.

“The Eagle Soars Alone” (1981)

The AMF ownership of Harley-Davidson is counted as a difficult time of the company history. Financially, company performance did not waver, however the morale of the brand community did take a hit. An ulcer on the soul of the brand community, Harley-Davidson owners and enthusiasts felt a loss of free will and the inability guide their own destiny. The Harley-Davidson management were family to their owners, standing for the same values, same quality and same lifestyle – ergo, to have them stripped of their status and dethroned marked a dark age for the organization. Forever loyal to their brand, the freedom riders awaited the resection of their brand in the hands of its rightful owner. This came in 1981, when thirteen members of Harley-Davidson’s senior management team participated in a leveraged buyback to purchase the company from AMF. This change in management also saw a revision in quality management and manufacturing methods, but most importantly stood for the return of Harley-Davidson to its roots. As the commemorative ad dictated, the eagle, once more, soared alone.

Iconic, the ad is simple in its presentation. At the top of the ad, the bold statement “THE EAGLE SOARS ALONE” is proclaimed, in plain, solid black text. An animated eagle flies solitary below the copy, with the only splash of colour – the Harley-Davidson shield – completing the ad in orange and black below the headline copy. At the footer of the ad, the time stamp spells out what they layperson may miss from this poignant piece:

COMMEMORATING THE RETURN TO PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF
HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR COMPANY
JUNE, 1981.

Ironically, the ad overtly proclaims freedom, with in the same breath underlines the importance of brotherhood in its connotative definition. The eagle was first introduced to Harley-Davidson advertising in the mid-seventies, and was quickly integrated into the Harley-Davidson brand persona. An icon of the American dream, the eagle stood for Harley’s appropriation of that dream, and for the freedom, equality and brotherhood that embodied the brand. The eagle, like the Harley rider, had a distinct edge and communicated the power and quest for adventure that lay at the core of the company value system and persona.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Discussion

The Apple, Nike and Harley-Davidson advertising archives involve a similar evolutionary pattern. At the core of each brand's campaigns lies a myth that embodies a strong history, a distinct persona, and a powerful call to action that provides freedom and rebellion, while also ushering inclusivity in the brand community.

Each embodiment of first and second persona, while bearing traits relative to the industry, ultimately speaks towards freedom, and liberation from a greater, darker power - Apple, from the overbearing world of PC; Nike, from a society bridled by the negative mantra of 'It can't be done'; and Harley-Davidson from the drudgery and conventions governing everyday life. The humble myths speak of underdogs with visions, individuals who unchain themselves to transform dream into reality; and the advertisements articulate these sentiments in overt and explicit means.

Where the Apple advertising repertoire evolved based on cultural context, Nike grew with its athletes, and Harley-Davidson with the climate and tone of the era. All three brands demonstrate and articulation of the proposed model in action, however differ in the dissemination of their messages; Apple and Nike haven taken mass mediated approaches, and Harley-Davidson espousing a more tailored reach.

The following section outlines each brand's case in light of the proposed model for the formative process of brand community in order to illustrate the substantiation of this study's propositions, and indicate avenues for future research.

