

Understanding consumer motives in social media community participation - Case Quality Hunters

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this thesis was to understand motives in consumer participation and in particular to find if motives on their own can explain the reasons why consumers engage in consumer communities. The context of this study was Quality Hunters social media community. The aim is to understand how consumers perceive the community and how they participate in social media community.

METHODOLOGY

The research is qualitative and interpretative. Six Quality Hunters community participants were interviewed and the data from the interviews formed the empirical data of this study. Phenomenological research approach and methods were used to gather and interpret the empirical data.

FINDINGS

The main findings of the study are that motives are one of the main factors influencing consumer participation in social media community, but they cannot alone explain the participation. The need to expand the motives was found during the data analysis phase and Motives, Opportunities & Ability model was introduced to better explain consumer participation. Other findings include the importance of the brands' to understand the conditions in which the communities are formed. Consumer tribes don't offer the same possibilities to commercialize the community as traditional brand communities offer and it can lead to consumers rejecting the brand existence in the tribe.

Keywords Consumer behavior, postmodern consumer, brand communities, consumer tribes, motives, social media,

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TUTKIMUKSEN TAVOITTEET

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on ymmärtää kuluttajien osallistumismotiivit sosiaalisen median yhteisössä. Erityisesti tämä tutkimus haluaa tietää, voidaanko motiiveilla selittää kuluttajien osallistuminen näihin yhteisöihin. Tutkimuksen kontekstina ovat Quality Hunters –yhteisön jäsenet.

METODOLOGIA

Tutkimus on kvalitatiivinen ja interpretatiivinen. Tutkimuksen empiirisen datan muodostivat kuuden Quality Hunters –yhteisön jäsenen haastattelut. Tässä tutkimuksessa käytettiin fenomenologista menettelytapaa ja metodologiaa datan keräykseen ja sen analysointiin.

TUTKIMUKSEN TULOKSET

Tutkimuksen tuloksena oli motiivien toteaminen riittämättömiksi selittämään kokonaan kuluttajien osallistuminen sosiaalisen media yhteisöön. Tutkimuksessa tuli ilmi tarve laajentaa pelkkää motiiveihin perustuvaa lähestymistä datan analyysi vaiheessa ja motiivi, mahdollisuus ja kyvykkyys –mallia tuotiin mukaan paremmin selittämään osallistumista. Muita tutkimustuloksia olivat tarve brändeille ymmärtää yhteisöjen taustojen olosuhteet, joihin yhteisöt rakentuvat. Lisäksi tuloksista käy ilmi, että kuluttajaheimot eivät mahdollista samanlaisia kaupallisia hyödyntämismahdollisuuksia, kuin perinteiset brändiyhteisöt. Ja kuluttajaheimojen hyödyntäminen kaupallisesti voi myös johtaa brändin mukanaolon vastustamiseen heimon sisällä.

Avainsanat Kuluttajakäyttäytyminen, postmoderni kuluttaja, brändiyhteisö, heimot, kuluttajamotiivit, sosiaalinen media,

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1 INTRODUCTION

“Build it, nurture it, engage them, and they may come and stay”

- Seth Godin

Internet and mobile devices have dramatically changed the way we connect with the world around us. First internet made the world shrink by making geographical limitations disappear and connected us with other people around the world and in addition mobile devices brought us possibility to carry the internet with us wherever and whenever we go. In recent years social media has only made it easier to connect with friends, like-minded and brands, in both good and bad. Social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+ and Pinterest attract hundreds of millions of users to consume and share user-generated content and connect with each other. You only need to take a look around in public spaces to see someone using their laptops, tablets and smart phones to post text, images and videos to social media sites for the whole world to see. These changes have affected consumer culture as what used to be a brand controlled marketing communications, has changed into consumer driven social spaces, where marketing messages and brands are only one of many players in the equal playing field. This thesis will try to understand this change and how it has changed the way consumers see brands in social spaces, but also to get deeper understanding why consumers participate in co-creation of meanings in social spaces that we call social media.

Marketing literature has been discussing this change of empowered consumer in how it has changed the ways companies and consumers interact with each other. While prior marketing thought (see Vargo & Lusch 2004) saw all value created by company and consumers were seen as experiencing the value through consumption, this view has changed. Recent evolvement acknowledges consumer as an equal creator of value with companies. (e.g. Schau et al. 2009; Vargo &

Lusch 2004) But while the potential for co-creation in social media can be seen as almost infinitive (Akaka et al. 2012), companies are still having hard time taking advantage of that potential, as these new mediums are centered around consumers and not brands (Fournier & Avery, 2011).

Internet, and social media particularly, has evolved marketing into true participatory conversations in two-way, many-to-many and multimodal communications (Muniz & Schau 2011), where consumers are allowed to create content with internet-based applications, which are called social media platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Social media, and social media communities are seen as venue for this multi-way communications to occur without the company appearing to being in control of the conversations. Social media is seen as a platform to engage and inspire consumer to produce information. (Foster et al. 2010) The biggest difference from traditional brand led conversations is that in social media the conversations are far from calculated, company-driven communications. The conversations in social media create, recreate and disseminate those marketing messages. (Muniz & Schau, 2011)

Consumer communities have been well researched from brand community aspect (E.g. McAlexander et al. 2002; Schau & Muniz 2001; Muniz & O'Guinn 2001) as well as brand communities in virtual environment (Bagozzi & Dholakia 2002; Shang et al. 2006). While brand communities focus on community as brand centric, another view has been introduced by Cova & Cova (2002) that forms the community around shared passion and experiences. But while communities have been widely researched, most of them limits out understanding on social media communities, as they have only existed since 2006 (Foster et al. 2010). Previous research on communities has concentrated on experience and abilities, but little has been researched about consumer motives in community participation and what affects those motives. (Füller 2010) But there is an agreement (Foster et al. 2010) that it would be important to understand what motivates participation in social networks.

This clearly shows a research gap for this thesis that needs to be addressed. This thesis takes a qualitative and interpretative look into the subject to find an in-depth

concept of the topic. Phenomenological interviews are conducted to collect the data. The interviewees are Quality Hunters community members who have experiences the community and are assumed to provide their lived experiences in community participation and tell stories of their participation. The data is examined and the analysis and interpretation of the data is done simultaneously, as is normally done in qualitative research. The interpretation of the data is based on views of the author and how the author experienced the interviews, which leads to findings and discussion being both portraits of the lived experiences and views of the interviewees and the interpretations of the author.

1.2 Research objectives and research questions

This study aims to understand consumer participation in consumer communities that exist in social media platforms. This research regards motives as the key indicator of why consumers participate in communities and it leads to the object of this study being to understand individual consumer experiences in Quality Hunters community and why they participate in Quality Hunters community in social media. Based on this view the research question of this study became

- How motives explain consumer participation in social media communities?

As this question offers a wide approach to the study, more specific sub-questions are used to give more detailed focus to the phenomenon. First we need to gather a deeper understanding on postmodern consumers' behavior in social media and the consumer communities in it. Second motives need to be categorized to include both the individual and the group related motives. The sub-questions are:

- How social media affects consumer behavior?
- How motives related to self explain participation in communities?
- How group based motives explain community behavior?

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This study has two major sections: the theoretical and the empirical part. First, in chapter two, literature review is presented that will discuss relevant previous literature and studies. Chapter three starts the empirical part of this study and presents the methodology used in this thesis. After the methodology chapter, findings are presented in chapter four and those findings are discussed in chapter. Finally chapter six presents the conclusions from this thesis. At the end of the research the literature is presented.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter theoretical discussion of the study is presented. First previous literature on evolvement of consumer communities are covered and second, the consumer motives in those communities are considered.

2.1 Postmodern consumer communities

“Consumers do not choose brands, they choose lives”

- *Susan Fournier*

This section will explore how consumer behavior has changed from modern rational consumer to more unpredictable postmodern consumption that is based on enjoyment and emotions. An understanding of postmodern consumer and postmodern consumer communities are searched. First a look at postmodern consumer behavior and how it has evolved from modern view is taken that will lead the discussion on how it has affected the consumer involvement in online communities. Both online brand communities and online consumer tribes are discussed and an understanding on how social media affects these communities in discussed at the end of this section.

2.1.1 Introducing the unpredictable postmodern consumer

The quote above from Susan Fournier (1998) and her article Consumers and their brands sums up the change from modern to postmodern in consumer behavior. A modern predictable and consistent consumer doesn't exist anymore (Firat, Dholakia & Venkatesh, 1995). Today's consumers don't want to buy mass produced, commercial goods and services, nor do they want to hear a CEO telling them how their lives should be run by market economy (Cova, Kozinets & Shankar, 2007 pp.21). Fournier (1998) continues that consumers' experiences with brands are often phenomenologically distinct from those assumed by the

brand managers. She mentions that one brand can fit multiple thematic categories for one or different consumers and stresses that we need new more complex approach to classify branded consumption.

Muniz & O'Guinn (2001) describe how modern consumer culture was one where branded goods and mass advertising replaced unmarked commodities and personal selling; and individual centrality and materialistic desires grew, which led to individual consumer replacing the communal citizen. Modern period of consumption can be seen as a period of mass consumption and material goods (Van Raaij, 1993), where consumption was regarded as secondary to production, without creating any value to society and consumption was a way for individual to carry out meaningful and valuable activities. Modern consumption was rooted in separations between home and workplace; and between work time and free time. (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995)

In the Age of Consumption in the nineteenth and early twentieth century consumer was desired to be a good citizen, who acted on by the market without trying to change it or the market's offerings. But recently postmodern consumer has been introduced to replace modern view of consumption. Postmodern consumers are seen as creative, innovative, and active participants and collaborators in the web of collective intelligence. (Kozinets, Hemetsberger & Schau, 2008) A modern simpler and rational consumer has been replaced by a more complex postmodern consumer, to which traditional variables explaining their behavior don't apply anymore. A postmodern consumer subscribes to multiple and contradictory value systems and lifestyle, where common variables as values and brand preferences, even social class and psychographics and demographics don't apply anymore. Where modernism was seen as human experience having fundamental real bases, postmodernism offers social experience as interplay of myths. (Firat, Dholakia & Venkatesh, 1995)

Cova (1997) explains that postmodern consumer is characterized as an individualistic that is a logical conclusion of the modern consumers' quest for liberation. Postmodern consumer has finally managed to liberate themselves from modern social links and can be categorized as an extreme individual. But he

mentions that a reverse movement to recompose social links on the basis of emotional free choice has been found. He continues that what sets the postmodern apart from modern consumer is that he values social aspects of life at the cost of pure consumption of goods and services. The value in goods and services is found in their linking value that allows and supports social interaction of communal type, a tribe. This view is expanded by Firat & Dholakia (2006) who explain modern thought stressing value created in production, and consumption was to devour and deplete that value. They note that postmodernism finds this problematic and seen meanings, identities and experiences being produced in consumption. In fact the whole modernistic distinction between consumption and production is challenged by postmodern thinking.

Van Raaij (1993) lists characteristic of postmodern wave of consumption as fragmentation, individualization and increased speed of change, but stresses that major changes are social and technological. Firat (1993) adds hyper reality, reversal of production and consumption and decentering of the subject to that list. To conclude these thought Cova (1997) explains postmodern consumer as a chameleon, who does as he pleases, upsetting the modern reference systems, which had organized individuals to categories. Postmodern era seems to be a period of extreme disorder in consumption and unpredictability in consumers' behavior.

