

**Brand community formation in service management: Lessons from the sport industry**

Bob Heere<sup>1</sup>, Daniel Lock<sup>2</sup>, and Danielle Cooper<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. Brint Ryan College of Business, University of North Texas

<sup>2</sup> Bournemouth University Business School, Bournemouth University

**Author Note**

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Bob Heere, G. Brint Ryan College of Business, University of North Texas, Business Leadership Building, 1155 Union Circle #311160, Denton, Texas 76203-5017

**Abstract****Purpose**

The purpose of this article is to propose an overall framework for brand community formation that separates antecedents that lead to the formation of a brand community, from those outcomes that are associated with established communities.

**Design**

The authors approached this review through an interdisciplinary literature review that delineated psychological, structural, and behavioral processes that underline the formation of the brand community, often illustrated by contemporary cases in the sport industry.

**Findings**

Our findings outline eighteen different constructs, categorized in three overarching dimensions, separating structural, behavioral and psychological constructs. The authors posit these eighteen constructs are at the heart of brand community formation. These constructs provide managers with a guide to inform their efforts to form a new brand community.

**Originality**

It is emphasized that brand community formation is a complex process that is paradoxical in nature and requires organizations to balance a non-interventionist approach that would allow for consumer empowerment, with a pro-active approach that creates conditions for a successful brand community formation process.

**Keywords:** brand, branding, brand community, brand community formation, brand image, social identity, organizational identity, community, customer to customer interaction,

**Article classification:** Conceptual paper

### **The formation of a new brand community**

While the emergence of marketing during the twentieth century provided a clear distinction between the consumer and the producer, changes in technology and the advancement of the internet created a society in which consumers could undertake a more active role in creating and maintaining the brand image of a product or service (De Chernatony, 2001). In this environment, consumer interaction has intensified, and in certain cases, the interests individuals share have led to the cultivation of vibrant communities (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). These brand communities are critical to consumer engagement, and successful brands such as Apple and Nike have based their strategies around compelling myths and ideologies around which consumers can coalesce (Kilambi *et al.*, 2013). Studies on brand communities such as Harley Davidson, Jeep, and Saab have uncovered lively communities—each with their own patterns of behavior—that allow consumers to interact with the company, as well as with each other, to become co-producers in the creation of the brand (McAlexander *et al.*, 2002; Muñoz and O’Guinn, 2001; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995).

When consumers come together for ephemeral group experiences, it can lead to what Cova (1997) and Maffesoli (1996) refer to as the emergence of neo-tribes. They view such communities as ever evolving, inherently unstable, and fluid, which distinguishes them from the way in which Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) defined brand communities as: “[...] relatively stable groupings, with relatively strong (but rarely extreme) degrees of commitment.” (p.415). In the context of the sport industry, both tribes and brand communities co-exist in relation to organizations. While communities of sport fans are, in many cases, stable groupings with strong degrees of commitment (i.e., brandom; Guschwan, 2012), there are also examples of collectives that form quickly and ephemerally in relation to movements started by organizations (e.g., Sport

England's This Girl Can campaign). Our focus in this paper is on the development of more stable communities, as they are marked by loyalty and because members stay connected to the brand over the long term. For example, the existence of such communities can diminish or prevent losses when a team does not perform well (e.g. Chicago Cubs are consistently among the highest revenue teams in the league), can lower customer acquisition costs (e.g. The Green Bay Packers have an estimated waiting list for season tickets of 137.000 fans), and supports more revenue generation through premium pricing of tickets and merchandise.

Given changes in technology and the global economy over recent decades, the marketplace has morphed from a primarily transactional logic into a series of business to consumer, and/or consumer to consumer engagements, through which the relationships between consumers often drive engagement, rather than business to consumer transactions. Katz and Heere (2013) provided ample evidence of consumers joining others for a game, even though they had no interest in the team/game itself. Furthermore, continued engagement with other consumers—from this low involvement base—led to them building an affinity to the team and/or the associated transactions (e.g. tickets, merchandise). In this ultra-competitive landscape of engagement, it might no longer be sufficient for companies to search for ephemeral communities that require a constant influx of new members, as Cova (1997) and Maffesoli (1996) envisioned. Marketers now aim to create stable communities in which ambassadors are loyal to the brand, and value is created through company to consumer interactions, customer practices in support of the brand, and most notably their willingness to recruit new members based on their personal relationships (Schau *et al.*, 2009). Such communities have enabled organizations to establish rich and meaningful relationships with their consumers that have a significant effect on behavior (Carlson *et al.*, 2008; Homburg *et al.*, 2009).

Sport team communities are a prime example of the stable, enduring brand communities Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) envisioned. The practices in which sport fans engage to advance organizational goals (Schau *et al.*, 2009) have been a staple of the industry since before marketing formed as a discipline or understood the value of belonging to a community. Many professional sport teams (particularly in Europe) were founded as amateur associations and were owned by their community of fans. While in the United States, almost all teams are owned by private companies (the Green Bay Packers being the exception), in most European nations, many teams are still community-owned, best exemplified by the 50+1 rule in Germany that stipulates that most of the teams' shares should be owned by fans through a non-profit. Consequently, they were already structured in a way that allowed for consumer acts of brandom (Guschwan, 2012).

The nature of sport is also conducive to strong consumer communities. Live sport events are service experiences that are consumed simultaneously by large groups of people, which leads to extensive customer-to-customer interaction (Uhrich, 2014), in an emotional setting (i.e. outcome uncertainty towards win or loss). However, given the scale of many sporting brands, the service experience is diverse, and enjoyed by fans in the stadium, in country, and by satellite fans in a host of places around the world through different media and digital platforms (Bodet *et al.*, 2020). The breadth of interest in many sporting brands (e.g. the SuperBowl) provides a pertinent example of the non-geographically bound nature of communities they attract. McAlexander and Schouten (1998) refer to these collective experiences as 'brandfests' and deem them crucial to the development of a brand community. The lessons they offer us provide insights into how to develop brand communities in other service industries (Underwood *et al.*, 2001; Heere and James, 2007).

There is evidence that the sense of community consumers obtain from brands can predict loyalty better than satisfaction (Drengner *et al.*, 2012), or financial incentives (Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2005), a point that Tsotsou (2016) replicated among fans of a Greek soccer team. Yoshida *et al.* (2015) emphasized the importance of feeling connected to other consumers in sport brand communities. They found that fans' attachment to other spectators was the strongest predictor of continued attendance. Katz *et al.* (2018) further refined our understanding of the importance of consumer-to-consumer relationships through a social network analysis of sport fans, which confirmed that the personal network of a fan was an important predictor of their attendance. This sense of connection among consumers is reinforced by their labor and active development of practices in the context of the brand community that create brand equity and consequent value for the company (Pongsakornrunsilp and Schroeder, 2011; Schau *et al.*, 2009).