Apple

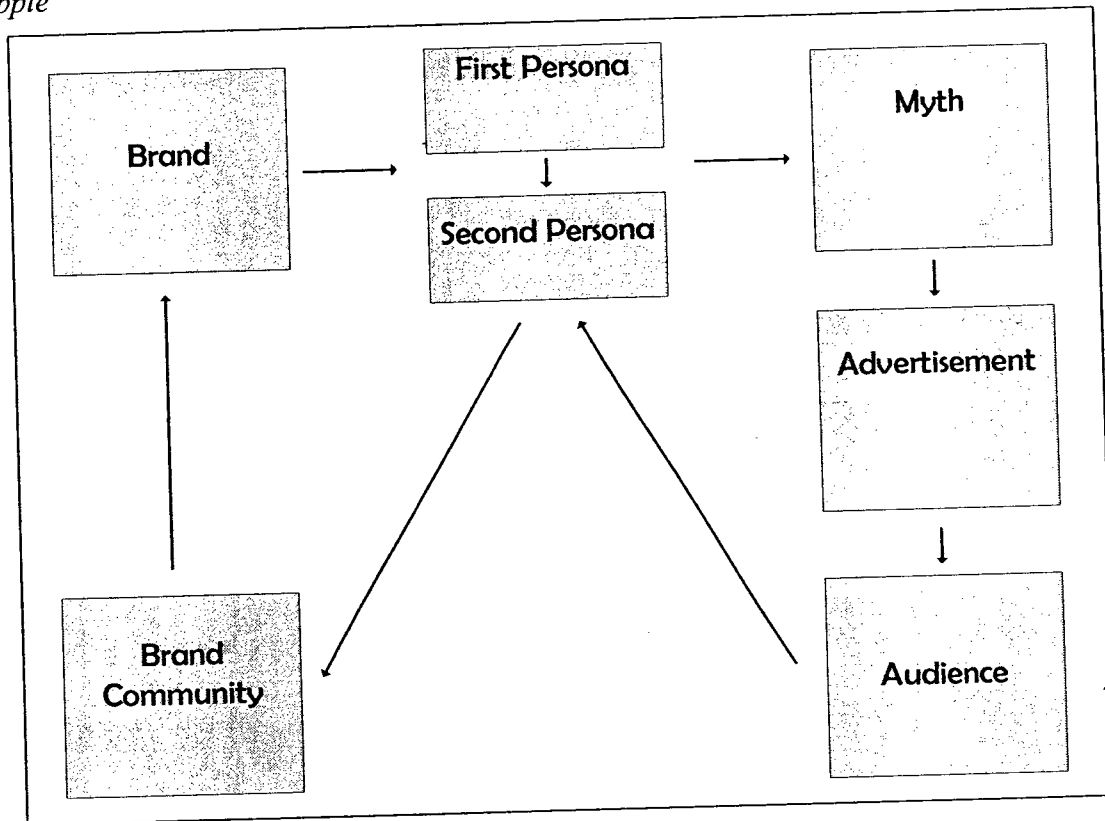


Figure 6.1 The Apple Brand Community, as understood via the proposed model

In the January 2009 issue of *Wired*, Steven Levy comments on the remarkable feat that has been accomplished by Apple – that, even in the mass market, they haven't lost their edge, and that being a "Mac person" remains a tried and strong statement. Levy (2009) forwards that:

Unlike almost any thing else dating from the era of Culture Club and *The Cosby Show*, the Mac has retained its vitality and cachet without ever becoming retro or kitsch. A sense of a cultural divide was there from the very beginning and persists into this day. The skunkworkers behind the Mac were self-styled corporate outcasts who flew a pirate flag and talked trash about the competition.

(p. 92)

A powerful ideological framework, launched with the “1984” ad campaign and careful and meticulous maintenance through subsequent advertisements have been imperative to the livelihood of the Apple brand community. “If a product is successfully tied to an idea, branding persuades people...to consume the idea by consuming the product” (Walker, 2008, p. 8).

Figure 6.1 illustrates the Apple case presented in light of the model forwarded by this current study. Indicative of Proposition 1, composing and viewing themselves as “silicon artists” and “a new kind of digital hipster...determined to take down the faceless giants dominating the industry” (Levy, 2009, p. 92), the minds behind Apple constructed their first persona, and then forwarded the principle of this implied author. Imbuing the persona with an ethos – that is was of a true moral character, and against repression, – and a strong intellectual virtue in its dianoia, this image was funneled into the implied audience, and used to construct a second persona and myth.

Weaving a myth shrouded in the ideology of change and rebellion, and “identifying a threat to its very existence as a narrative” (Charland, 1987, p. 146), “1984” called upon a history of oppression, and a David-versus-Goliath confrontation to usher in a future of freedom. “Audiences are constituted as subjects through a process of identification with a textual position. This identification occurs through a series of ideological effects arising from the narrative structure of constitutive rhetoric” (Charland, 1987, p. 147). Substantiating Proposition 2, the cultural meaning and character codes “1984” articulated an ideology and position with which audiences members could

identify themselves. Hinging upon a sense of dread for the future, the ad introduced the idea of the Apple user as a genre of freedom fighter, and beacon of hope.