For postmodern consumers, marketing plays a role in giving meaning to life through consumption, where the value realized may be utilitarian and practical or momentary and hedonic. This leads to decreased and fragmented brand loyalty, in which each communication must attract attention for its sake and be exciting to the senses. (Van Raiij 1993) Firat & Dholakia (2006) note that postmodern consumers are active participants and seekers of community, but their goal is not to find one and only culture, but to navigate across different ones to explore and discover alternative meaningful way of being. To this Cova (1997) argues that postmodern society looks like a network of micro-groups, where emotions, a common sub-culture and visions of life are shared. These groups are said to develop their own complex meanings and symbols and they form more or less stable communities, tribes.

To postmodern consumer products, services and brands represent a fragmentation of experiences and they are encouraged by marketing messages and images to play a game of image switching. Postmodern consumer does not possess one self-image, but many self-images that are adopted according to the requirements of the situation. (Van Raaij 1993) Brand relationships should not be seen as what brand managers intend for them or how brand is culturally in existence, but what consumers do with brands to add meanings to their lives. Brands are not seen to aid living, but give meanings to consumers' lives. (Fournier 1998)

One perspective in consumer research has been Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) that has been concerned with cultural meanings, sociohistoric influences and social dynamics that shape consumer experiences and identities in the myriad of messy contexts of everyday life. One family of CCT research has researched consumer culture in cultural milieu and the process of people experiencing it. CCT has found tribal aspects of consumption pervasive and it sees people as culture producers rather than culture bearers as is the traditional anthropological view. Consumer culture can be seen as groups making sense of their environments and to guide lives and experiences of members from commercially produced material. This is done in social situations and relationships to negotiate the local culture, which is increasingly being shaped by transnational capital and global media. (Arnould & Thompson 2005)

Modern consumer research can be said to have ignored any experiential aspects of consumption and limited our understanding of consumers (Cova 1997). The prior view of consumers as information-processing, knowledgeable assessors of benefits and sacrifices in relationships has been seen as goal-directed (Payne et al. 2008), while Holbrook & Hirschmann (1982) explain that consumer behavior cannot be reduced to any simplistic models and both goal-directed and experiential components should be acknowledged. They mention experiential consumption focusing on cognitive processes that are more subconscious and private than what has been researched before.

As discussed above postmodern consumer is thought to have abandoned brands as moved towards fragmented consumption, which is led by emotions. Arvidsson (2005) describes that while brand values have only increased in recent years, but the postmodernity is clearly seen in brand values. He states that brand marketing has a long history within marketing thought and how the emphasis of brands has shifted. While originally brands served as trademarks that guaranteed quality or linked the product to an identifiable producer, today brands refer more to significance that is acquired in the mind of a consumer. A brand does not refer primary to a product, but to a context of consumption, what they mean to consumer. Park et al. (2007 pp.219) describe that postmodern approach has contributed to the renewal of the understanding of consumer collectives, where two closely related concepts of brand communities and consumer tribes are seen including differing approaches to include consumers around a common interest.

2.1.2 Brand communities as consumer communities

Muniz & Schau (2001) defined in their article the concept of brand community as a specialized community that is not geographically bound and is formed around social relationships among brand admirers. This same approach is shared by others, (e.g. McAlexander et al. (2002); Langer (2007 pp.245) who agree that brand community emerges and is made up by consumers' attachment to brands. This view of communities stress the fact that community's ethos is situated within a commercial and mass-mediated environment.

Muniz & Schau (2001) continue arguing that their view of brand communities is legitimate and their thinking is that a brand community can be formed around any brand. But they mention that certain specification can help form a brand community that are a strong brand image, rich and lengthy history and threatening competition to the brand. Their view is that publicly consumed brands might have a better chance in forming a community than privately consumed. But their conclusion is that a brand community can evolve around any brand, without the need of being marginal or opposite to mainstream. This is also their argument, how they separate brand communities from consumption tribes as tribes usually

have an inconsistent approach to definitions of larger culture. Tribes often stand against accepted meanings of majority, which is not that stand that brand communities take. Brand communities embrace cultural ideologies of majorities.

Ouwersloot & Oderkerken-Schröder (2008) agree with Muniz and Schau in their view of brand communities being easier former around certain specification. They argue that high-involvement categories and some product categories offer a better fit for brand communities. Their view is that high-involvement categories attract consumer to connect and they are categories consumers search extensively and feel a need to share their experience with others. Product categories like board games and sports contests offering a join experience, where a brand community can serve as a meeting place to consume the product together. Third specification that they think can foster communities is brand's symbolic functions that include important symbolic meanings. In this view a brand community can strengthen these meanings and again offer a place to meeting others to express their devotion to this symbol of consumption.

This leads to brand communities being fairly stable social entities (De Burgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan 2007; Langer 2007 pp.245) since there are no elements other than the existence of the brand to keep them afloat or threaten them. Langer notes that brand communities are explicitly commercial and informed by a mass-mediated sense in which local and the mass come together. Consumers in brand communities can be committed to the brand or the group and De Burgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan (2007) add that commitment doesn't come at the cost to any other aspect in life, so there is nothing at stake.

However being centered around a commercial ethos, brand communities don't lack consumer involvement and companies should use consumer resources to derive added value (Schau et al. 2009). Fournier & Lee (2009) discuss how communities should serve consumers in them and their needs, interests and responsibilities. Their point is that to get the most out of brand communities companies should use it as a business strategy, but also as a platform for consumers to form social links. This view is agreed by Wu, Chen & Chung (2010) who think brand community should be a communication platform fostering social

networks, but they also see brand community as valuable provider of insights and feedback on existing products and services. To this view McAlexander et al. (2002) partly disagree and offer their view of existence and meaningfulness of a brand community that relates to consumer experience instead of the brand. They note that brand communities are more consumer-centric and consumers share cognitive and emotional material in brand communities. Their thinking is that consumers are always creating and negotiating brand meanings. And Fournier (1998) continues that brands can serve as powerful repositories of meaning in the substantiation, creation and production of self.

Fournier (1998) continues offering a stance on how brands should not be passive objects of marketing, but active and contributing members of relationship dyad in brand communities. Grönroos (2010) continues that a brand itself cannot create value for consumers, but can serve as a value facilitator. He notes that consumers create value for themselves in using resources from brands to which they apply their own skills. Schau et al. (2009) conclude that if consumers are given opportunity to construct brand communities and to modify them by the brands, they will. They think companies should provide consumer opportunities and material to welcome, milestone and evangelize consumers. Their thinking is that the most successful brand communities continuously evolve and encourage collaborative brand engagement and practices that leads to vibrant and dynamic community.

Akaka et al. (2012) view brand community actions as all actors in communities accessing, adapting and integrating resources in co-creating value for themselves and others in the community. This is done to render service or apply the knowledge of others with the goal of making circumstances better for both the provider and the beneficiary. They point out that in each of these exchanges of value the participants give up something with the expectation of creating greater value. Brand communities carry out important functions on behalf of the brands in co-creation practices. These practices can be information sharing, perpetuating history and culture of the brand or providing assistance. A brand community involves a social structure between marketers, consumers and the community that exerts pressure on members to remain loyal to the brand and to the community.

(Muniz & O'Guinn 2001) Four processes by which brand communities socially construct brand meanings have been found (Muniz 1997) that are recognizing the community aspect of the brand, sharing personal experiences with the brand and emphasizing and rejecting aspects of brand meaning.

A brand community that is centered around a branded good or service is described as specialized by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) because it's marked by shared consciousness, rituals and traditions with a sense of moral responsibility towards the community. Those rituals and traditions serve to reify the community and its culture and include history of the brand, brand related stories and myths and ritualistic communications (Schau & Muniz 2007 pp.157). They continue (pp. 145) that brand communities have a strong narrative component in which both marketer and consumers are situated. This storytelling creates construction larger than life brand mythology and inserts consumers into this mythology. Brand community membership can be used by consumers to self-induce a sense of exclusivity from others in marketplace and consumers in brand communities feel that the brand belongs to them as much as it belongs to a manufacturer (De Burgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan 2007).

Algesheimer et al. (2005) note that community size affects its influence on members and argue, that brand community membership is better as a consumer retention tool than as a consumer acquisition tool. Their thinking is also that smaller communities reach higher levels of identification and normative pressure because of richer and multifaceted nature of interpersonal relationships in community. McAlexander et al. (2002) argued in their article about Harley drivers that events or activities can offer an important factor for the emergence of a brand community, but Shang et al. (2006) dismiss this mentioning that while traditional brand communities were constrained by high costs of participation, this restraint can be overcome in virtual communities.

Muniz & O'Guinn (2001) offer that brand communities can form in both face-to-face and computer-mediated environments and while Bagozzi & Dholakia (2002) compare virtual brand communities and traditional brand communities as traditional brand communities being imposed by a chance of birth and

geographical locations. But this has been overcome by virtual communities and Shang et al. (2006) mention how interaction in virtual environment has made it easier to share experiences with others and belonging to a virtual community. And while modern IT has enabled community formation, Kane et al. (2009) stress the fact that bigger effect has been their impact and reach and they describe how mobile interfaces keep communities always on alert and ready to take actions.

On how a brand community membership can be beneficial to consumers Muniz & O'Guinn (2001) offer three aspects of brand community relationships. First is consumer-mediated communications that give consumers greater voice that they would have isolated from the community. Second was brand community being an important information resource as members can ask and offer information about the brand. And third being, that interactions between members in communities provide wide social benefits for its members. Payne et al. (2008) add that while those encounters make a cumulative contribution to the co-created value in brand communities, it requires a long-term view to foster a brand community that can be challenging in modern short-term financial cycles. But benefits of brand communities for companies include active customers serving as brand missionaries that can carry brand messages to other communities (McAlexander et al. 2002).

As brand communities constitute a specific brand centered group of consumers, Ouwersloot & Oderkerken-Schröder (2008) mentions that they should not be treated as a single homogenous group, but they differ in many ways. This can be seen as heterogeneous motives in joining the community, but also in respect to community's stage of development.

2.1.3 Tribes as consumer communities

As Park et al. (2007 pp.219) mentioned postmodern approach to consumption has renewed the discussion of consumer collectives in brand communities and tribes. As was discussed earlier in the brand community section of this chapter brand communities stress the connection between product identity and culture, where

the consumption arises in the attachment to a brand (Langer, 2007 pp.245) and brand community celebrated the history and stories of brands in commercial context (Schau & Muniz 2007 pp.157).

However tribes make a distance to brand communities since brand communities are explicitly commercial and tribes are not (Cova & Cova 2002) and tribes rarely consumer brands and products without adding to them, grappling with them or blending with them without altering them (Cova, Kozinets & Shankar 2007 pp.4). They continue (pp.21) with mentioning a new wisdom in marketing that companies do not need to send totally coherent messages to the marketplace, as consumers often fill in the blanks and even do a better job than marketers would do. But as brand communities were involved in consumption and social practices in public arenas, it was the brand who reigned supreme (De Burgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan 2007). But Cova & Cova (2002) explain that while tribes can have commercial elements in them, they place less emphasis on products and services themselves, bringing people together on the basis of shared passion and emotion. This view stresses the view that members are not simply consumers, but advocates.

This leads to units of reference in tribes being other consumers who share similar experiences and emotion that come together in loosely interconnected communities that Cova & Cova (2002) calls tribes. The community ethos that was formed around a brand in brand communities switch to being shared experiences in tribes. Belonging to a tribe doesn't involve same kind of personality traits or same values, but concentrates purely in emotions and passion as connective tissue. And where De Burgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan (2007) mention brand communities affording to be relatively stable as their existence cannot be said to be threatened by anything. But tribes work differently as DeValck (2007 pp.271) points out members in tribes constantly reorganize themselves into tribes that are defined by topic or taste and depending on this topic membership belongs to one tribe or another. Tribes come together for a brief moment, only to be swept away by flood as Cova & Cova (2002) colorfully describe, but the main point being that there is no same kind of stability in tribes as there is in brand communities. Tribes are always in flux and they are constantly reconstructure meanings through shared

experiences that also form the tribal identity in these postmodern consumer communities. These meanings are affirmed, evoked, assigned and revised in tribes by collective experiences.