A limitation of extant brand community research—in services and sport management—is the almost exclusive focus on existing communities. Researchers in marketing have studied strong enduring communities such as Harley Davidson (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), Jeep (McAlexander *et al.*, 2002), and Apple (Muñiz and Schau, 2005), often focusing on components such as history, tradition, and rituals. While this post-facto approach has informed conceptual understanding of how people relate to communities, we need a better understanding of the prelude to, or formation of enduring communities (Grant *et al.*, 2011). This is not an easy task, because of the inherent challenge it presents: How do we examine a community that does not exist? Nevertheless, the post-facto approach fails to provide us with an understanding of what components were present before the members of a group came to regard themselves as members of a community. Knowledge in relation to brand community formation is, presently, limited. O'Sullivan *et al.* (2011) attempted to overcome this limitation by exploring the emergence of a

brand community among Irish beer lovers. In this study, they focused on the importance of a conversion experience initiated by consumers. Building on this work, Kilambi *et al.* (2013) investigated the importance of advertising rhetoric in evoking a sense of community among their consumers. While these first in-roads offer important insights into the formation of brand communities, existing research in a wide array of academic disciplines—including sport consumer behavior— indicates that there are processes inherent to brand community formation that we know little about. For instance, O’Sullivan *et al.* (2011) did not explore what was necessary to put together that first conversion experience, and to what extent those ingredients could be generalized to other settings.

Communication-based perspectives and case studies offer useful insights into the dynamics of brand community formation (e.g. Kilambi *et al.*, 2013; O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2011). However, what is missing, given the centrality of identity in organizing processes (Piening *et al.*, 2020), is an identity-informed explanation of brand community formation and a better understanding of its underlying psychological, structural, and behavioral mechanisms. Accordingly, we implement an interdisciplinary approach to explore how brand communities develop, and how organizations can foster the conditions to support this process. Similar to Cova (1997), our approach is grounded in research on communities in general and assumes that while brand communities offer a novel marketing strategy, the notion of community formation is one that has been around for centuries and is well understood in other disciplines, for example, sociology (e.g. Bourdieu, 1985; Maffesoli, 1996), political science (e.g. Anderson, 1983), and anthropology (e.g. Cohen, 1976).

### **Brand communities**



Definitions of community remain somewhat ambiguous across disciplines, yet at the heart of the concept appears to be a group of people who (i) share a sense of relatedness, and (ii) meet certain needs through the group (Boyd and Nowell, 2014). This is exemplified by Chavis and Newbrough (1986), who defined a community as: “any set of social relations that are bound together by a sense of community” (p. 335). Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 412) also emphasized that brand communities are rooted in a “structured set of social relationships.” Furthermore, they added that community members a) shared an affection towards the focal point of the community (e.g., admiration of the brand), b) accepted a certain structure to the social relations, c) coalesced around a particular community function or interest (specialized), and d) do not have to be geographically bounded (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). Neither group of authors, however, defined what a sense of community meant.

Developing on this ambiguity, Carlson *et al.* (2008) used social identity theory to define a sense of community, proposing that the more individuals identify with a brand, such that their self-schema and the brand overlap, the greater their sense of community. It might be that the manifestation of social identity is what separates the ephemeral tribe as discussed by Cova (1997) and Maffesoli (1996) from the enduring brand communities envisioned by Muniz and O’Guinn. Van Vugt and Hart (2004) demonstrated—using experiments—that social identity increased individuals group loyalty, even when presented with a more attractive option, signaling an enduring relationship (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). This finding was echoed by Heere *et al.* (2011) who used a social identity measure to examine the sense of community of college football fans among three different fanbases and demonstrated its strong effect on consumer behavior.

Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001) suggested that social identity was important in defining established communities for members. They referred to social identity as a shared consciousness

of kind, which aligns with the process of self-categorization (Turner *et al.*, 1987). Specifically, shared identity is made possible through a process of self-stereotyping whereby individuals define themselves as interchangeable with other members on a shared characteristic – in the present example, shared interest in a brand. This process is critical because it changes consumers self-construal when salient, from what a brand means to ‘me’ to what it means to ‘us’, making a shared consciousness of kind possible (cf. Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). In self-categorization theory, Turner *et al.* (1987) argued that individuals formed groups and communities to reduce subjective uncertainty. Consumers experience uncertainty when they receive information (e.g., about new sports or brands) that is unfamiliar or incongruent with their self-concept. Gravitation towards others with shared interests reduces uncertainty, and therefore, acts as a motive for sport consumption (Dimmock and Grove, 2006).

Coalescing around shared rituals and traditions is key to reducing subjective uncertainty. Research on established brand communities has noted the presence of distinctive rituals and traditions in groups alongside a sense of moral responsibility shared by members. For example, Underwood *et al.* (2001) found that successful brand communities were characterized by: a) group experiences, b) history/tradition, c) role of physical facility (later defined by others as social space – see Warner and Dixon, 2011), and d) rituals. These group activities and qualities help to reinforce shared social identity (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006). As discussed, while immensely valuable to our understanding of successful communities, these are markers of established communities and provide little insight into how such entities form.

Grant *et al.* (2011) examined three professional sport teams in New Zealand to explore if marketing managers used deliberate strategies to foster the emergence of a brand community. They found little evidence of strategic community development and remarked that marketers

were unfamiliar with the importance of brand community and, therefore, did not allocate resources to develop a consciousness of kind (Muñiz and Guinn, 2001), which could have supported them through their challenging first years. All three teams were relatively new, though not brand-new; one team was more than a decade old, and the other two were in their third and eighth year respectively, yet all of them struggled to keep their fanbase engaged. The teams competed for fans with Rugby Union, who either directly (NPC competition), or indirectly (Super League competition) were founded by fans more than a century ago, and like their European counterparts, were able to build their brand community efforts from the labor of members. Yet, these new teams lacked such build-in communities, or the marketers did not recognize them as such.

When asked about the existing community markers as discussed by Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) and by Underwood *et al.* (2001), marketers of these new teams deemed them to be incredibly hard to use. They believed their teams were not old enough to have history, traditions, or rituals. Furthermore, their fan bases did not experience any consciousness of kind specific to the new team or a moral responsibility toward it, which led participants to claim they did not have the resources or access to control their physical facilities and design them as an effective social space. This might indicate that many of the proposed markers of successful brand communities are better viewed as outcomes, rather than antecedents that marketers can use as a starting point for consumer engagement. Markers such as history, rituals, and tradition offer little value to organizations who are attempting to initiate their own community. Similarly, failures by more established organizations in fostering strong brand communities (e.g. Gambetti and Graffigna, 2015) suggests that they, too, could benefit from a better understanding of what components could lead to brand community formation, versus those that are an outcome of them.

### **Sense of brand community and consumer engagement**

Social identity theorists would argue that behavior is a corollary of an overall community identity, rather than an outcome (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Ashmore *et al.*, 2004), which places doubt to the proposed causality, and suggests that identity and behavior are two dynamic forces that move hand in hand. For established organizations, identification with the organization or its associated communities could be a starting point for consumer engagement (Heere *et al.*, 2011) and, therefore, identity is antecedent to behavior (see also Yoshida *et al.*, 2015). However, for a new organization, consumer engagement is critical to the development of an identity in the first place. Thus, the opposite path is also feasible: behavior is an antecedent to identity, and prior to activating a sense of identity through history, traditions, and rituals, organizations must look at other constructs to develop that sense of identity through consumer engagement.