The basis of the Apple brand community was alive within the public, however were awakened and given a cohesive breath of life by the “1984” ad and its message. Establishing grounds for confirmation of Proposition 3, following this advertisement, which aired only once, many users identified themselves with the Mac myth, and saw themselves as not unlike the “silicon artists” who were crafting the new Macintosh machines. The message, delivered in the dramatic enactment mode guided a collective of Apple Macintosh users, branding them with the same identity as its founders, and articulating this identity and ideological framework of resistance through it’s advertising campaign.

In particular, it is the third ideological effect, the constitution in action of a motivated subject, that orients those addressed towards particular future acts. Since narrative offer totalizing interpretations that ascribe transcendent meaning to individual acts, the maintenance of narrative consistency demands that a certain set of acts be chosen.

(Charland, 1987, p. 143)

The tautological logic of the message – traditional computers are repressive, Macs are liberating, be liberated and buy a Mac – provided the public with the motivation to rebel, to rebel by purchasing a Mac.

While many identified with the myth, and were called into action by its proponents, market figures indicated that the majority of consumers were not of this group. It is for these reasons that Apple continued to build its brand community, and reinforce its original efforts in subsequent ad campaigns. While efforts fell short between

1985 and 1997, momentum was re-established when the Apple marketing campaign focus was realigned with its creator and overall vision.

Telling of Proposition 4, the “Think Different” and “Get A Mac” campaigns, not only revitalized the original tenants of brand community set in place in 1984, but also served as unique acts of constitutive rhetoric themselves, interpellating new generations of consumers into the Cult of Mac. Taking the positions of 1, 3, 7 and 16 (for the iPhone, Apple, iPod, and Mac, respectively) in the Vitruv Top 100 Social Brands of 2008 analysis, Apple has proven itself to be a top competitor among brands in its ability to command attention and enlist engagement from its consumers in online realms (Klaassen, 2009). This strength is paralleled in its offline efforts as well, where Apple continues to dominate in sales and earnings versus industry competitors.

Apple has made formidable efforts to maintain the cachet of the Apple brand, and thanks to these initiatives, being an Apple user continues to carry weight. Being an a member of the Apple community confers status and speaks about the user; Apple people are now, as they have been before, hip, cool individuals, ahead of their time and continuously “Think[ing] different[ly]”. Anxious to take part in the Apple revolution, without hesitancy, consumers have been purchasing Apple to convey what they know and feel of themselves, and what to communicate this message via their consumption habits. The strength of the Apple brand, and brand community, transforms purchases from simple utilitarian transactions to statements that echo the character of the consumer.

Principal competitor, Microsoft has even recognized the importance of the customer and participatory marketing endeavours, and at a 2007 AAAA Media conference, Mich Mathews (Senior Vice President for Microsoft's Central Marketing Group) announced that Microsoft was ready to enter the "Era of Consumer Participation". Mathews alluded to a new ad campaign and corporate outlook, shifting the company intention from "informing, persuading and reminding" to "demonstrating, involving and empowering"—a perspective similar to that adopted by Apple a quarter of a century prior (as cited in Jaffe, 2007, p. xv).

In January, 2009 Business Week announced that Apple's reports of its first fiscal quarter announced "better-than-expected profit and record revenue" despite the overall financial slump and economic recession (Hesseldahl, 2009). "For the three-month period ended December 27, Apple recorded \$10.2 billion in revenue, as compared with \$9.6 billion a year ago, and net income of \$1.6 billion, as compared with \$1.58 billion a year ago" (Krazit, 2009). While in computer sales, Apple remains to capture only 10% of the market share in sales, and the Mac itself lags behind other Apple product offerings⁸, the Apple name speaks beyond the Macintosh computer. Due in part to of the strength and status carried within the Apple brand, consumers are easy set to hop aboard the Apple bandwagon, and proclaim themselves members of the Apple brand community without the commitment required to change operating systems and overhaul their computing routines. The iconic white headphones of the iPod, the sleek iPhone handset, and the pristine white Macbook stand apart from the ordinary electronic world of silver and

⁸ Apple sold 2.5 million Macs during the quarter, 22 million iPods, and 4.3 million iPhones (Krazit, 2009),

black, and relay the messages and myth upon which the Apple brand is founded. With the strength of their brand community behind them, and the power behind their brand persona, Apple continues to build and grow as a mainstream market player.