Cova & Cova (2002) continue that tribes are often smaller in scale and not fixed to parameters of modern society. The sociality in tribes does not stress the mechanical and instrumental function of an individual member, but the symbolic and emotional role of persons within tribes. Tribes can use the resources of latest technology in order to form virtual tribes that means that no physical presence is needed (Cova 1997). Kozinets (2007 pp.205) explain that different tribes can share the same general territory, only to occupy different parts of the vast landscape. They can have several languages and wide range of customers and rituals that are unique only to certain tribe, but when gathered together, they share enough common material to communicate. And their shared common customs makes them recognize one another as members of the same tribe. Goulding et al. (2002) calls this a certain ambience and a state of mind that keeps these groups together.

As Brand communities included consumers committed to the brand and the group, (Langer 2007 pp.245) tribes can be just a feeling, a fancy or a fantasy (Cova & Cova 2002). Cova & Cova continue saying the tribes don't necessarily have rules and their social order isn't relied on central power to maintain. Cova et al. (2007 pp.21) continue by agreeing that individuals enter social and economic relations knowing that giving and receiving is not dictated by governing body. Economic value of being part of a tribe is based on perceptions, feelings and emotions. Postmodern tribes can be a central feature of how we experience everyday life and they can exist side by side with modern society. Each postmodern consumer can belong to several tribes and even play a different role in each of them. Belonging to a tribe can be more important for a consumer than belonging to a social class or segment, which has made it difficult for consumer research to classify them by sociological tools. Tribalism argues that consumers are less interested in consumption for a direct mean of giving their life a meaning, but for a mean to forming links with others in tribes, which give meaning to their life. (Cova 1997; Cova & Cova 2002)

Tribes were described above as coming together and disappearing in relatively short amount of time. But, there is no single definition of tribes and tribes include multiple sub-categories that can be thought as tribes. Kozinets (2007 pp.195) mentions that fan communities act like tribes as they move among corporate landscape, appreciating myths and living with it, but also make their own myths and move on. He mentions (pp. 204) that these communities do things like construct overlapping images, even conflicting practices and meanings to make sense of their environments and affect members' experiences that connect them with tribal actions. Kozinets (2007 pp.205) also mentions another form of tribe in what he calls inno-tribes. Inno-tribes include prosumers, people who actively engage in co-creation, who go elbows deep into cultures of consumption and are members of groups that construct meanings and alternate texts, images and objects.

Another way to see tribes is to see them as subcultures of consumption that share consumption values and decisions about commitment and authenticity. Subcultures negotiate meanings whether from consumer or marketing side and the mystique of a subculture can greatly contribute to the popularity of a brand or activity. (Schouten et al. 2007 pp.74) Subcultures consume in a focused way which is governed by lifestyle or personal factors, rather than product elements (De Burgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan 2007) and Schouten & McAlexander (1995) define them as subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of shared commitment to a particular product class, brand or consumption activity. Last community that can be referred to tribe in here is communita. Celsi et al. (1993) refer to communitas as a sense of camaraderie that occurs when individuals from various life paths share a common bond of experience. The spirit of communitas emerges from shared ritual experience that transcends the mundane of everyday life and what is important in communitas is that every day statuses and social roles don't apply.

As described above tribes don't form around something rational, like brands. They form around kinship, emotion, passion that can represent a counter power to institutional powers (Cova & Cova 2002). They are held together by shared

emotions, styles of life, moral beliefs, sense of injustice and consumption practices (Cova 1997). Traces and signs of tribes, temporal and spatial traces have been found by Cova & Cova (2002), as they note how temporal tribes emerge, grow, reach their zenith, languish and dissolve. They explain tribes coming together and dissolving in the crowd for the brief moment joining the flow before being swept away by the flood. Goulding et al. (2002) also describe tribes, people who have little common outside of the tribe, coming together to engage in collective experience, which disappears after the experience is over. These gatherings can occupy physical spaces where they gather to perform rituals, and provide a momentary home for the tribe (Cova & Cova 2002). Park et al. (2007 pp.222) describes the evolution that tribes commonly take. Their thinking is that individuals are first attracted to the tribe by the similarities they share with other members, which cannot be related to the passion of the community. Then as the community evolves the profiles of individuals reach more heterogeneous nature. They argue that expected sense of belonging is often the first step to enter the group, but then the common passion starts having more relevance. In the later stages of the group one can expect that members feel part of the group with individuals of differing profiles. Maffesoli (1996) thinks that learning the etiquette of a particular tribe is required to be a member of that tribe. He explains how that is often ritualized and individuals move from the outsides of the group to become fully-fledged member of that tribe.

For modern marketing, tribes are hard to identify. Cova & Cova (2002) explains them by being fuzzy societal sparkles, where consumers can belong to and yet does not belong to. They don't quite follow modern marketing's logical trails of rational analysis. Tribes are hard to measure because they do not exist, while they exist. And while postmodern consumer can belong to several of these tribes, they don't exclude him from living a normal life. Marketers should approach consumer tribes considering the angle of linking value rather than use value and how that linking value can be used to support the tribe in its being. Marketers should see themselves as a member of a tribe rather than non-participants, but remember to have a supporting role instead of prior thinking of controlling the group. Cova & Cova point out that a community can be supported by a brand, not a brand community.

As tribes no longer simply resist the market, but play within and with it, businesses are beginning to see their transformative value (Cova et al. 2007 pp.21). The presence of the market is acceptable for the tribe as long as exploitable motive, manipulation and socially isolating outcomes of the market are absent. When company's first move is non-market and has a societal point of view, it can later introduce a more market minded anchorage. It can return to the tribe in support of the tribe and have a two-way approach as in one in supporting the tribe and the other to serve a market. However it has been noted that any attempt to capitalize a tribe will melt into thin air. But arguments have been also for soft marketing approach not being synonymous to selling out and being rejected by tribe members and tribes co-existing side by side with mainstream society. (Cova & Cova 2002)

2.1.4 Consumer communities in social media

As this study concentrates on a consumption community in social media it's important to form an understanding on how social media affects the previously discussed views of brand communities and tribal communities. Social media has roots deeply rooted in web 2.0 that has enabled the formation of online communities (Fournier & Lee 2009). And as virtual communities that can be said to have preceded social media communities tackled the constraints of high costs of traditional brand communities (Shang et al. 2006) and made it easier to connect with consumers without limits of geography (Bagozzi & Dholakia 2002), they have been described as more as a forum for strangers to meet, rather than a form of a brand community (Shang et al. 2006). Kane et al. (2009) describe the characteristics of these modern communities as actively posting and vetting information and mentions that those communities can be friendly, but also hostile. They also note that technological development that has allowed increased formation of communities has also magnified their reach and impact.

Correa et al. (2009) offer a definition to social media as consumption of digital media through a mechanism for the audience to connect, communicate and interact with each other in social networking sites. Another definition is used by

Kietzmann et al. (2011) who explain social media as mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms that are used by individuals and communities to share, discuss and modify user-generated content. Social media has dramatically changed the relationships of individuals to larger society. Social media allows individuals and communities to communicate with broad global reach as well as personal intimacy. It has diminished boundaries of time and space that previously existed. The power of social media lies in its ability to foster collaborations on new scales and shorter time cycles than previously was possible. (Lewis et al. 2010)

Cova et al. (2011) compare the previous marketing thought where marketers had a control over consumers, but how it has changed with social media. Now companies should provide dynamic platforms for consumer practice, which free the creativity and know-how of consumers to create ways to channels those actions to the benefit of the company. This view is agreed by Kietzmann et al. (2011) who propose social media to have democratized corporate communications and taken the power from marketing and public relations to the benefit of individuals and communities. They also note that communication in social media can happen with or without the permission of the companies in question. This has led to reluctance from companies to participate because of fear of consumers taking the power from companies, even if companies also acknowledge the potential that social media communities have (Bernoff & Li 2008).

Conversations that occur are usually unstructured and consumers can join them freely based on what their preferences are and what they can learn from the discussion (Barwise & Meehan 2010). Kane et al. (2009) bring up social media's reach and impact when discussing how it enables calls to action around common interests in discussion that can form in minutes and gather populations of hundreds, even thousands of people around the globe. This has led to notion that social media communities cannot be lead with control (Fournier & Lee 2009) and companies engaging in social media should know its rules and as most discussion are being moderated by consumers, a company to join them needs the acceptance by other participants (Barwise & Meehan 2010).

Social media requires flexibility and nimbleness from companies as in addition to planning social environment can more quickly to unexpected directions. But as consumers find ways to connect with each other in the internet anyway, the best practice can be to manage communications in in-house channels to be able to gain any benefits. (Bernoff & Li 2008) This leads to the goal in online communities not being information controlling, but in order to build long-lasting relationships between products and brands, the best practice can be to give things away to build value. This leads to loyalty and allows companies to build on things that are difficult to copy, while giving easily copied away. (Kozinets 1999) Foster et al. (2010) agree by proposing that idea of social media communities is to enable engagement and inspire consumers to consumer and produce information.

What makes social media community different from traditional definition of community is that the members of social media brand community may never interact face-to-face, but still acknowledge membership in community and engage in social interaction with other members. So social media brand community can be said to be largely an imagined community that exists in the mind of the individuals. (Carlson et al. 2008) Social media requires new ways of thinking and Kaplan & Heinlein (2010) even propose that social media will be the locomotive via which the internet will evolve with the low cost and high efficiency in engaging in timely fashion that traditional media has lacked. The challenge to companies is the need for new tools and capabilities to connect the dots from the rapidly changing conversations puzzles that social media constantly creates (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

Consumers used to expend content in the internet, but now with social media they are increasingly utilizing social media networking, content sharing sites, and blogs to create, modify, share and discuss this content (Kietzmann et al. 2011). Social media promotes this fast organization and improve creation and synthesis of knowledge. It also promotes deep relationships better than prior virtual communities. Social media offers multifaceted relationships that are far richer from those in earlier generation online communities, such as discussion boards. But there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for social media marketing. One was to offer consumers key insights and access to company is to engage whole company to

be active in social media as it can make a company more authentic to followers.
(Kane et al. 2009)

2.2 Consumer motives in postmodern communities

“Every action needs to be prompted by a motive.”

- Leonardo DaVinci

This chapter discusses consumer behavior in postmodern communities from motives perspective. First is discussed why motives play an important role in community participation, second different motive categories are presented that affect consumer behavior in these postmodern communities and third group related motives are also presented.

2.2.1 Individual motives in community participation

This section will present motivations theories used in this study. First a look at how consumer research traditionally has used motives to understand behavior is explored and it is expanded with postmodern look to affiliate it with postmodern communities. A motivation means to be moved to do something. If a person feels no inspiration to act that person can be categorized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized towards an end can be considered motivated. (Ryan & Deci 2000a) Motivation has been described as activation and intention that concerns energy, direction, persistence and equifinality. Motivational research has been one of central issues and motivations are highly valued because of its consequences, motivation produces. (Ryan & Deci 2000b)

Batra & Ahtola (1991) remind that typically consumer responses towards brands and consumption behavior in general have been measured on single evaluation dimensions that have often been on semantic scales. Ryan & Deci (2000a) add that while most theories on motivations have viewed them as unitary phenomenon that goes from very little motivation to a great deal of motivation in doing something, motivations are not a unitary phenomenon. They continue mentioning that motivations should be understood a phenomenon that includes different kinds of motivations that differ also in amounts of motivations. Holbrook & Hirschmann

(1982) join this chorus and argue that consumer behavior has been only seen as information processing that has lacked experience and offer an explanation that experiential consumption focuses on cognitive processes that are more subconscious and private in nature than prior views on it.