Research on sport fan socialization clearly demonstrates that while supporters may form identities without social contact, frequently consumers are brought into communities by friends, family members, marketing, and other social structures (Funk and James, 2001; Spaaij and Anderson, 2010). Katz and Heere (2013) showed that for sport fans, behavior could be both an antecedent and outcome of identity at the same time, and that it might be the consumer-to-consumer interaction (see also Curth *et al.*, 2014), in which one consumer already identifies, whereas the other does not, that is crucial to the formation of a brand community. For one consumer, identification might form instantly, based on their love of the sport and/or the organization that founded the team (e.g. university, company, church, etc.). For another consumer who was invited to come to a game, behavior might antecede their identity, as they initially attended for other reasons (Spaaij and Anderson, 2010). Moreover, if one juxtaposed the example of sport teams in New Zealand (Grant *et al.*, 2011), with more recent marketing efforts

to create new Major League Soccer (MLS) teams in the United States, community development was more successful because of organizational efforts to engage with their (potential) fans throughout the formation process (to illustrate, see this article on LACF, Lowery 2021). This emphasizes that who ‘owns’ the brand community is contested, and engaging consumers in meaningful ways that includes a sense of ownership for everyone is an effective strategy to build a sense of identity among fans.

In this paper we seek to outline the conceptual groundwork for an examination of the formation of brand communities through a discussion of what occurs prior to the outcomes discussed by brand community scholars (e.g. Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001; Underwood *et al.*, 2001). To allow for such an examination, we present a conceptual paper that is grounded in the proposition that brand communities are merely a new kind of community in human civilization, and to understand how they are formed, we need to implement an interdisciplinary approach, referencing scholarly work from marketing, sociology, political science, psychology, history, and anthropology that have studied communities throughout history. This review is marked by a discussion of what occurs before the brand community manifests itself and outlines the mindset of the individuals that led them to come together (i.e., psychological), the structural components required to have the individuals collaborate (i.e., structural), and the energy the individuals put forward (i.e., behavioral) to form the actual brand community (see Tables 1-3). Consistent with prior work, we assume that brand communities are, to some extent, co-created by consumers and organizations, and both (should) play a role in formation (e.g. Black and Veloutsou, 2017; Weiger *et al.*, 2017).

### **The psychological components that bring people together**

At the heart of the community formation process is a realization that a particular task or activity (i.e., watch football, attend a tailgate party, etc.) in which a person aims to participate would either significantly improve, or only be possible, with the help of other individuals. As such, sport offers a powerful service context for community engagement. Consumption of sport brands is almost always a group experience; it is something that we enjoy with others, and in fact, often serves as social glue to bond with people we already know, or to make friends in a new community (Ahuvia *et al.*, 2022; Collins and Heere, 2018; Holt, 1995). Therefore, early consumer-to-consumer relationships and brand practices result from *shared needs and wants* that emerge due to subjective uncertainty (cf. Turner *et al.*, 1987), and that are fulfilled through a common interest in an activity. Most people who engage in a sporting brand community, either as fan or participant, do so to fulfill a variety of needs not related to the sport itself, such as health, sense of belonging, connection with people they love, or simply, entertainment, and they need others who participate in that activity for similar reasons.

If a successful convergence takes place during this neophyte stage, it causes individuals to evolve past simply meeting these needs and acts as an initial step towards community formation. At this point, individuals do not yet identify with the potential brand community (as it has not yet developed); instead, they *start to share an identity centered on the underlying cause*, as illustrated by O'Sullivan *et al.* (2011). This is because as individuals voluntarily engage in behaviors consistent with an identity, they start to internalize that identity (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016). In the case of sport, the cause could be the love for the event or sport itself. For example, in their study of tailgaters that attended the games of a new college football team, Katz and Heere (2013) found that while many fans just showed up for a good time with their friends or family, and had no affinity with the new football team, over time their participation in the

tailgate group led to a genuine identification with the college football team. Lock and Funk (2016) argued that common bonds between individuals can forge the initial identity and territory for community formation. The cause could also be association with a meaningful image. For example, Holt (2004) illustrated how cultural contradictions in society create opportunities for brands to address anxieties people experience. The 'outlaw' 'patriot' image cultivated by Harley Davidson offers a salient example of this point (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). In this sense, the meanings communities come to represent can be strongly related to cultural shifts and tensions in society (Holt, 2004).

Thus, common identity groups emerge due to a shared understanding of the underlying cause behind the activity. It is important to note that while there now might be a group of consumers that could be regarded as a community, this group is not centered on the brand yet. For instance, Katz and Heere (2013) found that for most people who came to the tailgate party and game of the new football, they were there because they were part of an existing (external) community, such as family, school, or work. Yet, over time, the community that was initially grounded in social interaction and a love for an event or sport (potential underlying causes that led them to participate in this new community) turned into a specific brand community focused on the team itself. As Katz and Heere (2013) showed, there is no guarantee that this identity with the underlying cause (i.e. the sport) will develop into a successful community in which members manifest a moral responsibility to the brand. In one tailgate group, the leader of the group halted his efforts to put together this community experience after a few games, as he was too busy with other responsibilities, and as a result, the entire group ceased from engaging with the team. As they had not yet developed an identity with the team itself, they did not feel any moral

responsibility to continue their engagement with the team and perhaps found alternative communities to engage with the underlying cause.

Katz and Heere (2013) demonstrated the importance of the community initiator, the leader who brings the community together and often provides the resources to allow for that to occur. Whilst these individuals are extremely important to community formation, they could also be the Achilles heel of the community if other members do not become active organizers of the community event. Within the community development literature, this negotiation is acknowledged as *sense of empowerment*, in which the willingness of the leader(s) to share their power with other members of a community is examined (Chavis and Newbrough, 1986). As Katz and Heere (2015) stated, empowerment is crucial to formation, as it allows other individuals to exert their energy towards building a new community. Empowerment is one of the most complex phenomena in community formation for organizations. On one hand, organizations want to be proactive and set the conditions for community formation, yet on the other hand, true empowerment would offer the agency and voice over the community formation process to the consumers. Dann (2020) offered a powerful case study of how LAFC, the Los Angeles based MLS club, empowered their fans from the very beginning and gave them an active voice in shaping the brand identity of the team. As stated previously, ownership of the community surrounding the team is always contested, and it is important that the organization itself acknowledges this and identifies a balance in which they provide the freedom to fans to develop and operate their own brand community, yet find ways to support these communities, and ensure they are aligned with the brand values of the team itself.

Hidden in the concept of empowerment are members' beliefs about the distribution of power as a community forms, and the treatment of individuals with varying degrees of power.