Nike

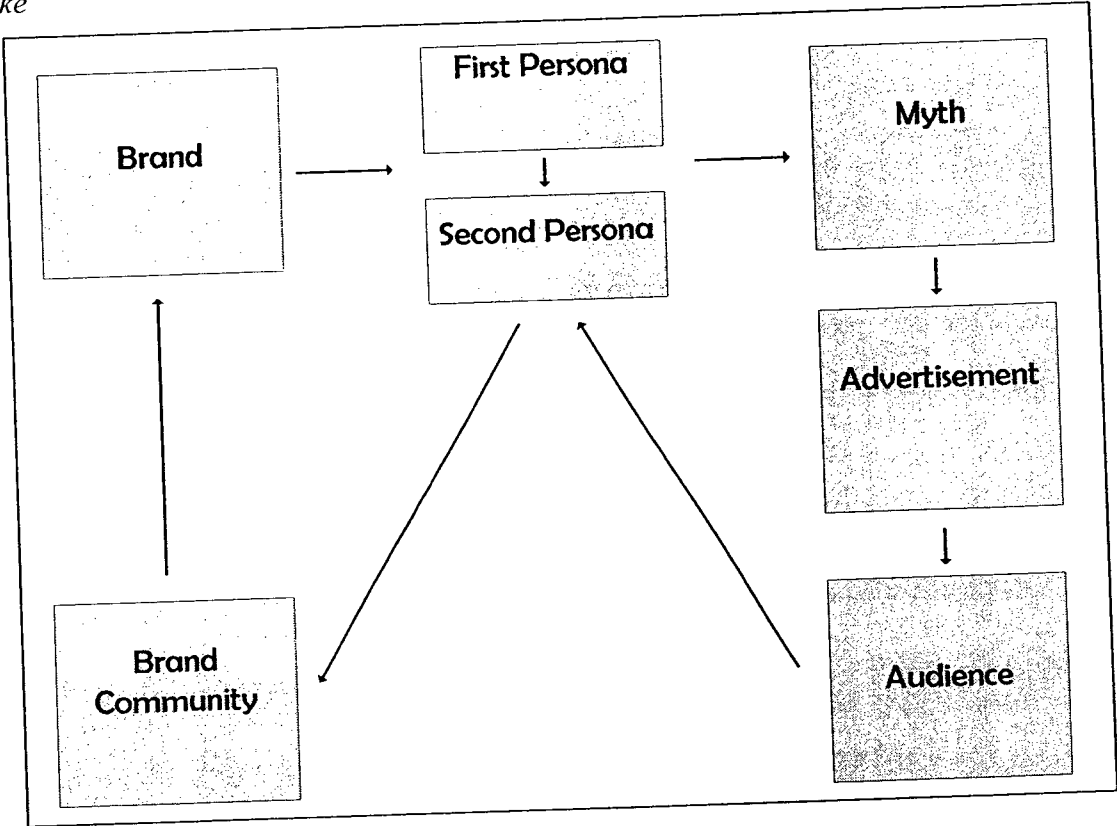


Figure 6.2 The Nike Brand Community, as understood via the proposed model

Nike’s accolades are many. Nike is listed as number 39 on the Vitruve Top 100 Social Brands of 2008, well above competitors Adidas (no. 85) and Puma (no.99). Just Do It has been saluted by *Advertising Age* as one of the top five ad slogans of the 20th century, and the campaign has found a place in the Smithsonian National Museum as a “true part of American History” (Nikebiz, 2009).

“Nike’s *swoosh* is a commercial symbol that has come to stand for athletic excellence, a spirit of determination, hip authenticity and playful self-awareness” (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 1). To illustrate history, and situate its message, the Nike advertising repertoire is rife with cultural allusions and a referential system of meaning that calls upon this core persona of an athlete on a mission. Appropriating culture, the Nike myth addresses its audience with a “knowing wink”; furthermore, Just Do It is empowering, and speaks to the restraint that inhibits transcendence in everyday life (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 19). Wonderfully ambiguous, the Nike slogan that has come to represent the company’s spirit and very essence allows for a multidimensional brand community of sports enthusiasts that come from all realms of athleticism and all levels of discipline.