Batra & Ahtola show that consumer responses towards brands and their behavior have at least two distinct components, hedonic and utilitarian. Hedonic consumption can be seen as affective gratification and utilitarian consumption as instrumental expectations of consequences. Ryan & Deci (2000b) continue that consumers can be motivated because there is a strong external coercion or because they value the activity itself. Their behavior can be due their interests and values or for reasons external to self. Holbrook & Hirschmann (1982) think that traditional consumer research has ignored these multisensory responses and concentrated on semantic responses with the costs of leaving emotions and imagined reactions to the background. But their argument is that hedonic consumption acknowledges the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of consumer behavior that is tied with behavioral sciences including motivation research. They also see consumer behavior as far more sensorily complex and emotion laden than how traditionally is seen in consumer research that will help understand the consumption experiences better.

But Belk et al. (2003) remind that consumers are far from being independent and yet behavioral models can assume consumers acting as individuals. They talk from the aspect of desire that behavioral models that models that focus on preferences or benefits are problematic and consumers individually and jointly construct the desire of actions within a social context. They conclude that it is consumer's own actions with the set of social relations that lead to desired outcomes. Ryan & Deci (2000b) add to this pointing out that consumers can be proactive and engaged or alternatively passive and alienated as a function of social conditions in which they function.

However Holbrook & Hirschmann (1982) remind that whether the model is behavioristic or psychoanalytic; cognitive or motivational; consumer behavioral is an endlessly complex result of multifaceted interactions between individuals and

environment. With this dynamic process consumer behavior is multifaceted interactions that neither experiential nor problem-directed approach has single handedly explain themselves. The simple definition of personal motivations can be distinguished between reasons and goals to lead to action. This basic distinction that is further explained next is between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. With this simple categorization motivations can be divided into doing something because it leads to a separable outcome, a reward, as extrinsic motive. Or doing something because of its interesting or enjoyable focus, that are intrinsic motives. (Ryan & Deci 2000a) As these motivations have different kinds of results (Ryan & Deci 2000b) mention that intrinsic can be seen as more authentic have more interest, excitement and confidence, which can lead to enhanced performance and creativity. And can be considered as hedonic as Holbrook & Hirschmann called for. This is partly confirmed by Füller (2010) as he mentions intrinsically motivated consumers preferring experimental behavior, while extrinsically motivated consumers tend to prefer goal-oriented behavior.

Ryan & Deci (2000b) say people are curious, vital and self-motivated, who are inspired and striving to learn and extend themselves. They have formed self-determination theory to approach motivations that include consumer's tendencies and psychological needs that are bases of self-motivation and personality integration, but also conditions that foster them. Foster (2010) add to it with his social exchange theory perspective and offers an analysis of innovative consumer behavior in online communities and explains why humans behave the way they do. Based on the theory consumers interact and engage in virtual co-creation because it is rewarding. Those rewards might be tangible such as money, or intangible such as social friendship.

2.2.2 Motives related to extrinsic outcomes

This part will look at consumer motivations from extrinsic motive perspective. Ryan & Deci (2000b) introduced Self-determination theory as an approach to human motivations and personalities that use traditional empirical methods while employing an organismic meta theory that highlights the importance of humans'

evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation. According to their theory different motivations reflect differing degrees to which value and regulation of the requested behavior have been internalized and integrated. This can be explained as internalization meaning people taking in value or regulation and integration meaning further transformation of that regulation into their own, so that it will emanate from their sense of self. Ryan & Deci explain how social contexts catalyze within and between person differences in motivation that results people being more self-motivated in some situations, but also domains and cultures than others.

As self-determination theory divides motives two categories between intrinsic and extrinsic motives, they include multiple sub-categories. Extrinsic motives have been characterized as pale and impoverished form of motivations and they have been defined as doing something in order to attain a separable outcome. But extrinsic can vary in the degree to which it is autonomous and various types of extrinsic categories can be found. (Ryan & Deci 2000a) Etgar (2008) explains extrinsic motives as serving means to an end and adds that they can be used to learn and master new skills in participation in co-creation practices to satisfy consumer needs for self-expression. And as Hars & Ou (2001) studied those co-creation practices they noted intrinsic motivations playing a role, but extrinsic motivations had a greater weight in participation. Extrinsic motives were mentioned to concern self-marketing and fulfilling personal needs in their study and Dholakia (2001) also explains extrinsic values influencing participation as consumers might be willing to share their knowledge to impress others.

Both Ryan & Deci (2000a) and Füller (2010) have categorized extrinsic motivations to different categories ranging from the least autonomous forms of extrinsic motives to most autonomous that already include many forms of intrinsic motives. Extrinsic motives can have influence on intrinsic motives as Füller (2006) explains their informational effect reinforcing intrinsic motives, when they increase person's competence, need for finding a creative solution or task involvement. This way extrinsic motive acts as an additional bonus and encourages activity, but they can also be counterproductive and undermine initial intrinsic motivations.

Ryan & Deci (2000b) use a self-determination continuum that ranges from left to right as it moves towards right side that are intrinsic motives. On the far left they list amotivation that means people just going through motions without intent to act or acting at all. This means there are no motives what so ever involved. First real motivation category on their continuum that can be listed as least autonomous form of motivation is external regulation, which means a behavior that is directed to obtain an externally imposed reward and the action has an external locus of causality. These motives are associated to extrinsic rewards or punishments (Ryan & Deci 2000a). Füller (2006) explains these monetary rewards engaging consumer because of the incentives such as giveaways, bonus points, prize drawings or monetary compensation that delivers immediate benefit to consumer and more time consumer invest the stronger the will for compensation will be. In virtual co-creation this category involved motives like monetary compensation or personal dissatisfaction (Füller 2010).

This category offer a slippery slope according to (Füller 2010) as he reminds that the danger lies in consumers not being interested in the topic suddenly engaging in virtual co-creation because of the incentive without any interest in making a serious contribution to the co-creation project. This has been termed minimax strategy that means striving to do the least possible of the task for maximum reward. Another risk to include monetary rewards is that it includes crowding out intrinsic motivation as co-creation project first considered playful and rewarding activity by itself, but consumers starting to hide their ideas thinking they can gain economic benefits by selling them. Or consumers can feel misused by companies if the extrinsic incentives offered do not present a fair compensation to them.

Second extrinsic motivation category includes introjected regulation (Ryan & Deci 2000a) that they categorize as performing something with the feeling of pressure in avoiding guilt or to attain ego-enhancement or pride. This category refers to sharing know-how and desire for peer recognition, where people get recognition and make feel worth to enhance their self-esteem. Füller (2006) adds that involvement in co-creation to become visible and get recognition from other participants, but also from the producer. The actions can be performed for fame and reputation and further consumers can derive benefits from building up direct

relationship with companies due to special treatment and reduction of uncertainty. Füller also mentions that consumers may seek to become known beyond their local boundaries. Although this action may be internally driven, it still includes an external perceived locus of causality and is not really experienced as fully part of the self.

Third extrinsic motivation category refers to identified regulation and refers to conscious valuing of behavioral goal or regulation. It means that actions are accepted or owned as personally important and experienced as part of the self. (Ryan & Deci 2000b) Füller (2010) mention prior studies showing that people participate in online communities to look for relevant information for them. Community may allow them to access obscure or inaccessible information. He adds that consumer may perform an activity because they strive to improve their won skills and gain new knowledge. This might be done to advance their own ideas and allow them to learn more about products or services.

The last extrinsic category that Ryan & Deci (2000b) list is integrated regulation that means actions being fully assimilated to self. The actions are evaluated and are in synthesis with one's values and needs. These motivations share many qualities with intrinsic motivations, but are still considered extrinsic because they are not done for their enjoyment and fun, but to attain a separable outcome. Füller's (2006) sees these motives as opportunities to prove one's self efficacy and explains that it can drive consumers to innovate in the internet. Consumers enjoy the challenges an activity may include and be proud of their contributions. He calls this category achievement, challenge and self-efficacy. Another category that Füller (2006) lists is making friends that argues that consumers like the possibility to get in touch with like-minded consumers, but also the interaction with company can become similar to friendship. Altruism he regards as closest extrinsic motive to intrinsic motivations. He explains it as doing something for the community at some cost to self. Ryan & Deci (2000b) conclude that even with the categories of extrinsic motivations, consumers are likely to adopt their activities in relevance to values in social groups and how different activities are respected in them.

2.2.3 Motives related to self

Ryan & Deci (2000b) mention that perhaps no single phenomenon reflects the positive potential of human nature as much as intrinsic motivation. They mention tendency to seek out challenges and to extend and exercise own capabilities to explore and to learn. Intrinsic motivation can be explained as a principal source of enjoyment and vitality throughout life. Intrinsic motivation can be described as doing an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for separable consequence like was discussed above in extrinsic motivations part. Intrinsically motivated consumer acts not because of reward, but because of act for fun or to challenge himself. Consumers might be motivated intrinsically for some activities, but not all. This can depend on task interest or the satisfaction gained from engagement in the task. (Ryan & Deci 2000a)

Intrinsically motivated consumer tend to prefer experiential-oriented behaviors that can be categorized by enduring involvement, ritualized orientation, interest in the medium and the content, fun, time-filling and recreation activities that lead to hedonic benefits. These consumers look for enjoyable experiences and vividness of the context. (Füller 2010) This experiential view can be seen as involving a flow of fantasies, feelings and fun. It focuses on cognitive processes that are more subconscious and private in nature and can be centered on imagery, fantasies and daydreams. (Holbrook & Hirschmann 1982) In virtual communities intrinsic motive categories were noticed as interest, involvement, curiosity, satisfaction and positive challenge. This contribution is seen as playful and enjoyable that leads to it been perceived as rewarding instead of pure reward, not as an outcome but the activity that makes it enjoyable. (Füller 2006) And Hars & Ou (2001) found in their open source study that intrinsic motivations played a role, even if extrinsic motivations had a greater weight. Their findings were that open source projects included different groups that differed in their motivations. They mention that hobbyists were more intrinsically motivated than those whose job included the participation and one of their main findings listed altruism, seeking to increase the welfare of others as one of the top intrinsic motives. This can lead to Dholakia (2001) mentioned situational triggers that may alter intrinsic motivations. According

to him consumers need to be targeted according to their involvement levels, because they might need different motivational factors to affect their behavior.

Fuller (2006) lists curiosity and arousal seeking as one of the categories in intrinsic motivations. Curiosity in his mind refers to desire for knowledge because of intrinsic reasons, which can involve a single stimuli or a variety of sources. He also mentions that consumers may involve themselves just because they are curious or even to escape boredom. The most intrinsic category in his listing is a playful task and autotelic. This means the above mentioned doing the task just due to the activity being considered rewarding itself. This can be centered around a product category, brand according to Füller. Etgar (2008) mentions that consumers may want to participate in intrinsic activities also simply to their offering of deviation from the daily routines.