Communities, like most networks, are scale-free, consisting of hubs and nodes, in which highly engaged individuals take on leadership roles, and less engaged individuals remain on the periphery (Katz and Heere, 2013). Yet, during the formation of a new community, engagement and the voice of each member is still fluid and negotiable. Scholars in organizational research who have examined *sense of equity* would suggest that judgments regarding perceived fairness develop within the emerging community, including how everyone perceives their treatment in comparison to the treatment of others (Adams, 1963). Fairness and equity have been discussed through the concepts of distributive and procedural justice (Greenberg, 1990). Distributive justice focuses on the fairness of outcome distributions (Cohen, 1987). That is, people are willing to work under inequitable circumstances, if those inequities are seen as fair. Procedural justice focuses on the process of decision-making, as opposed to the outcome (Folger and Greenberg, 1985). When individuals perceive a group as exhibiting distributive and procedural justice, they believe that the group will support them, and in return, they exert energy on behalf of the group (Aryee and Chay, 2001). The concept of equity is challenging enough for established organizations or communities, but it is even harder to address during the initial formation of a community when much of the contributions of the members are voluntary, and the distribution of power within the community is still negotiable and in constant flux (Katz and Heere, 2015). While these psychological processes are crucial to the formation of the community, they need to be accompanied by the emergence of a structure that allows the community to form, which is discussed below through structural components that are needed for a community to form.

INSERT TABLE 1

**The structural components that bring people together**

Structural components are features that are inherent to emerging communities (rather than characteristics and attitudes of the individual members) and the ways in which members interact. As participants start to interact with one another, an initial *communication system* emerges amongst members. These systems may be established by consumers or organizations. The critical point is that the system provides a forum in which consumers can communicate to coordinate labor (cf. Arvidsson, 2005). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, setting up such a communication system was an arduous, time-consuming process (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Yet, with the emergence of worldwide communication services, such as online community platforms, social media, and streaming, communication systems can be created with little effort and play a pivotal role in the formation of brand communities (Weiger *et al.*, 2017; Wirtz *et al.*, 2013). These online communication systems have allowed for constant interaction between individuals (both synchronous and asynchronous – see Giertz *et al.*, 2021), placing the challenge not just on creating a system, but on developing one that can compete with a myriad of other physical and virtual communities that attract the attention of individuals.

Access to communication structures offers a mechanism through which neophyte members can begin to negotiate community values and start to internalize group norms and a *belief system* (Lucas, 1992). The belief system originates from the shared characteristics that initially drew members to identify with the underlying cause. In the case of Harley Davidson, it was a nostalgic sense of freedom (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), and for the Beamish community, it was their love for Irish beer, and perhaps, male bonding (O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2011). In turn, the belief system directs the form of participation toward the procurement of *resources* (time, labor, money, etc.) to fulfill a shared task or activity conducive to community creation (Bourdieu and Richardson, 1986).

Lastly, participants have to coalesce around an *organizational structure* that allows a community to evolve, such that they share expectations about how members relate to each other (Scott *et al.*, 1981). Some organizational structures may be primarily virtual, linking disparate community members, while others may be more visible and geographically bound (Ahuja and Carley, 1999). In their analysis of the Harley Davidson brand community, Schouten, and McAlexander (1995) discussed ways in which the established community was marked by a hierarchical structure based on the status of its members. Within that context, structure was based upon commitment to the community and its ideology. Consequently, the community consisted of some hardcore members who were highly committed, and peripheral members who were less devoted, a congruent finding to Katz and Heere's (2013) discussion of leaders and followers (see previous section on equity). As this example from an established brand community showed, it is important to note that the development of a social structure within a new brand community does not necessarily require formalization, with clearly written processes and, in some cases, it may be preferable for the social structure to remain organic, with decentralized decision-making and flexible processes (Ireland *et al.*, 2009). This distinction depends on the belief system of the group, as this—and the power of the community members' desire—determine the most appropriate structure for the community. O'Sullivan *et al.* (2011) illustrated this in their discussion of the constitution the members created for their community, and the quasi-serious way the members treated this document. Nevertheless, some form of structure helps to increase the perception that the community exists as group (Meneses *et al.*, 2008), contributing to members' identification with the community (Hogg *et al.*, 2007).

Each of the processes outlined above can be bolstered by identifying successful *associated communities* that focus on a cause or entity important to community members. While

there might not be a strong sense of social identity in the newly formed community as communication structures emerge, members are likely to have an identity with either the underlying cause or with an associated established community that they believe is complementary to the new community. Hammedi *et al.* (2015) stated that consumers participate in multiple brand communities, and how we engage with one, will affect how we engage with another, something they refer to as a brand community constellation. For an organization that would like to initiate a new community, this would start with an understanding of features that could serve as a symbol that represents an associated community, and finding ways to partner with them, or at least, reflect them in their own brand. For example, Heere *et al.* (2011) demonstrated that our identification with sport teams often originates in how we identified with the communities that we believed the sport team represented, whether this was a university, a city, a region, a state, or a nation (e.g. New York Giants, the University of Florida Gators, the Brazilian national team, etc.).

Anthropologists argue that symbols are an important part of how we connect with communities. According to Cohen (1976), human beings ascribe multiple meanings to symbols, which are bestowed upon specific objects by agreement and convention. However, the meanings attached to symbols are not fixed and are (re)produced and (re)interpreted over time. Discussing the meaning of symbols to communities, Cohen (1985) argued that a community itself is a symbolic structure: “The symbols of community are mental constructs: they provide people with the means to make meaning. In so doing, they also provide them with the means to express the particular meanings which the community has for them” (p.19). Brand communities can contribute to consumers’ identities because they act as symbols of their desired self that they wish to communicate to others (Cardador and Pratt, 2006).

In addition to the community itself serving as a symbol, shared symbols within the community are useful components to create meaning for members. They bring the ‘imagined’ community to the forefront (Anderson, 1983). Many of the communities we identify with, such as nations, are so abstract (i.e., large and difficult to define) and intangible that they only become apparent through symbols, such as a flag, a political leader, or a building. The role of symbols within the context of community is well understood. Symbols provide meaning to the community and have the potential to harmonize intragroup relations (Wilkins and Patterson, 1985), support organizational ideologies (Abravanel, 1983), and enhance organizational image and identification (Cheney, 1991). For this reason, when managers change [or propose a change to] symbols (e.g., team crest) it can yield fervent resistance from fans (Hayton *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, as members imbue shared objects with symbolic meaning, it supports the development of a sense of community (Livne-Tarandach and Jazaieri, 2021).

While identification is possible without comparison to a relevant out-group (e.g., Postmes *et al.*, 2005), the presence of a salient outgroup can intensify identification with nascent communities (Randolph-Seng *et al.*, 2012). In some instances, the term outgroup captures those who are not part of the in-group, but in many instances, community members start to become aware of other communities with which they compete, or wish to be distinctive from, that are viewed as *rival communities*. Muñiz and Guinn (2001) defined these group dynamics as oppositional brand loyalty. Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggested that awareness of an out-group enhanced peoples’ awareness of their in-group – which helped to reinforce the identity of the emerging brand community. Furthermore, the more salient an out-group is in a given context, the more pervasive in-group norms will be in shaping member behavior. Sport teams seem to illustrate this particularly well, as games against rivals (i.e. Manchester City versus Manchester

United, University of Auburn Tigers versus University of Alabama Crimson Tide, etc.) often attract the highest attendances of the year, regardless of standings (Tyler and Cobbs, 2015).