Figure 6.2 illustrates the Nike case presented in light of the model forwarded by this current study. Nike positioned itself as a brand committed to, and governed by, victory, as suggested in Proposition 1. A band of athletes who saw no mountain high enough, no valley low enough, and no river wide enough to keep them from achieving their goal, to keep them from attaining greatness, the minds behind Nike created a First Persona akin to the very goddess from whom their moniker was borrowed. Interlacing this First Persona with an implicit call to action, and a moral spirit that whole-heartedly embraced a challenge, the persona was symbolized in the Swoosh, and summarized in the slogan Just Do It. In this very image, the second persona, the Nike athlete, was borne.

Demonstrating the relationship between the brand and persona in this study's proposed model, confirming Proposition 2, through their advertisements, Nike began the process of "[inscribing] real social actions within its contextual structure of motives and [inserting] them into the world of practice" (Charland, 1987, p. 142). "Bo Knows" offered a strong voice to a community of "always already" subjects. Laden with the notion of personal best, triumph and excelling at something new, the ad brought to life the taunt of "anything you can do, I can do better" and breathed life into the multidimensional, cross-training Nike athlete. The athlete who was victorious, driven by the challenge, yet humble - an everyday person turned machine when in the heat of the game.

Verifying the logic of Proposition 3, the meaningful and powerful message, and brand story rooted in a history of rising to the occasion, was then adapted into the personal narratives of the audience initiating their assumption of the role of the Second Persona. Charland (1987) articulates that "to be an embodied subject is to experience and act in a textualized world" (p. 144), this world is once where identification and awaking occur at first interaction with the myth, and initiation occurs at consumption. While the ambiguous call to action of Just Do It could be lent to various sports, goals, and fitness objectives, one thing was distinct and undeniable: to Just Do It, you had to Just Do It with Nike.

Through rough patches in the 1990s, Nike continued to thrive thanks to its brand community. In efforts to strengthen its current base, and interpellate new members, Nike

reverberated its myth and rallying call in subsequent ads like the Michael Jordan series and “Pretty”, confirming Proposition 4 and the cyclical nature of the brand community process. Demonstrating the necessity of continuity, through its various ad campaigns (all build upon the same skeleton and forwarding the same message), Nike has established itself as an industry leader. Reebok has even begun to follow in Nike’s footsteps, attempting to stir up the same luster and reputation of excellence. In one particular effort, Reebok attempted to create a buzz around their insignia, The Vector. A noteworthy effort, and step in the right direction, while the icon is recognizable as a Reebok symbol, The Vector does not enter everyday vernacular as the Swoosh has, due in gross part of the personality and philosophy infused in the Nike Swoosh and Just Do It mentality.

Nike continues to have its consumers be a true part of the Nike team through the NIKEiD program, where consumers can moonlight as designers creating their own unique Nike shoes, demonstrating their individuality and membership to the Nike family. Efforts to unite its team of athletes have even begun beyond advertising efforts, as Nike embarks on its second Nike+ Human Race on October 24, 2009. Dubbed as “the Day the World Runs, Virtually,” the Nike+ Human Race is a worldwide 10K race, currently taking place in 24 cities across the globe. Drawing 780, 000 participants in its inaugural year, the Nike+ Human Race is an opportunity for the community of Nike+ runners to come together in a true demonstration of their Nike spirit. (Nikebiz, 2009).

Through their multiple efforts to sustain and develop their brand community, Nike has risen from its runner up status to be the leader of the pack in sports equipment

manufacturing, and has emerged as a team any athlete can be proud to be a part of. It is with this position that Nike has been able to reach its corporate goals, despite economic recession. In a time where “success” is akin to “survival” in the business world, in 2009 NIKE, Inc. (including brands acquisitions like Umbro, Cole Haan, Converse and Hurley) generated \$19.2 billion in revenue – up 3 percent compared to the previous fiscal year; of this, a record performance of \$16.7 billion of which was generated by the Nike brand alone (Nikebiz, 2009).