But while intrinsic motives are seen as doing a task without getting an extrinsic motives and extrinsic motive can influence intrinsic motivations. Expected tangible rewards can make contingent on task performance do reliably undermine intrinsic motivations. And this doesn't have to be only tangible rewards, but also threats, deadlines and imposed goals diminish intrinsic motivations. But in contrast, choice, acknowledgement of feelings, and opportunities for self-direction are seen as enhancers of intrinsic motivations, because of greater feeling of autonomy that they offer. (Ryan & Deci 2000b) This has also been studied by Deci (1971) who studied what happens to intrinsic motivations when an extrinsic motive was introduced. His findings supported the view that some intrinsic motives were lost when a monetary rewards was introduced.

However when an intrinsic motive, such as social approval was used, it didn't have a significant impact on person's original intrinsic motive and the motivational level stayed the same. This can be seen as reward acting as a stimulus that leads to a cognitive reevaluation of the activity from the intrinsic motives side to extrinsic motives. The conclusion from the study was that money can be used to buy a motivation, but when used it will increase the original intrinsic motive at the same time. (Deci 1971)

Ryan & Deci (2000b) summarize that social environments facilitate intrinsic motivations by supporting consumers' innate psychological needs and links it to need of autonomy and competence. But they remind that consumers will only be intrinsically motivated for activities that hold intrinsic interest for them. To understand consumer motives in the community environment better, we need to include group motives to support the discussion of individual motives above. To this Algrheimer et al. (2005) propose that identifying positively with a brand community influences community engagement and intrinsic motivations that play a role in interactions. To this view Chan & Li (2010) add that individual sharing; discussion and interactions help facilitate the experiences of positive and fun feelings. They also argue that social media platforms as a tool for knowledge sharing, and online interactions for individuals is a hedonic social activity.

2.2.4 Motives rising from the group

Consumer power can surface in different guises and degrees in online communities, partly depending on the lenses utilized. Consumer power can be recognized as identifying, understanding or trying to measure it in online communities, but it has been recognized that consumers will be empowered as much as he acts as a rational, self-serving agent, but key in this empowerment is that that power will magnify when he combines his resources with others. (Denegri-Knott et al. 2006) Participation in communities has been studied before, but as Foster et al. (2010) note most of this research has been prior 2006 when first real social media platform Facebook opened its doors to everyone. They point out that these prior studies focus on understanding participation in virtual communities that differ from traditional brand communities and later social media communities. However virtual communities can be said to include some of the same elements as social media communities to make the prior studies relevant also for social media studies.

Shang et al. (2006) argue that main purpose for community participation has been information searching and consumers have searched information that has had a degree of personal relevance for them. But Chiu et al. (2006) disagrees with them

and discuss that consumers not only seek information or knowledge and solve problems in virtual communities. Their argument is that people treat communities as a place to meet other people, to seek support and friendship; they think consumers seek a sense of belongingness in these communities. They see social relationships as main reason for participation. Algersheimer et al. (2005) bring cognitive component to this discussion and adds that community identification involves maintaining a self-awareness of one's membership within the community. They mention consumers emphasizing the perceived similarities with other members and dissimilarities with nonmembers. Bagozzi & Dholakia (2002) studied virtual communities and found three antecedents that functioned as participatory factors for consumers. Those were positive emotions in achieving one's goal of participation, social identity that drives decisions to participate and those two produced we-intentions through desires that acted as a transformative function to motivate participation decisions with group members.

One aspect that has been widely applied in the information systems theory and which defines human behavior as a triadic, dynamic and reciprocal interaction between personal factors, personal behavior and social network, is social cognitive theory. It argues that person's behavior is shaped and controlled by his own cognition and influenced by social network. However is has its limits in addressing what components within influence consumer behavior and how they influence it. Another theory in Social capital theory tries to fix that and explores the impact of social network on knowledge sharing in communities. (Chiu et al. 2006) They continue the one of the biggest challenges in virtual communities have been supply of knowledge, the willingness to share knowledge with others, because without the rich knowledge virtual communities are seen as limited in value.

Stokburger-Sauer (2010) explains social capital theory as helping explain brand community integration and that it can be viewed as totality of actual and future resources that result from having a continuous network of institutionalized relationships with other individuals. She notes that social capital in an intangible asset and that it results from interpersonal relationships and says brand communities are one of the options where individuals can gather in groups to build and foster social relationships, which maximize their social capital. Social capital

can be divided into three types: Structural, which relates to density of networks and thickness of ties between individuals; cognitive that relates to the level of shared skills, knowledge, discourse and practice among participants; and relational, which relates to identification with the collective through shared norms and trust. (Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998) Onyx & Bullen (2000) explain further that an individual acting on its own in isolation cannot create social capital, but it needs networks, norms and trust that enables acting together to pursue shared objectives and it needs reciprocity, which means individuals producing services to others for the benefit of others. They explain that communities that have strong reciprocity, people care for each other's interests and also point out that social capital is most likely to develop in communities with strong sense of internal identity and boundary.

Social capital, the network of relationships possessed by individuals and the set of resources embedded within it strongly influence the extent to which interpersonal knowledge sharing occurs. Through close social interactions individuals are able to increase the depth, breadth and efficiency of knowledge exchange. Those social interaction ties, reciprocity and identification have been found to increase individual's quantity of knowledge sharing, but interestingly not knowledge quality. Reciprocity and identification also exerted positive and strong effects on trust, but trust didn't impact quantity of sharing. This leads to trust not being important in less risky relationships. (Chiu et al. 2006) Chan & Li (2010) have studied reciprocity in virtual communities and note that stronger the social ties, the more enjoyment was expected in interaction between members and more likely reciprocity was expected.

Five themes by Onyx & Bullen (2000) can be used in studying social capital in communities. First it refers to networks as lateral associations that can vary in density and occur among individuals and groups. Second, it refers to reciprocity, expectations that in long and short term, kindness and services will be returned. Third is trust that means willingness to take risks in social content, but to have confidence that others will respond as expected. Fourth are social norms that are underwritten shared values that direct behavior and interaction in the community. And last is personal and collective efficacy, the active and willing engagement of

members within a participative community. But they include a note that all these can occur with different intensities in different communities.

Foster et al. (2010) used the conceptualization of social capital in their study and suggested the existence of five key motivators that influence participation in communities. First is community membership, which represents consumers' need for belonging to a community with a substantial base. Second is the friendship connection that refers to maintaining ties with existing and old friends or acquaintances. Others are information value, participation confidence and concerns. Their conclusion was that while prior research has examined social motivations as a single construct in social networks it's too broad interpretation. Their view is that certain individuals are likely to focus on community membership that can be referred to as bridging social capital that are weak ties. or to stronger ties, as individual identifies self to bonding social capital, like friendships. They mention that the choice is rather either of these than both.

Some have suggested that social capital may be more of an informative mechanism for understanding the complexities of connections, but as Foster et al. (2010) mention social networks offer a multi-layered concept that social capital is a useful way to frame it. Algesheimer et al. (2005) add to community engagement proposing three behavioral intentions of community members. First they think community implies the willingness to stay committed to the community. Second is that members can recommend community to nonmembers and third that they mention is to pertain own level of participation. Their argument is that higher participatory levels will lead to higher levels of involvement that will turn visitors into members, and into contributors, and finally into evangelists. The suggestion is that community doesn't work as new member acquisition tool, but as an engagement tool.

Song & Walden (2007) offer a perspective on the size of the community that the larger the network, the more attractive it would be. Their view is that this way there is more abundant and relevant information available for sharing. Foster et al. (2010) add to the discussion that some networks can have thick multiplex ties that are conceptualized as bonding capital, while others may have thinner, weaker ties

of bridging capital. However they point out that the keys to information sharing are reciprocity and trust, which will lead to participation. Social media communities are about engaging and inspiring consumer to consumer and produce information. Marketers' role in these communities is to occur without total control of the conversation. (Foster et al. 2010) Childers et al. (2001) conclude with notion of how new media plays significant roles in interactive experiences and how those interactive environments create forums, where consumers in general expect more enjoyment. But these networks are constantly in a state of flux with respect to the development of social norms for participation that will lead to concerns among participants and what they are willing to share and with whom.

2.3 Theoretical synthesis

This literature review has presented the main concepts and studied from previous literature from two different viewpoints. First postmodern consumer was introduced and it was explored how viewing consumption from postmodern viewpoints differs from traditional modern view of consumption. Second thinking of consumer as postmodern led to rethinking of a traditional concept of community as brand community, and introduced tribes to this study as communities that are formed around shared passion and experiences instead of a brand. Last consumer motives were presented from both traditional utilitarian and postmodern hedonistic viewpoints. To personal motives, group motives were added to gain understanding of how group related motives needs to be taking into account when exploring social media community participation. I have attempted to explore and discuss relevant literature to this thesis to form an understanding of the field that this study is involved in.

When exploring an understanding of consumer participation in social media communities, we need to understand how social media has changed consumer behavior and how it affects their behavior. This review presented that a need for understanding postmodern consumer was needed to explain consumer participation in social media communities. This study views postmodern consumer as creative, innovative and active participant in social media communities, but as one who is not keen on relationships with brands, but as someone who values goods and services as giving meaning to his life. Postmodern consumer can be active participant in communities, but the goal is not to find one culture to belong to, but a consumer can be involved in different cultures that offer alternative ways to explore and discover meanings.

Both aspects of communities in brand community and tribe were explored. The differences between these communities were found to be the ethos of the community and how the community feels towards commercial involvement. Where brand communities were formed around a brand and it had a strong commercial

aspect to its existence, tribes were totally different. A tribe is formed around common interest and passion, where commercial elements have a narrowed space to maneuver and tribes can turn to opposite commercialization if it becomes too apparent in the community. Other differences were found to be brand community's relative stable existence, but tribes to be in constant flux and often coming together for just a brief moment. For marketers brand communities are quite rational and their existence identifiable. Tribes on the other hand present problems for marketers as their existence isn't as straightforward and their existence can be hard to identify.

The other viewpoint for consumer participation in social media communities was from motives perspective. Personal motives were divided into two categories depending on if the motive was related to one's self or external to self. Motives related to self were noted to be hedonistic and related to doing something for its inherent satisfaction. Motives related to external to self were explained as doing something in order to attain a separate outcome. Several categories in extrinsic motives were found that ranged from pure rewards to motives closely related to intrinsic, such as altruism where community is benefiter at some cost to self.

Group related motives were presented as social capital theory that had three categories in structural, cognitive and relational. Social relationships were explained as something to able knowledge sharing in reciprocity. Social media communities were presented as platforms for marketers to engage and inspire consumers. Social media was also seen as playing significant role in interactive experiences and was seen as an environment where more enjoyment was expected.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the case company and the research approach. With the research approach, data collection and analysis methods are introduced.

3.1 Case company Quality Hunters

The case company for this study is a crowd sourcing initiative by Finland's national airline Finnair and Helsinki Airport. Quality Hunters is a travel related initiative that focuses on finding best practices from the world and lets consumers find them, discuss them and develop them, with the goal to both make travelling better for everyone, but also for the companies to benefit from them. It focuses on bringing passengers together with service professional from both companies to produce practical ideas.

Quality Hunters started in 2010 and continued in 2011, when they flew bloggers around the world to find those best practices and bring to other consumer to social media platforms to discuss their ideas further, how to make travelling better. After two seasons best ideas had been searched for, discussed, voted and best of them selected for further development. One of ideas that was voted as one of best ones for example has been book swap, which is located now at Helsinki Airport. Quality Hunters continued in 2013 with a changed focus as no consumer were selected to fly around the world in the hunt for best practices, but instead active community members were selected for a weekend long work shop in Helsinki. These work shops had a goal to further develop the ideas that had come from the community during prior seasons and try to make them part of Finnair's and Airport's products and services.