The social world of each community occurs in a *social space* in which the interactions between different social agents take place (Bourdieu, 1985). While, initially, members do require space to interact, this space is merely functional, and it is not until the community is formed, that it takes on symbolic value. Meaningful social spaces are a vital thread in the fabric of community, as they play a pivotal role in processes of identity formation with reference to the community. Enhancing the space to reflect the identity of the community diversifies the ways that individuals identify with the community. It is important to note that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century these social spaces can be both physical and virtual (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Once social spaces are created, occasions for the development of identity are facilitated by organizing *group experiences* or brandfests (McAlexander and Schouten, 1998), in which members congregate to experience a brand. The games played by the team are obviously at the heart of these experiences, but fan congregations often occur in ‘third places’, such as bars and parties (Fairley and Tyler, 2012). More recently, because of the geographic spread of sport brand communities these third places have increased mixed in-person and online spaces due to the emergence of satellite (Bodet *et al.*, 2020) and/or displaced fans (Collins and Heere, 2018). The argument is that to build a sense of community, it is necessary to create group experiences that are shared by community members. While this may occur physically around the stadia of a team, it is increasingly likely to occur between subgroup members online (cf. Lock and Funk, 2016). This mirrors what Anderson (1983) noted in his review of the role of pilgrimages in the national identity process. Similarly, Underwood *et al.* (2001), when discussing the notion of shared group experiences, explored this phenomenon as a central component of shared consciousness. These

group experiences could be organized by the brand (see Jeep - McAlexander *et al.*, 2002) or by consumers of the brand (see Beamish – O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2013), and as mentioned previously, sport brands have a strong advantage here towards other brands, as their games are natural brandfests in which consumers collectively experience an emotional event that is set up to bring them together. The group experience component also signifies the reciprocal relationship between behavior and sense of community, as it illustrates that participation in group experiences is crucial in the development of a sense of community (Katz and Heere, 2013).

#### INSERT TABLE 2

#### **The behavioral components that bring people together**

The actions or behaviors performed by individuals are the final ingredient that is required to form a brand community. First, once individuals recognize the need for the community, they will start *participating* in different activities that support its emerging function or purpose and provide the energy that boosts the formation of the community (Laszlo and Krippner, 1998). The verb ‘participating’ is used here to collectively discuss all activities that are necessary for the foundation of a community (e.g. meeting, communicating, discussing, etc.). It is important to note that not all members will participate in all activities, and the time and energy put into any of these tasks may vary greatly from member to member as well. As such, participating should be regarded as a highly heterogenic term that includes a plethora of activities dependent on a community’s specific goals, and the heterogeneity of its member base. Yet, as Schau *et al.* (2009) remarked, certain practices are important to the context of community development and are worth discussing separately from participation in general. Associated with these first activities, individuals start to *justify* the energy they exert on behalf of the neophyte community to other people (Kozinets, 2001) and recruit potential members through the act of *evangelization*

(De Ruyter and Wetzels, 2000; Schau *et al.*, 2009). A crucial behavioral practice proposed by Schau *et al.* in the early stage is *governing* (see also Mathwick *et al.*, 2008). Without governing, the formation of a structure, the creation and maintenance of resources, and the organization of group experiences would all be impossible, and the governance structure that has been agreed upon by either the consumers and/or brand signifies those members of the brand community agree on how the brand community should function (O'Sullivan *et al.*, 2013).

Early consumer-to-consumer interaction should lead to *empathy* with fellow members and *welcoming* of new members into the group (Katz and Heere, 2013; Muniz and Schau, 2005; Schau *et al.*, 2009). Community members do not always empathize and welcome new members, however. In a recent study of a Somalian sporting club in Melbourne, Spaaij (2015) found that variables, such as gender, can create boundaries to entry. Under circumstances of welcoming and empathy, sport communities can grow and thrive; however, it is also feasible that exclusionary practices in this early stage of community development can marginalize and exclude people based on other category memberships (e.g., ethnicity or gender). Understanding these potential issues during the process of community formation provides a means to potentially counteract such exclusionary practices and would allow the first members to *welcome* new members. Katz and Heere (2013) suggest that during the formation of the community, the member-to-member relationships are more important to many individuals than the member-to-community relationship (cf. Prentice *et al.*, 1994).

INSERT TABLE 3

## **Discussion**

Ultimately, we propose that if an organization can leverage the energy and desire of individuals to form a new community, and support efforts of consumers to create the structural



components required to allow for consumer-to-consumer interaction, a shared consciousness of kind and moral responsibility to the community can manifest. Katz and Heere (2013) discussed this in their study of fans of a new college football team: *“This identity [with the other group members] did not exist at the start of the season but emerged during the later weeks of the inaugural season of tailgating as a result of the social interaction among the members of the social network (p. 282).”* While in the beginning, the community identity that individuals develop is still fragile and highly related to the cause or utility pursued, the advent of the consolidated community brings the shared identity process to fruition. Through successfully representing an underlying cause or concern a community can become synonymous with it which, in turn, fosters a strong sense of identity and loyalty towards the organization (Pritchard *et al.*, 1999; Filo *et al.*, 2008). It is at this point that the components that have been proposed in previous research as markers of a brand community would start to manifest. Structural components such as *traditions, rituals, history, and behavioral practices* are all discussed in detail by scholars and could become visible within communities, pending the context (Foster and Hyatt, 2008; Grant *et al.*, 2011; McDonald and Karg, 2014). As discussed by Schau *et al.* (2009), members become co-producers of the community, serve as ambassadors for the community, and could display all kind of behaviors that are beneficial to the community (*staking, milestoneing, badging, customizing, grooming, commoditizing, and discouraging use of opposite brands*). It is not our argument that some components are antecedents and others are outcomes. Rather, we view the different components as emerging at different points of time, due to a continuous interplay of evolving psychological and behavioral constructs in social context. So, for instance, while the establishment of a communication structure temporally precedes the development of a ritual, we do not argue that one is antecedent to the other. They emerge at different points in

time, and once they are both present, they impact each other (i.e. communication leads to new rituals, whereas these rituals then enhance communication between community members), and all of them are likely to evolve and change over time, in order to adapt to the changing needs of (new) consumers, and to extend their lifecycle. We also like to emphasize that not every community needs to incorporate all components to be considered a community, and /or that every component needs to be developed to the same extent. Communities differ because of the social context and, likely, each one offers a unique combination of all the components reviewed in this paper.