Harley-Davidson

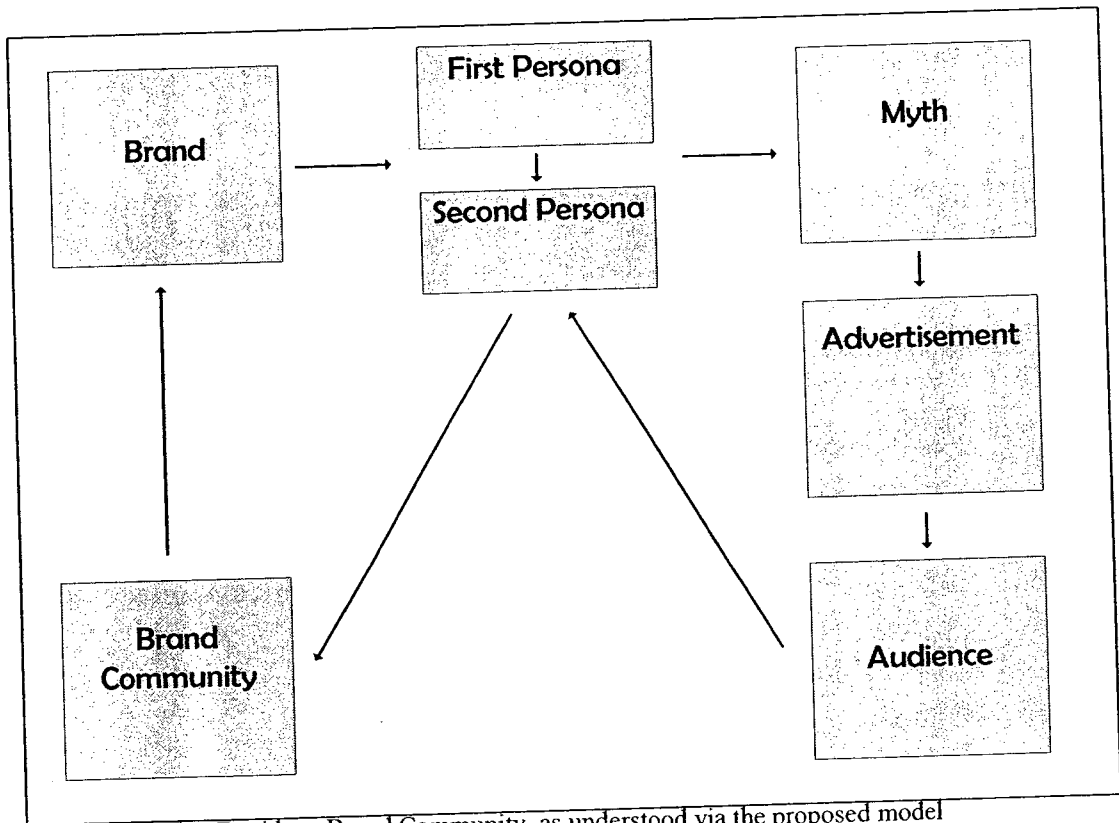


Figure 6.3 The Harley-Davidson Brand Community, as understood via the proposed model

Harley-Davidson is much more than just a motorcycle. Kevin Roberts (World CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi) often alludes to the force that has helped create its undeniable equity and allure. According to Roberts, the most powerful brands are those “that have

built their own mythology, or rather that have helped their loyal customers to build their mythology” (as cited in Haig, 2003, p. 77).

Since 1903, Harley-Davidson has produced the “most enduring and recognizable motorcycles in the world” (Harley-Davidson, 2009), and the very same can be said for the ad campaigns that accompanied these product innovations. Articulating the Harley-Davidson myth of freedom and the open road, the ads have piloted a premier brand community of loyal enthusiasts willing to share their passion, and show their pride.