Quality Hunters is a virtual community that includes a webpage as the digital home for the community. Its purpose is to recap conversations and hold further discussion. The main platforms for the discussion are Twitter and Facebook; the community also includes a blog and Pinterest boards. From these platforms the

most vibrant has been Twitter, where the discussion is on going all the time under Quality Hunters hashtags.

For this study Quality Hunters offered an excellent case company as it offers a successful, long-lasting example of postmodern community that uses internet and more specifically social media platforms for its communications. It can also be regarded as one of the best consumer communities in Finland and Finnair and Helsinki Airport have won prizes with their social media actions in the past. It must be noted that the researcher was aware of the community, but had no personal experience of the community and the members of the community, which offered an opportunity to study the community with open mind.

3.2 Research approach

This thesis is qualitative in nature. Its aim is to gain a wide understanding of how Quality Hunters community members see the community and how they experience it. The aim of this thesis is to find motivational factors that lead to community participation, but as this study takes a phenomenological approach to this approach to the thesis, it must be noted that the aim is to understand the world in which they in the community and let the community members tell their own stories to gather their perceptions of the encounters in the community (Shankar et al. 2001). Phenomenological study doesn't want to only put consumers motives into categories and try to find them, but wants to understand the phenomena as it is lived (Thompson et al. 1989).

As this thesis takes a qualitative perspective, Creswell (2007 pp.19) explains qualitative research as inductive and merging. This method uses a ground up method and instead of being totally handed down from a theory, qualitative research can be seen as inductive, where new information is included to the research as it happens. Creswell (pp 39) describes this method as after the initial plan is been altered as the data collection happens and more is learned about the problem from the participants. In case of this study, this included the initial

research to understand the theoretical world in which this thesis lives in. That understanding was altered during the data collection phase as new information about that world was found and the research was altered accordingly.

As stated above, this research takes a phenomenological approach, which has a goal of understanding the experiences as they are lived. This view should be viewed as an alternative method in studying consumer culture and it must be understood that it doesn't necessarily correspond with the larger society. (Thompson et al. 1989) As prior consumer research has widely neglected the experiential part of consumption and has taken a utilitarian, rational view to consumer behavior, it has also limited our understanding of consumer behavior (Holbrook & Hirschmann 1982). To this phenomenology offers a solution in concentrating on human experiences as they are lived, and seeks a first-person description of those experiences. (Thompson et al. 1989)

3.3 Data collection method

The data collection method used in this thesis was phenomenological interviews that are loosely structured and informal. The purpose for the loose structure is not to yield a question and answer session, but to have a conversation around interviewees' experiences of the phenomena. (Thompson et al. 1989) With this in mind a loosely formed semi-structured interviews were made, where certain themes were formed around the topic and the purpose to let the interviewees to tell their own experiences with their own worlds as much as possible (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008 pp.48). To include the induction element of the phenomenological study, the interviews were altered to also include elements from the first interviews, keeping the original themes as they were. The interviews also didn't proceed all the same, but interviewees were let to guide the interview as much as possible and interviewer tried not to interrupt the talk as much as possible and guide the interview to new themes when needed. It is important in phenomenological interviews that the interviewer should not think that he knows more about the topic than the respondent. The respondent must be acknowledged as the experts in telling their own story. (Thompson et al. 1989)

The data was collected from six interviews and from six different people; three male and three female participants. The interviewed were selected by Quality Hunters based on their membership length and activity in the community, but most importantly they all had experiences the community for a long time from many perspectives. Total of ten Quality Hunters were approached to participate in this study and those six were chosen because of their availability. Others either didn't respond to the emails or they were unavailable to be interviewed.

The interviews took place in January to February in 2014. Two of the interviews were face-to-face interviews that took place in Helsinki. In those interviews the interviewee was asked to select a location where they wanted to do the interviews. Other four interviews were made by Skype and were phone interviews. Two of the participants were from Finland, while others were from Hong Kong, UK, USA and Germany. The interviews lasted from 50 minutes to two hours in duration.

The participants formed a very heterogeneous group of people from different cultures, counties and ages. This gave this study a good data for understanding the lived experiences. No extra interviews was felt to be needed as the six offered an heterogeneous description of the experiences in the community, but at the same time offered enough similarities that the interviews started repeating same elements, while everyone had their own view of it.

3.4 Data analysis method

The data analysis followed the part-to-whole process of phenomenological interpretation offered by Thompson et al. (1989). It offers two phases of data analysis, where each interview is interpreted individually and then those interviews are related to each other to identify common patterns. The data analysis in this study included making transcripts of the interviews and reading them to get a comprehensive view of each individual's worldview. This was done with all the interviews while trying to relate them to the common view simultaneously.

The interviews were interpreted first to gain every interviewee's worldview of this phenomenon. Common themes were underlined and connections between the interviews were made. This phase included trying to find common themes, underlining text and making notes to make common themes visible from all the interviews. Underlines and notes were coded and this coding process was done to make it easier to transfer common themes to this study as raw text. The raw text was later written to its final form and edited to write a story, which would be easy to read and carry this study forward towards its conclusion.

4 FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings of the study are presented. The interviews yielded two themes, which are discussed next. First consumer behavior in social media and how social media was seen by interviewees is explored. Second the ethos of Quality Hunters community and what elements the community included is discussed, before motivational factors that are involved in social media community participation are explored.

4.1 Consumers in social media

This section offers a descriptive view of how the social media is used by consumers. As postmodern consumer was described as an extreme individual, who has finally liberated himself from modern links, but started to recompose those links on the basis of emotionally free choice (Cova 1997). Social media has allowed consumers to form new kinds of social links that were visible in this study. Next social media and how it has had impact on behavioral change in consumers is examined.

4.1.1 Bringing together by passion

The interviews showed an interesting image of how social media can be utilized to bring like-minded people together around their interests. The interviewees were brought together by their common interest and passion in aviation and travelling. They were people from different parts of the world, from different backgrounds, but they were all involved in Quality Hunters because of their interest. Without this interest, it can be hard to image them sharing anything else in common.

The love for making travelling better, as is the idea behind the Quality Hunters initiative, was the reasons to bring all these people together, but it was interesting to realize during the interviews how different they were away from the community. As Katharine well said in her interview on people in the community:

“Everyone is very different; there are people who are travel bloggers and whose lifestyle is different. And Kinny and Charles, who are aviation geeks, they take pictures of planes. It’s crazy when they come to Hong Kong and they go to the airport. We are very passionate about certain things. There is Mrs.O’Reilly who is into luxury travel and goes to most fancy places. But when I travel I go to hostels.” (Katharine)

“We are all very different; we come from different society, different countries, different cultures and lifestyles. But we all use the same surface.” (Katharine)

This quote tells the difference among them better than I could have. To continue on explaining their behavior in social media, another interesting fact that was brought up in the interviews, was that for some there was a clear distinction between work and leisure in social media usage. But for two of the interviews it was their job and one more told that it was more than hobby as a blogger. This shows in two of the interviewees not acting under their name, but under their blogger name to which people relate to instead of their real names.

But even for other participants in this study, who didn’t include social media participation in their work, it didn’t exclude them from checking their devices during workdays to see if anything interesting was happening. Inka mentioned having her iPad besides her computer while working and checking her social media accounts every now and then during workdays. To conclude postmodern consumer in social media and the usage of mobile devices, Ian’s words describe it:

“I would say I’m active on social media from the time I wake up to the time I go to bed. I’ve got my phone with me at all time with all the major social media platforms in it. (Ian)

This explains well how social media has allowed consumers to be connected from early in the morning until very late in the evening. There is no closure of social media while interviewees were working or travelling, Nikos even mentioned tweeting from airplane on his last trip. The interviews didn't paint an image of social media filling a certain time or place during days, instead it was used during whole day anywhere and anytime.

4.1.2 Consumers and their brand in social media

As Susan Fournier has said, consumers don't choose brands, they choose lives (1998), this study can be said to support her view on consumers. All interviews supported this view, where brands are not chosen or followed in social media because of their brand value, but because of their linking value to interviewees' interests and relevance to their lives.

This view was widely supported in the interviews and how brands that were followed were described as:

"I follow companies that has company values that I value" (Inka)

I follow companies that I have personal interest in and I like to see what does on behind the business side" (Katharine)

"On Social media I choose brands that I like personally or that mean something to my life" (Ana)

Jens even goes as far as saying that "I don't find any value in following companies in social media". But what he meant was that even if he doesn't actively seek brands or companies to follow, he trusts his contacts in social media to bring all the relevant information to him. This leads to second conclusion in consumer interacting with brands in social media. In the interviewees this view from Jens was widely supported to varying degrees. Brands weren't actively searched for.

What came up in the interviewees was that most brands that were followed were related to personal interests and their relevance to consumers' lives. Inka described her behavior in social media in finding relevant information well:

"I don't actively seek to follow companies, but I get passively introduced to interesting companies that are brought to my feed and I might get interested in them. If something has been in the news I might do a search, but otherwise I wait passively that it comes to my feeds. And overwhelmingly they appear in my feed. I can't explain whether it's the same kind of people that you connect with or something else. But I must admit that normally I stay still and wait for things to come to me and easily they do come." (Inka)

Another aspect worth mentioning, why brands were followed was the actions they took in social media. Katharine mentioned earlier that she likes to see behind the business side and continues describing her liking of brands, when brands don't just use their business side in social media actions, but actually talk to consumers like talking to a friend and she likes conversations that are related to company in general. Good content was generally mentioned as one of the reasons to keep following brands and it was also mentioned that companies producing good content might be a reason to start following that particular brand in social media, even if the company otherwise didn't attract any interest for consumers.

Some companies were followed due to their relevance in work settings as companies that one would like to work with in the future. And companies that consumers used most frequently were the ones followed more closely, but this varied greatly according to social media platform and their usage in interacting and connecting with brands. Last important notion from the interviews on brands was how competitions were not seen as a way to get introduced to brands. Only one interviewed, Ian, mentioned taking advantage of brand competitions and even by that he said that he does it because there is no real penalty included either. He mentioned that most contests are based on following or liking, and even if he generally wants brands to be interesting, he might take part in competition with

uninteresting brand. But this will lead to more discussed problem in following brands in social media, the difference in social media platform usage.

4.1.3 Social media platforms in consumer engagement

The data from the interviews clearly show that there is no one common aspect to describe social media and more specifically different platforms in social media. How different social media platforms were used differed in their openness, interactions and communication model.

Most used platforms that everyone used were Facebook and Twitter. Other platforms that were mentioned were Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn. Also WhatsApp was mentioned, but there was no real discussion of its usage was made. Facebook as the biggest social media platform with over one billion monthly users (Facebook 2013) was no surprise, but how it was seen in interactions with brands could be considered one. As Facebook can be considered a closed platform, where you connect with friends, it was mentioned lacking interactive elements and interviewed brought up the fact that in Facebook one mostly connect with people you know. Inka mentioned that she doesn't connect with strangers and her view was supported for example by Katharine, as she mentioned it being weird to be friends with strangers in Facebook. Another aspect brought up was Facebook's communication model that Ana described as more traditional one-to-many, and Nikos mentioned from a blogger perspective that Facebook limits reaching your audience with their pay-to-view model.

Another problem with Facebook that relates to it being mostly to connect with close friends and people you know, brand messages can be seen as cluttering one's newsfeed. These were the same problems that were mentioned on Quality Hunters' Facebook page. Some of them weren't even following Quality Hunters on Facebook and those who were, weren't paying a close attention to it. Katharine explained her view of it as more of an afterthought, compared to Twitter.