It is at this point we can refer to the new community as an established brand community, as it has been reviewed in the extant literature. While we propose that each of the components presented in Table 1, 2, and 3 is present in each brand community *to some extent*, we do not claim that each member will experience or adhere to each component. Furthermore, we expect there to be heterogeneity among communities in how strongly each of the components are present. Particularly, those members on the periphery of the brand community might have ulterior motives to contribute to the community, and might not adhere to some of the psychological, structural or behavioral practices. Yet, we believe that each of the components give marketers a starting point for an opportunity to strengthen their own community. For example, if a community does not have a clearly defined rival, creating one might generate higher engagement. If communication among members is low, new platforms could be explored to increase communication. Where a facility does not exude the story of the community, marketers could work on integrating symbols of the brand into the service environment to create a stronger social space, and consumer events can be created as additional brandfests to increase the opportunity for consumers to meet with each other and build a connection. From that

perspective, the Tables shared in this manuscript offer a checklist for brand managers who are looking to create a new brand community, and while it was not the purpose of this study, could perhaps even be used to evaluate existing brand communities to understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Sport marketing researchers have examined the social and psychological processes that drive consumers into the community extensively (Heere *et al.*, 2011; Katz and Heere, 2015), yet we offer a broader reflection of the structural and behavioral elements that lead to the coalescence and formation of a community. Researchers have started to explore both the behavioral (Yoshida *et al.*, 2015) and the structural (McDonald and Karg, 2014) components, yet more work is warranted. Another venue of exploration would be to examine why certain communities start to decline and suffer from entropy. A review of the components offered in this conceptual paper could offer insight into that decline. Ultimately, the value of this framework for future research is that it provides scholars insight into the dynamics of a community that has yet to form. The biggest strength of this study is also its biggest limitation. Due to the holistic approach, testing this framework empirically through a particular model, and subsequent survey research will be complicated, because of the eighteen interacting constructs highlighted in Tables 1-3. We would suggest for researchers to follow the approach of Yoshida *et al.* (2015) and McDonald and Karg (2014) and focus on certain components that seem relevant to the context of the study.

Communities should be evaluated both holistically and through an examination of attributes or subcommunities. In many cases, the overall community is the umbrella for the community identity, and this should be the starting point for any community development. However, as discussed in this paper, some communities are quite abstract at the holistic level,

and for these communities most of the development work is done at the second level where the sense of community is made salient through the use of symbols or through interaction of smaller groups (e.g. fan group, tailgate group, etc. – see Lock and Funk, 2016). For each of these symbols, the other components proposed in this manuscript could be applied. For instance, a social space such as Fenway Park has its own history, symbols, rituals, and traditions.

Ultimately, the purpose of this study was to separate those community markers that are best discussed as outcomes to successful community formation processes, from those that are best discussed as antecedents to those processes. This framework could help organizations evaluate how to create a new brand community around their product or service, or to evaluate their current community and determine how to improve or expand upon it. To some extent, forming a brand community will remain a paradoxical phenomenon for organizations. On one hand, they need to make it an integral part of their brand strategy, as its value to the brand is immense. On the other hand, the strength of a brand community is grounded in empowering consumers to create their own community, which implies a hands-off approach for companies. Thus, organizations must maintain a fine balance between actively supporting and facilitating brand communities, and passively provide agency and voice to their consumers to create their own community.

## References

- Abravanel, H., 1983. "Mediatory myths in the service of organizational ideology." *Organizational Symbolism*, 1, pp.273-293.
- Adams, J.S., 1963. "Towards an understanding of inequity". *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(5), pp.422-435.
- Ahuja, M.K. and Carley, K.M., 1999. "Network structure in virtual organizations." *Organization science*, 10(6), pp.741-757.
- Ahuvia, A., Izberk-Bilgin, E. and Lee, K., 2022. "Towards a theory of brand love in services: the power of identity and social relationships." *Journal of Service Management*, 33(3), 453-464.
- Anderson, B., 1983. *Imagined communities*. Verso. *New York*.
- Arvidsson, A., 2005. "Brands: A critical perspective." *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(2), pp.235-258.
- Aryee, S. and Chay, Y.W., 2001. "Workplace justice, citizenship behavior, and turnover intentions in a union context: Examining the mediating role of perceived union support and union instrumentality." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(1), p.154.
- Ashforth, B.E. and Mael, F., 1989. "Social identity theory and the organization." *Academy of Management Review*, 14(1), pp.20-39.
- Ashforth, B.E., Harrison, S.H. and Corley, K.G., 2008. "Identification in organizations: An examination of four fundamental questions." *Journal of Management*, 34(3), pp.325-374.
- Ashforth, B.E. and Schinoff, B.S., 2016. "Identity under construction: How individuals come to define themselves in organizations." *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 3, pp.111-137.
- Ashmore, R.D., Deaux, K. and McLaughlin-Volpe, T., 2004. "An organizing framework for collective identity: articulation and significance of multidimensionality." *Psychological Bulletin*, 130(1), pp.80-114.
- Bourdieu, P., 1985. "The social space and the genesis of groups." *Social Science Information*, 24(2), pp.195-220.
- Bourdieu, P., and Richardson, J.G., 1986. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. *The Forms of Capital*, 241, pp.241-258.
- Black, I. and Veloutsou, C., 2017. "Working consumers: Co-creation of brand identity, consumer

- identity and brand community identity.” *Journal of Business Research*, 70, pp.416-429.
- Bodet, G., Geng, H., Chanavat, N. and Wang, C., 2020. “Sport brands' attraction factors and international fans.” *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 10(2), pp.147-167.
- Boyd, N.M. and Nowell, B., 2014. “Psychological sense of community: A new construct for the field of management.” *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 23(2), pp.107-122.
- Brodie, R.J., Ilic, A., Juric, B. and Hollebeek, L., 2013. “Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis.” *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), pp.105-114.
- Cardador, M.T. and Pratt, M.G., 2006. “Identification management and its bases: Bridging management and marketing perspectives through a focus on affiliation dimensions.” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34(2), pp.174-184.
- Carlson, B.D., Suter, T.A. and Brown, T.J., 2008. “Social versus psychological brand community: The role of psychological sense of brand community.” *Journal of Business Research*, 61(4), pp.284-291.
- Chavis, D.M. and Newbrough, J.R., 1986. “The meaning of" community" in community psychology.” *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(4), pp. 335-40.
- Cheney, G., 1991. *Rhetoric in an Organizational Society: Managing Multiple Identities*. University of South Carolina Press.
- Cohen, A., 1976. *Two-dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in complex society*. Univ of California Press.
- Cohen, A.P., 2013. *Symbolic Construction of Community*. Routledge.
- Cohen, R.L., 1987. “Distributive justice: Theory and research.” *Social Justice Research*, 1, pp.19-40.
- Cova, B., 1997. “Community and consumption: Towards a definition of the “linking value” of product or services.” *European Journal of Marketing*, 31(3/4), pp.297-316.
- Collins, D.R. and Heere, B., 2018. “Sunday afternoon social capital: An ethnographic study of the Southern City Jets Club.” *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 18(4), pp.439-458.
- Curth, S., Uhrich, S. and Benkenstein, M., 2014. “How commitment to fellow customers affects the customer-firm relationship and customer citizenship behavior.” *Journal of Services Marketing*, 28(2), pp.147-158.