Figure 6.3 illustrates the Nike case presented in light of the model forwarded by this current study. The Harley-Davidson First Persona, and subsequently Second Persona are formed around the principle of a homegrown hero. Master of his own domain, the Harley-Davidson first persona is an everyman, a brother who is free from the chains of “Big Brother” when on his Harley. Demonstrating Proposition 1, it is with this image in mind that the myth of Harley-Davidson was spun. Laced with themes of brotherhood, freedom and power, the Harley-Davidson myth is difficult to articulate in that it is open for interpretation and adoption to a wide body of consumers, from stay-at-home moms, to rural teens, to high-level executives. Clyde Fessler, retired VP Business Development of the Harley-Davidson Motor Company, comments of this spirit that “it’s like a fire, you can pull and use a color from the fire, but if you just try to grab the whole thing, you’re going to get burned” (Wright, 1983, p. 223). Establishing a mystique about their product, Harley-Davidson has ensured their bottom line in ensuring that the only way to experience the Harley myth, is by riding a Harley.

The focus of the Harley-Davidson advertisement has not always been myth centered, as described by William H. Davidson “ We tried for a long time to convince people that motorcycles had some utility value. Motorcycles have never been anything but pleasure” (Wright, 1983, p. 219). While originally, the Harley-Davidson advertisements spoke to the practical value of the product, this focus shifted to integrate the Harley-Davidson persona as the voice of media efforts. This shift underscores the importance of Proposition 2, and the fusing of the advertisement with myth in order to elicit brand experience and audience adherence. Once this recognizable change in direction was undertaken, the ads began to espouse and expose the history and myth behind Harley-Davidson. Articulating Proposition 3, the Harley-Davidson brand community flourished under the guidance of the company and committal to the Harley-Davidson myth. The community persevered and persisted to build under AMF ownership, as ads continued to advance and feature the spirit of Harley-Davidson, demonstrating the iterative nature of this study’s proposed “how-to” model for brand community formation.

Established in 1983, the H.O.G marks the height of the Harley-Davidson brand community. A *de jure* manifestation of what was *de facto*, the H.O.G served as a concrete indication of the Harley-Davidson brand community. Subsequently, brand fests such as the pilgrimage to Milwaukee (dubbed “the ride home”) and Harley-Davidson museum and factory tours demonstrate the true potency of the brand community and the value of such a strong base of brand evangelists and enthusiasts.

A 1981 study conducted for Harley-Davidson concluded that typical Milwaukee motorcycle owner was a confirmation of the Harley-Davidson second persona: “one who sees himself as an individualist, but is a conformist who needs a sense of brotherhood and camaraderie...led more y gut feeling than by logical reasoning...one who uses his motorcycle to express his attitudes and to make a social statement about himself” (Wright, 1983, p. 223-224). These statements continue to hold true for today’s Harley-Davidson rider, although the demographic of this rider has changed significantly over the years.

In the Harley-Davidson case, the principles of Proposition 4, while applied, are not full demonstrations of the concept of renewal in action. While programs like “Riders Education” invite new members into the Harley community, the pointed reach of the advertisements allow for little encouragement to new audiences. From 1987 to 2006, the median age of the Harley-Davidson brand community, and specifically H.O.G leapt from 35 to 47; this change evidences that while Harley-Davidson riders are loyal, recruitment is low and the brand has become less of a attraction to new riders and more of a “middle-aged, nostalgia brand” (Weber, 2006).

Further to this observation, the figures quoted in the 2008 Harley-Davidson Annual Report indicate that the brand that survived the Great Depression is not ricocheting so well in what they proclaim to be “one of the most challenging economic times since the Great Depression” (Harley-Davidson, 2009). The overall trend in Harley-

Davidson figures quoted is a decline – revenue decreased by 2.3%, a decline in shipments was experienced, net income dropped by 29.9%, and a fall in earnings per share and share price at fiscal year close was observed, compared to the previous year.

Juxtaposing the Harley-Davidson metrics, versus those of Nike and Apple, it can be suggested that Harley cast a wider net, and expose their application of the proposed model to a larger audience body. Harley-Davidson alludes to such a brand-centered approach in their promise to shareholders in the 2008 Annual Report to revitalize the brand through a three-pronged strategy. Where the first two efforts will be concentrated on pricing, costing and finances, the third level of interaction will be centered on a investment in the brand and in the development of their motorcycles, insofar as Harley-Davidson is committed to capturing “the hearts and imagination of motorcycle enthusiasts for generations to come” in a sustained effort to “build [their] brand, [their] enthusiasts base, and most importantly, [their] company” (Harley-Davidson, 2009).