The most popular social media network in interviews was clearly Twitter. Twitter was praised for its interactive communication model, which made it easy to interact with friends, like-minded and companies. Ana explained the communication model, which can start from traditional one-to-many, but can evolve into one-to-one or many-to-many conversations. Ian describes his liking of Twitter:

For me Twitter has the greatest utility because in addition to meeting people I know, it's everyone else. And there is no closure and you can follow people without any reciprocity. And Twitter has the ability to follow conversations and listen to them, and then when you have something to say you can easily jump in. (Ian)

Instagram was mentioned as a growing platform that has offered new opportunities in connecting with different kind of people than in Facebook or Twitter. It was mentioned in bringing a visual element to social interactions that lived in the very moment and was mentioned allowing someone who never had been able to take a picture to save a life as Ana said, to be able to show her blog followers good pictures. But as Instagram didn't offer any relevance to this study, no further discussions on it was held. But it can be noted to being a social media platform that was mentioned as increasing its popularity.

4.2 The community around shared passion and interest

As stated in the research objectives, the objective of the study is to understand consumer behavior in Quality Hunters community. This section moves the discussion from general discussion of social media behavior to focus more specifically on Quality Hunters as a community. Next the ethos of the community, which explains the actions in the community, is discussed.

4.2.1 The initial ethos of the community

Initially the whole Quality Hunters community has been evolved around the ethos of making travelling better. While it was mentioned in the interviewees that behind the community are two brands Finnair and Helsinki Airport, it was Quality Hunters that the interviewees referred themselves to, not those brands. It was easily noticed in the interviews that brands behind the initiative were recognized and were brought to discussion, but the reasons for participation didn't lay in the attachment to neither of those brands. Half of the interviewed had no experience of using the brands before coming to Helsinki for the workshop; some mentioned having very distant image of them prior to joining the community. As brand communities were noted to form around interest to a brand, from this perspective Quality Hunters can be said to have formed around shared passion and love for aviation and travelling.

As Ana pointed out, the whole point was to find best practices in travelling in the whole world. She said that while she always knew who was behind the initiative, she thanks Quality Hunters for being very honest about it and making it well known, which she says changes everything. She continues saying that when forming a community like this, there have to be a real and clear purpose and agrees that they had it. Another who discussed this balance between the group and the brands was Nikos, who said the obviously they know that Finnair is behind Quality Hunters, but he described their involvement as a genuine discussion partner, who is interested in people's ideas and want to make things better. What Nikos said is beneficiary in Finnair's involvement is that they have left the business side aside and said that they don't throw marketing messages to the community to get people fly with Finnair, that he mentions others doing. Ana mentioned that it's not like she is going to be flying to Helsinki any time soon, but mentioned that the whole point is not to get people fly to Helsinki, but to find best practices.

In general, the interviews painted a picture of the early stages of the community as consumers were introduced to Quality Hunters it was during the first or second season, when bloggers were send to find those best practices around the world and the community discussed their initiatives further. Some of the interviewed

noted that they had applied to being one of those hunters flying around and blogging, but none of them were chosen. That was not seen as problematic, as they reminded that they were involved because of their interest in the traveling, not purely because of the reward of free flights. But all, who had applied brought up the question, whether those chosen were the correct ones, since only one of them reminds in the community to this date.

On why they chose to remind in the community after the initial phase, the participants offered few important notions. The most important attachment to the community was the interest in travelling. But while they shared the same interest, they all approached it from very different angles. Some of them, like Jens, Nikos and Ian, were into aviation, while Katharine, Inka and Ana were more interested in travelling in general. This was clearly visible in the comment from Katharine in previous section, where she described their differences from some of the members being aviation geeks and taking pictures of airplanes to others blogging about different parts of travelling, like Ana about luxury travelling and Nikos about airline food.

The other strongly agreed reason for keeping up community participation was the other people in the community. All the interviewees mentioned community members as like-minded, some of the were even called friends, and all of them agreed that they had made new friendships from the community that they embraced. Some of those friendships have even become so strong that they see outside of the community in real life. One interesting aspect of like-minded sharing a common passion can be seen this way, that they might have something in common also outside the gatherings online. Ana said after a moment of thinking what makes her participate that first it was because of the topics, but actually it's because of the people. By that she means both from Quality Hunters' side and the other community members. She makes an argument that some of the people acting behalf of Quality Hunters are so deep into the group's history and myths that it could be a problem if they left and someone, who cannot share the common stories and history replaced them.

About the community characteristics the data showed how to community embraces itself as the participants described the community as differing from other communities in its positive goal of making travel better. Ian described it as:

“I think the thing about QH is that it’s a very positive community its very respectful community and it’s a community that wants to make things better. That’s the express intent of QH its to find quality and make things better. We are not just talking about travel we are talking about making it better. And I think that little addition is what makes the group so positive and easy to interact with. And I think having that positive mission statement really does a lot for the things that people bring to the community. People are always coming up with ideas that make things better. If someone is having an issue it doesn’t become a complaint beyond I had a problem, it becomes like how do we fix that for next time. That’s an interesting question and I have never heard that before lets talk about this. It’s very welcoming and open community where as other communities aren’t necessarily that positive or that welcoming of discussion.” (Ian)

Ian continued that while other communities can be less positive in their approach and evolve around people complaining, but says that Quality Hunters doesn’t have that problem and it makes him happy to keep participation. Katharine adds to Ian’s view mentioning that community includes people who want to make the world a better place. She admires peoples desire in life to dream about making things better. And as the community includes passionate travel enthusiastic both Nikos and Katharine said that they have a feeling that the ideas discussed in the community are also made into real life projects. Nikos said he feels the value in the community being the feeling that you are creating ideas and helping out to solve problems that passengers have now or in the future. And while his initial angle to the community was the food part of the discussion, he mentioned still liking everything else and contributing if he knows enough about the topic discussed in the community.

4.2.2 Building around shared passion and interest

While the general aspect of participation was discussed above the interviews brought up many aspects of common interactions with the community that will attach it to the ideology of tribe. As discussed the community is formed around a common interest and passion that is one of the central aspects of a tribe. Next the everyday actions that relate the community to a tribe are discussed.

Another main ideological difference between brand community and tribe was how the ethos of the community was centered in the commercial settings (VIITE). How this affects the discussion is described by Ana, as she mentions that Quality Hunters has done a good job positioning themselves in participants' lives as no one really talks about Finnair in commercial point of view, as a brand, that allows to have talks about other airlines that makes the whole point of the community, as she said:

“If they want to talk about points and we will talk about points and will talk about it. Talking about points is not telling how amazing Finnair points are is not the purpose because no one gives a damn what Finnair points are alike because no one has Finnair points. But they want to know what others do so well. And how they can use it in their program. And that's what makes it interesting because people can talk about what they know. And they will have access to other things because not very many from Finnair staff are BA gold.” (Ana)

But while the discussion isn't centered around Finnair as a brand, it doesn't mean Quality Hunters aren't active members leading the discussion as driver of the community. Almost all of the interviewed told that how they normally are introduced to the ongoing discussions in the community were the Quality Hunters engaging them. Only Ian mentioned actively following the common hashtags that the discussions were held under and said to take part in the discussion almost every time. Other participants varied greatly in how they were involved in the daily participation. But everyone mentioned that they would take part in the discussions if they were involved in them by Quality Hunters. Inka described it as:

“Quality Hunters have this incredible way to interact and seek input from people. And it normally leads to a situation where you are asked a direct question and invited to join the conversation that makes it nice and easy to join the conversation. It’s like in real life as if someone would ask you a question looking at you directly in your eyes, you want to answer it. (Inka)

But she said she doesn’t take part in the Twitter discussions, but told that she knows in general how they function. Jens said he only took part in the discussion when he has more work trips where he had time to answer questions from Quality Hunters, while at the airports and hotels. And Ana said that when the discussion is going on Tuesdays in Twitter she might take a look at her phone during the breaks she has, but isn’t actively seeking to get involved in the conversations. She pointed out that the discussion happening on Tuesdays under hashtag #ttot, which means Travel talk on Twitter, in which Quality Hunters are heavily involved with isn’t actually theirs. But she explains that Quality Hunters have made it their own and said it’s a great excuse for them to be more active. Katharine explains her view on Quality Hunters tagging people in their tweets and engaging them as a nice gesture and much nicer than only waiting for your clients reaching to you when they have a problem. Only Ian said he actively seeks Quality Hunters conversations through their hashtags or like he said that more likely scenario is that someone, who he is following on Twitter is already part of a conversation and he will jump into the conversation and take part. But he too said that generally Quality Hunters would involve him and ask him questions.

Ian was the only one to mention that those conversations can be happening without being initiated by Quality Hunters, but someone else. But the general consensus among interviewed was that Quality Hunters does a very good job about engaging and bringing people to the discussion whether by a direct question or a follow up question to something that is already discussed. Inka admired their ability to guide the discussion to a certain direction without really appearing to be controlling the discussion too much.

Other ways how the interviewed followed the community were following the Quality Hunters account on Twitter, Nikos had put Quality Hunters members into group that he followed and also Facebook page and Quality Hunters blog were mentioned. But their Facebook page was described as an afterthought by Katherine that explains its role in the community. Ana said that she might take a look at the Facebook page every two months, but talking with them on Twitter two to three times a week.

On how they see the different topics discussed all the interviewed told that they prefer some topics to others and said that it was easier to join the conversation about something that is familiar. But it didn't matter what the topic was, if they were asked a question, they tried to answer it the best they could. Ian said that generally Quality Hunters offer conversations that are interesting and feels an interesting topic makes it easy for him to get involved. He mentioned following along interesting conversations and jumping in, where he could offer interesting personal insights or facts if they were needed. But his point was that he needed also to see where the conversations was going because an interesting conversations can become very or not so interesting very quickly according to him. He makes an example:

“I think of value varies greatly dependent on who is participating and also how interested people are in that particular conversation. So if you are talking about travel for instance and you are asking someone to comment on the size of the ice cubes in the glass, that conversation is not going to be very interesting. But if you ask somebody to comment on how wide the seats are that's going to be pretty interesting conversation.” (Ian)

Nikos offers an explanation on why he thinks Quality Hunters involve him to the discussions on Twitter. He thinks it might be that they think he might have some knowledge on the topic or they think he might want to get involved. He thinks it's only a good thing that they want to know his viewpoints to different topics. He has done other travel Twitter chats besides Quality Hunters, but says he loses track on the discussion, because he mentions Twitter going crazy with the all the

discussions going on at the same time. He offers a new view on why he also likes Quality Hunters that Inka also shared with him on the different possibilities to get involved with Quality Hunters as one can also for example write a blog post on the topic and get responses. Inka said that writing blog posts and gathering already discussed information was her way to make an impact to Quality Hunters.

But while Ana sums up Quality Hunters tribal aspects in mentioning that it's a group of people who speak her language and are equally passionate about the topics and have strong opinions in the group where she says she has learned a lot, almost all the interviews left a feeling that interviewees' participation had decreased in recent year during season three of Quality Hunters. As discussed above Ian was the only interviewed, who was actively involved in Twitter discussion, but others described their involvement in Quality Hunters today not as active as it had been. Jens said that there is a limited time frame to keep him interested and mentioned that he is not keen on continuing purely from his interest to the topics. Ana pointed the same kind of thing, that to create something that people want to talk about every week is difficult to do. To a certain degree she agreed with Jens that the community competes with other aspects in her life that her time doesn't allow her to be interested as much as she would want.

One important discussion in the interviews was on how the community has changed from the first two seasons when bloggers travelled around the world and the third season, which included no bloggers, but members were invited to a workshop in Helsinki. The prior seasons with the bloggers were described as amazing and exciting, but most of the interviewed described today's discussions in less enthusiastic words. Ana argued that they will never get the same interaction they got few years ago, but thought that it might not be the goal either.