- Dann, J. B. (June 5, 2020). "Kickoff: The launch of Los Angeles Football Club." *Harvard Business Review*.
- Dimmock, J.A. and Grove, J.R., 2006. "Identification with sport teams as a function of the search for certainty." *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 24(11), pp.1203-1211.
- De Chernatony, L., 2001. "A model for strategically building brands." *Journal of Brand Management*, 9, pp.32-44.
- De Ruyter, K. and Wetzels, M., 2000. "With a little help from my fans—Extending models of pro-social behaviour to explain supporters' intentions to buy soccer club shares." *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 21(4), pp.387-409.
- Drengner, J., Jahn, S. and Gaus, H., 2012. "Creating loyalty in collective hedonic services: The role of satisfaction and psychological sense of community." *Schmalenbach Business Review*, 64, pp.59-76.
- Fairley, S. and Tyler, B.D., 2012. "Bringing baseball to the big screen: Building sense of community outside of the ballpark." *Journal of Sport Management*, 26(3), pp.258-270.
- Filo, K.R., Funk, D.C. and O'Brien, D., 2008. "It's really not about the bike: Exploring attraction and attachment to the events of the Lance Armstrong Foundation." *Journal of Sport Management*, 22(5), pp.501-525.
- Folger, R. and Greenberg, J., 1985. "Procedural justice: An interpretive analysis of personnel systems." In *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, Vol. 3. Ed. K. Rowland, G. Ferris. Elsevier.
- Foster, W.M. and Hyatt, C.G., 2008. "Inventing team tradition: A conceptual model for the strategic development of fan nations." *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 8(3), pp.265-287.
- Funk, D.C. and James, J., 2001. "The psychological continuum model: A conceptual framework for understanding an individual's psychological connection to sport." *Sport Management Review*, 4(2), pp.119-150.
- Gambetti, R.C. and Graffigna, G., 2015. "Value co-creation between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of a company: Insights from a brand community failure." *Marketing Theory*, 15(2), pp.155-178.
- Giddens, A., 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of a Theory of Structuration*. Polity, Cambridge.

- Giertz, J.N., Weiger, W.H., Törhönen, M. and Hamari, J., 2022. "Content versus community focus in live streaming services: How to drive engagement in synchronous social media." *Journal of Service Management*, 33(1), pp.33-58.
- Grant, N., Heere, B. and Dickson, G., 2011. "New sport teams and the development of brand community." *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 11(1), pp.35-54.
- Greenberg, J., 1990. "Organizational justice: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow." *Journal of Management*, 16(2), pp.399-432.
- Guschwan, M., 2012. "Fandom, brandom and the limits of participatory culture." *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 12(1), pp.19-40.
- Hammedi, W., Kandampully, J., Zhang, T.T. and Bouquiaux, L., 2015. "Online customer engagement: Creating social environments through brand community constellations." *Journal of Service Management*, 26(5), pp.777-806.
- Hayton, J.W., Millward, P. and Petersen-Wagner, R., 2017. "Chasing a Tiger in a network society? Hull City's proposed name change in the pursuit of China and East Asia's new middle class consumers." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 52(3), pp.279-298.
- Heere, B. and James, J.D., 2007. "Sports teams and their communities: Examining the influence of external group identities on team identity." *Journal of Sport Management*, 21(3), pp.319-337.
- Heere, B., Walker, M., Yoshida, M., Ko, Y.J., Jordan, J.S. and James, J.D., 2011. "Brand community development through associated communities: Grounding community measurement within social identity theory." *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 19(4), pp.407-422.
- Hogg, M.A., Sherman, D.K., Dierselhuis, J., Maitner, A.T. and Moffitt, G., 2007. Uncertainty, entitativity, and group identification." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 43(1), pp.135-142.
- Holt, D.B., 1995. "How consumers consume: A typology of consumption practices." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), pp.1-16.
- Holt, D.B., 2004. *How brands become icons: The principles of cultural branding*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.
- Ireland, R.D., Covin, J.G. and Kuratko, D.F., 2009. "Conceptualizing corporate entrepreneurship



- strategy.” *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 33(1), pp.19-46.
- Jackson, T., Jager, W. and Stagl, S., 2004. “Beyond insatiability—needs theory, consumption and sustainability.” *The Ecological Economics of Consumption*, pp.79-110.
- Katz, M. and Heere, B., 2013. “Leaders and followers: An exploration of the notion of scale-free networks within a new brand community.” *Journal of Sport Management*, 27(4), pp.271-287.
- Katz, M. and Heere, B., 2015. “Empowerment within brand communities: Overcoming the Achilles’ Heel of scale-free networks.” *Sport Management Review*, 18(3), pp.370-383.
- Katz, M., Ward, R.M. and Heere, B., 2018. “Explaining attendance through the brand community triad: Integrating network theory and team identification.” *Sport Management Review*, 21(2), pp.176-188.
- Kilambi, A., Laroche, M. and Richard, M.O., 2013. “Constitutive marketing: towards understanding brand community formation.” *International Journal of Advertising*, 32(1), pp.45-64.
- Kozinets, R.V., 2001. “Utopian enterprise: Articulating the meanings of Star Trek's culture of consumption.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(1), pp.67-88.
- Laszlo, A. and Krippner, S., 1998. “Systems theories: Their origins, foundations, and development.” *Advances in Psychology-Amsterdam-*, 126, pp.47-76.
- Livne-Tarandach, R. and Jazaieri, H., 2021. “Swift sense of community: Resourcing artifacts for rapid community emergence in a temporary organization.” *Academy of Management Journal*, 64(4), pp.1127-1163.
- Lock, D.J. and Funk, D.C., 2016. “The multiple in-group identity framework.” *Sport Management Review*, 19(2), pp.85-96.
- Lowery, S. 2021. How LAFC became the No. 1 MLS team valued at \$860 million. *Los Angeles Business Journal*. October 25.
- Lucas, J.A., 1992. *Future of the Olympic games*. Human Kinetics Books.
- Maffesoli, M., 1996. *The Contemplation of the World: Figures of Community Style*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Mathwick, C., Wiertz, C. and De Ruyter, K., 2008. “Social capital production in a virtual P3 community.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(6), pp.832-849.

- McAlexander, J.H. and Schouten, J.W., 1998. "Brandfests: Servicescapes for the cultivation of brand equity." *Servicescapes: The Concept of Place in Contemporary Markets*, 377, pp.377-402.
- McAlexander, J.H., Schouten, J.W. and Koenig, H.F., 2002. "Building brand community." *Journal of Marketing*, 66(1), pp.38-54.
- McDonald, H. and Karg, A.J., 2014. "Managing co-creation in professional sports: The antecedents and consequences of ritualized spectator behavior." *Sport Management Review*, 17(3), pp.292-309.
- Meneses, R., Ortega, R., Navarro, J. and de Quijano, S.D., 2008. "Criteria for assessing the level of group development (LGD) of work groups: Groupness, entitativity, and groupality as theoretical perspectives." *Small Group Research*, 39(4), pp.492-514.
- Muniz Jr, A.M. and O'guinn, T.C., 2001. "Brand community." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), pp.412-432.
- Muniz Jr, A.M. and Schau, H.J., 2005. "Religiosity in the abandoned Apple Newton brand community." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), pp.737-747.
- O'Sullivan, S.R., Richardson, B. and Collins, A., 2011. "How brand communities emerge: The Beamish conversion experience." *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(9-10), pp.891-912.
- Piening, E.P., Salge, T.O., Antons, D. and Kreiner, G.E., 2020. "Standing together or falling apart? Understanding employees' responses to organizational identity threats." *Academy of Management Review*, 45(2), pp.325-351.
- Pongsakornrungrungsilp, S. and Schroeder, J.E., 2011. "Understanding value co-creation in a co-consuming brand community." *Marketing Theory*, 11(3), pp.303-324.
- Postmes, T., Spears, R., Lee, A.T. and Novak, R.J., 2005. "Individuality and social influence in groups: Inductive and deductive routes to group identity." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(5), p.747.
- Prentice, D.A., Miller, D.T. and Lightdale, J.R., 1994. "Asymmetries in attachments to groups and to their members: Distinguishing between common-identity and common-bond groups." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20(5), pp.484-493.
- Pritchard, M.P., Havitz, M.E. and Howard, D.R., 1999. "Analyzing the commitment-loyalty link in service contexts." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 27(3), pp.333-348.