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

The discourse of meaning making in advertising provides an interesting opportunity for research in marketing communications. The present study forwards a model of brand community formation that describes the brand community as a brand-initiated and maintained organism. Drawing upon the concept of constitutive rhetoric and the formation of a collective through mythic messages, this thesis illustrates the concept of interactive consumer (Stern, 1994), and the transformation of the actual consumer to the imagined consumer through the operation of text.

The current study demonstrates the initial viability of the its model through an elementary case analysis of the Apple, Nike and Harley-Davidson brand communities, and a selection of each brand's major advertisements, however requires a more in-depth examination before it can be practically applied in marketing endeavors.

Future research should therefore first seek to empirically test the model elements to determine their concrete applicability, and whether they exist as correlational or causal relationships. Given the direction of the current study, neither ethnographic, grounded theory, nor longitudinal studies were within the scope of exploration, but could prove to be interesting means by which the model can be tested more exhaustively, moving it from theoretical to practical.

The expansion of the model is also an interesting avenue for future research, as in examining in the model in more detail, mediators and moderations of the proposed relationships can be identified. Specifically, the media used for communication, as well as the various modes of message framing should be articulated within the model, as they could result in different audience responses. The frequency and scheduling of the messages should also be examined within the model to resolve whether timing implies different outcomes and results in terms of the strength of the brand community, and the members' drive to action.

The model should additionally be tested for differences that may emerge given the product, or brand type and its position in the product life cycle. For example, the current model could prove to be effective for new-to market products and services, or those heralded as revolutionary to their class, but less potent for line extensions. Moreover, low-involvement purchase items may not merit or be able to sustain brand communities as well as high-involvement or big-ticket purchases. It would additionally be beneficial to test the model based on consumer-level differences, such as the level of consumer engagement within the brand community, the position of the consumer in the brand community life cycle, and the congruence between brand community behaviour and the consumer's everyday lifestyle.

Further to consumer-level variants, as the current study explores the formative process of brand community from a brand-engineered perspective, the proposed model should moreover be expanded by the specific and detailed analysis of the role of consumer agency. As articulated in the theoretical discussion of this paper, audience agency plays a large role in brand community formation, but also continues throughout all stages of brand community life cycle. Muniz and Schau (2005) underscore the grassroots potential and intense religiosity that brand communities can foster in their study of the abandoned Apple Newton brand. Concluding that the brand community continued to operate, bearing themselves the role of the brand in their maintenance and development activities, the authors demonstrate the power that consumers play in the brand community process.

6.3 Conclusion

The creation and sustainability of brand communities provides an interesting opportunity for research in marketing communications. The model of constitutive rhetoric lends to the understanding of this act, framing advertising efforts in a new light and demonstrating how brand communities are rhetorically constituted in and through advertising texts. Constitutive rhetoric helps understand the concept of interactive consumer, and the transformation of the actual consumer to the imagined consumer of the brand community through the operation of text. Once the components of brand community have been identified, the task of qualifying this construct for inclusion in the brand valuation model, and efforts in building brand equity, becomes an increasingly viable task.

The current study expands on the concept of brand community from a brand-engineered and directed perspective. In doing so, the theoretical tenants proposed by this model offer important insights for future research, as well as rudimentary steps for marketing practitioners seeking to manage and direct their brand community efforts. While marketing practitioners must always tread lightly when choreographing their efforts in advertising, balance brand objectives with the consumer climate, the current study offers insight as to how brands can work to build and shape the foundations of a brand community. Through theoretical and case analysis, this study forwards a model for brand community development that sees the brand at the helm of activity, and as active, participatory and momentum-driving agent in the formative process of brand community.

Brand communities are more than fan clubs. They are more than social networks. The brand community represents the dovetailing of both self-portrayal and relationship aspects of brand value, and contributes to the brand value through its social positing and power. It is therefore imperative to include the brand community in the discussion of brand equity and the valuation process. This study contributes to the current body of literature outlining the brand community, in tracing a conceptual framework for the formative process of constituting a brand community. While only an exploratory analysis, the study offers avenues for future research and broadens the understanding of brand community, and in doing so, is a step towards revitalizing the brand valuation process to include this important element.

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