- Randolph-Seng, B., Reich, D.A. and DeMarree, K.G., 2012. "On the nonconscious antecedents of social identification: Ingroup salience, outgroup salience, or both?" *Social Cognition*, 30(3), pp.335-349.
- Ravasi, D. and Schultz, M., 2006. "Responding to organizational identity threats: Exploring the role of organizational culture." *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(3), pp.433-458.
- Rosenbaum, M.S., Ostrom, A.L. and Kuntze, R., 2005. "Loyalty programs and a sense of community." *Journal of Services Marketing*, 19(4), pp. 222-233.
- Schouten, J.W. and McAlexander, J.H., 1995. "Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), pp.43-61.
- Schau, H.J., Muñiz Jr, A.M. and Arnould, E.J., 2009. "How brand community practices create value." *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), pp.30-51.
- Scott, W.G., Mitchell, T.R. and Birnbarum, P.H., 1981. *Organization theory: a structural and behavioural analysis*. Illinois: Richard D. Irwin Inc.
- Spaaij, R., 2015. "Refugee youth, belonging and community sport." *Leisure studies*, 34(3), pp.303-318.
- Spaaij, R. and Anderson, A., 2010. "Psychosocial influences on children's identification with sports teams: A case study of Australian Rules football supporters." *Journal of Sociology*, 46(3), pp.299-315.
- Turner, J.C., Hogg, M.A., Oakes, P.J., Reicher, S.D. and Wetherell, M.S., 1987. *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. basil Blackwell.
- Tyler, B.D. and Cobbs, J.B., 2015. "Rival conceptions of rivalry: Why some competitions mean more than others." *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 15(2), pp.227-248.
- Uhrich, S., 2014. "Exploring customer-to-customer value co-creation platforms and practices in team sports." *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 14(1), pp.25-49.
- Underwood, R., Bond, E. and Baer, R., 2001. "Building service brands via social identity: Lessons from the sports marketplace." *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 9(1), pp.1-13.
- Van Vugt, M. and Hart, C.M., 2004. "Social identity as social glue: the origins of group loyalty." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(4), p.585.
- Warner, S. and Dixon, M.A., 2011. "Understanding sense of community from the athlete's perspective." *Journal of Sport Management*, 25(3), pp.257-271.

- Weiger, W.H., Wetzel, H.A. and Hammerschmidt, M., 2017. "Leveraging marketer-generated appeals in online brand communities: An individual user-level analysis." *Journal of Service Management*, 28(1), pp. 133-156.
- Wilkins, A.L. and Patterson, K.J., 1985. "You can't get there from here: What will make culture-change projects fail." *Gaining control of the corporate culture*, pp.262-291.
- Wirtz, J., Den Ambtman, A., Bloemer, J., Horváth, C., Ramaseshan, B., Van De Klundert, J., Canli, Z.G. and Kandampully, J., 2013. "Managing brands and customer engagement in online brand communities." *Journal of Service Management*, 24(3), pp.223-244.
- Yoshida, M., Gordon, B.S., Heere, B. and James, J.D., 2015. "Fan community identification: An empirical examination of its outcomes in Japanese professional sport." *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 24, pp. 105-119.

Table 1. Overview of Psychological constructs of community formation

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Value for community development</b>	<b>Authors</b>
<b>Psychological constructs</b>		
<b>Shared needs and wants</b>	People have fundamental social needs that lead to community development.	Baumeister, 2005; Jackson <i>et al.</i> , 2004
<b>Social identity with cause</b>	People form communities because they identify with a higher cause.	O'Sullivan <i>et al.</i> (2011); Schouten and McAlexander, 1995
<b>Sense of empowerment</b>	The ability of members to gain a sense of ownership in the community	Chavis and Newbrough, 1986; Warner and Dixon, 2011; Katz and Heere, 2015
<b>Sense of equity</b>	Each member is content with how the power in the community is distributed	Adams, 1963; Greenberg, 1990; Warner and Dixon, 2011.

Table 2. Overview of Structural constructs of community formation

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Value for community development</b>	<b>Authors</b>
<b>Structural constructs</b>		
<b>Resources</b>	In order for a community to survive, its members need to be able to provide resources to that end.	Bourdieu and Richardson, 1986
<b>Communication system</b>	The ability of members to communicate and interact with each other	Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001
<b>Belief system</b>	A formalized agreement between members on what shared needs and wants the community will aim to fulfill	Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Lucas, 1992
<b>Structure</b>	Members have to agree on the desired level of formalization of the community that would define the relationship between them.	Giddens, 1984; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995
<b>Social spaces</b>	A community needs allocated space (both virtual and physical) that allows members to interact.	Bourdieu, 1985; Underwood <i>et al.</i> , 2001; Warner and Dixon, 2011
<b>Group experiences</b>	Events that allow members to interact and experience a fulfillment of needs and wants	Anderson, 1983; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; Katz and Heere, 2013.
<b>Rival communities</b>	A community can benefit from creating a friendly rival community that is competing with the organization, and take advantage of oppositional brand loyalty	Tyler and Cobbs, 2015; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001
<b>Associated communities</b>	Sport properties are often representative of a larger community that provides extra value to the community	Beverland and Lindgreen, 2002; Heere and James, 2007; Heere <i>et al.</i> , 2011

Table 3. Overview of Behavioral constructs of community formation

Constructs	Value for community development	Authors
<b>Behavioral constructs</b>		
<b>Participating</b>	The members' willingness to exert energy on behalf of the community	Laszlo and Krippner, 1998
<b>Evangelizing</b>	The members' willingness to communicate the value of the community to non-group members, often resulting in word-of-mouth.	De Ruyter and Wetzels, 2000; Schau <i>et al.</i> , 2009
<b>Justifying</b>	The members' ability to explain their willingness to participate in the group to themselves and others.	Kozinets, 2001; Schau <i>et al.</i> , 2009
<b>Empathizing</b>	The members' ability to understand the needs and wants of other (prospective) members	Schau <i>et al.</i> , 2009
<b>Governing</b>	The efforts member make to create the structural components of the community (see above)	Mathwick <i>et al.</i> , 2008; Schau <i>et al.</i> , 2009
<b>Welcoming</b>	The members' willingness to introduce and integrate new members into the group	Muñiz and Schau, 2005; Schau <i>et al.</i> , 2009