However it was interesting how those seasons with the bloggers were talked about from the community aspect. The community was seen as really active, producing lots of ideas and lots of discussion based on bloggers' experiences. As Inka said the prior seasons were amazing, especially how ideas were processed and ideas thrown around and voted. Nikos agreed with that and said:

“Its different in a sense of the excitement lasted longer with the quality hunters on a journey. The bloggers who were actually travelling the world was actually really fun to see, because you kind of felt like you were there with them going through everything. Also it was obviously longer period of time and workshops are only for the weekend. That’s great and the workshops themselves are awesome and it’s such a great idea. I just feel that in between the momentum gets a bit lost”. (Nikos)

4.2.3 Attempt to commercialize a tribe

Interviewed showed that the community’s ethos has been more brand centered this year as Quality Hunters have included elements that are known to belong to brand communities, such as events and more commercial ethos (VIITE). This has led to a situation explained above, where community activity among interviewees has decreased.

The earlier seasons were admired by their open discussions and huge amounts of ideas. And while those seasons included commercial elements in the community, they weren’t as clearly visible and the community was still centered around its openness. From social media point of view Katharine said it gets quiet a lot and she shares the thought that Nikos presented earlier. But the interviewees talked more from the perspective of the community that has lacked the same buzz that was present before. The brands’ perspective to increase their commercial actions was understood relatively well. Ana put it as PR wise Quality Hunters got lot less from season three, but quality wise they got a lot more.

Inka mentioned the workshops in season three being beneficiary from the brands’ perspective and mentioned that it was nice to see other members even if she had not met any of them before. This view was also embraced by others and everyone who was interviewed for this study had also participated in one of the workshops. Katharine talked about all the ideas that they had gathered before and said she understood the those needed to be narrowed down and mentioned that it was

exactly what was done in the workshops. She thought it was the right direction for the company.

But what was criticized was the communications back to the community from the workshops. Ana said Quality Hunters haven't been very good in telling the conversation back and how things are and what they were doing as they did in earlier seasons. She said she had absolutely no idea what was going on. And Katharine told that after all the ideas talked in workshops were very similar to those that had come up earlier. She described the workshops as squeezing everything out of the participants, but doing very little promotion besides that and said it had made her feel little less available and being little less attractive to participate because everything has happened behind closed doors. But the workshops were seen as rewarding those who had stayed with Quality Hunters after the first few seasons.

However there was a total opposite view also to the workshops as Ian said they have made Quality Hunters a bit more accessible. He based his opinion on bringing a lot of people together to share an experiment and sending them back to the world, as he described. From his view the face-to-face interaction makes it easier to connect with those people afterwards and said that workshops were more concrete, as with bloggers you didn't necessarily know anybody. He also thought that those who participated in workshops become carriers of the discussion forward after them. This view was challenged by Jens, who hadn't been active in the community after the workshop; and Inka, who said it didn't affect her behavior to be more involved in any way. But Ian's point was to not rely on the bloggers and rely on the workshop participants and said there is just more of them and it become easier to maintain those connections than maintaining bloggers.

Clearly there were a couple of differing viewpoints to more brand centered community. Kath and Ana thought they missed the open conversations from prior seasons and Nikos mentioned it getting a lot quieter between the workshops. But for Ian it made him feel more personal and didn't see the metaphor of discussion being behind closed doors relevant and added that the workshops were

summarized in blog posts and said people were tweeting even as the workshops were happening.

4.3 Motives in community participation

This section will introduce motives related to community participation to understand interviewee's motives in joining the community and what motivational factors are included in daily participation to community actions.

4.3.1 Motives related to self

All community members who participated to this study had very strong connection to self, on why they had joined Quality Hunters in the first place. They all have been involved in the community since its early stages and have kept the interest without being offered any rewards, so as Katharine said those people who continued after the first two seasons were really the people who were interested in improving air travelling experience. And Jens stated strongly that he had aviation related to family and that his interest to the community rose from those family ties.

Inka had her reasons in her history of participation to all sorts of community actions all her life and Quality Hunters was a natural continuance to that participation. Her interest to the community was also the deeper understanding of the whole process and she mentioned the community looking even greater, when it's put into a perspective, especially in the long run. Ana had started her blogging career because of Quality Hunters, so this community meant much more to her than just being a consumer community. Nikos on the other hand worked in the industry and said his following was out of interest to travelling and his passion lied in the food part of the community, as he was an airline food blogger.

The passion of making airline travelling better was clearly the backbone of all the interviewees, but for some their intrinsic motivations to participate were clearly seen as decreasing. Jens mentioned his involvement in the community starting

from pure interest to aviation, but it been worn out, all the interest he had. His argument in being worn out was that while some could keep the interest for years, he didn't want to have the same conversations over and over again. His thinking was that there weren't that much to innovate in the aviation that would keep the community active for years. Ana described her situation as the Quality Hunters missing an opportunity to make her even more involved and gaining her ownership to the community. But her passion and interest still showed on the background when she continued that she is willing to participate anytime needed, because she cared about the community. She just wanted to be better informed on what was going on, if her knowledge was used to benefit the processes.

All members in the community had followed the path described by Ian as becoming involved in the Quality Hunters either by them engaging people or finding the group from the people they already knew. After the initial membership in the community they all become more involved and then heavily involved in the conversations as Quality Hunters kept getting more and more interactive.

Besides pure intrinsic motives that were seen as a bigger picture in participation, many extrinsic motives that had strong link to self were found. The interviewees enjoyed to co-creation that happened in first few seasons as ideas were thrown around and discussed further. Almost all of them had been taking part in the book swap at the airport and it was described with proudness. It had been one of the tasks that were voted as top ideas from season two and then made into real life. Both Nikos and Katharine said that even when they had lounge access, when they were flying back home from the workshop, they went to see the workshop instead. Nikos described how his Twitter handle was on a plaque on the wall of the book swap, which includes all those who participated in the discussion to create it. They went because it was something they were partly creating. There was an agreement that it had a big effect on interviewee's motives if the co-created projects were actually pushed through and the brands behind the concept adapted some of them. Katharine talked about the book sway and how she thinks it as very special because she knows the community effort the was behind it.

Katharine continues describing her involvement in the community colorfully as she wanted to make the world a better place and with it, make travelling better. But she said the participation for her was also about reliving some of the good and bad memories. She liked the parts of the community discussion where she could in the middle of workday or while commuting from work think about them and think about where she would like to travel in the future. She found satisfying to help people out, like she tended to do when other community members came to visit Hong Kong she would offer her knowledge to them to richen their travel experience.

She continued explaining how life is there days: you go to work, go to school, eat dinner, and be with your own group of people. To this Quality Hunters offered an escape from her routines, to meet people she never had met before and listen to their stories. She wanted to make the world a better place and this was her way to make it better.

4.3.2 Motives related to external outcomes

The total opposite from motives relating to self are the motives relating to external outcomes from participation. And while it was mentioned that the community has been great in involving members without dangling the carrot as Nikos noted, there can be a clear categorization to different external motives that are involved in the community participation.

Extrinsic motives that included some intrinsic elements were gained knowledge that many of the interviewees discussed. Most of these were related to gaining knowledge from the participation. Inka mentioned that she used social media to seek information when her head feels empty. This can be easily understood as Jens said the only thing that isn't lacking in the social media is content and that there is too much of it to find relevant or for a company to be relevant in there.

Own skill improvement wasn't talked about as much as learning new things was. There was a line between those whose job included working in travel or aviation, who mentioned more personal improvement point of view in the interviews. And

others, who were interested in gaining new or further knowledge in the community discussions. Ana had started her own community as a luxury travel blogger because of Quality Hunters community and gained knowledge on its behavior to her own community. Nikos belonged to both parties, when he said he really enjoys the food part of the discussion, but also mention learning people's viewpoints about things and a sense of value of leaning something new. He liked getting new information, but also stressed learning new points of view from people around the world as interesting learning experience.

Ian explained this view even further, as he mentioned how easy it is with social media to follow a conversation to gain new knowledge on topics that you are not familiar with, but also to jump in to the conversation if you feel like you want to share your view. Both Finns explained themselves as lurkers, who like to follow the conversation to occur before making any judgments. They were not heavily involved in the daily interactions as the others had been or were still, but their approach to the community was more as a by stander, who likes to gain the whole knowledge and then make something out of it. Inka mentions that it has been natural for her always, but also said that her role changes from community to community. From the interviews, even when new information and perspectives on how other members saw things were regarded as something that all had gained from the community, it must be noted that community actions weren't attended only to seek information, but it was more of a side product of participation.

Motives between intrinsic and extrinsic motive categories were seen in Jens's talk about what his thinking of what needs to be done to him involved again. He said it would involve Quality Hunters bringing new layers to the community as people actually responsible for making service processes better would answer the questions and take responsibility in the community. He said that now it's more a brand recognition campaign than real co-creation initiative. When asked what he had gained from the workshops, he said it was contacts to Finnair what he could use in the future.

One theme that rose from the interviews was killing boredom. It was involved in almost all the interviews in either direct or indirect was. Jens explained community

participation filling his time when travelling, and his interactions stopping when he was home because he had so much other things to do. Nikos said his workdays include working from home and sometimes not having much to do or being lazy and interacting on social media. The total opposite was that he turned his phone to background when he needed to do something or had a deadline approaching. Katharine explained her bored related participation as:

“You know we all have bored days in work and you have time to check your phone and even when you are very busy you still want to check your phone. My Tuesdays used to be very boring and it’s was 5 to 6 o’clock over here when the discussion started you know its time when you want to get out of the office. Its something I anticipated.” (Katharine)

Pure rewards were not mentioned as a reason to participate to the community. They were involved in the first stages in joining the community, when Quality Hunters were picking bloggers to travel around the world, but all the interviewed continued after that and became heavily involved in the community. Katharine explained that the community was really active before they picked the last Quality Hunters to travel around the world, but when the last one was picked the community activity dropped dramatically after that.

One aspect that has already been discussed in this thesis was the fact that those who were picked to travel around the world are no longer part of the community, except for one. This can lead to discussion on how pure reward hasn’t clearly increased community participation. Ian describes his relationship with rewards as them being nice and that the rewards can help drive the conversation, but there is also a negative impact on them, because they can draw the wrong people to the community, who are only interested in the conversations as much as they are interested in the rewards. He says that rewards need not to be provided too much, so that people don’t just try to get the reward as could be seen in picking the last Quality Hunter.

An interesting angle on how differently external rewards can be seen was on how everyone saw their visit to Helsinki for the workshop. While Ian and Katharine saw it as a nice reward from their participation in the community and Nikos said he felt flattered, even if he understood that he had been member of the community for a long time and an important one also, he even offered a counter service for the involvement to the workshop. However Ana wondered if she should have also been paid for her involvement, since it included the same kind of consultancy that she does for her job. This can be thought to be related to the fact that some are involved as a hobby while others it is related to work. She said:

“I had the problem that when they asked me to go to Finland they asked to come Finland and let’s pick your brain for two days. And I felt I probably should have paid to do that. Because some people were actually paid to do that and I would actually demand a payment but for two consulting days I worked for QH you should have come with payments for me because I do it for living. Whereas other people were very happy to come to Finland but so was I and that’s why I went to meet them. But if I wanted to do it again it’s a tough one.” (Ana)

4.3.3 Introducing extrinsic motives to passion and interest

An interesting affect on motivations was found in the discussion on how rewards had affected either participants’ own involvement or how they saw them affecting the community in general. There was no one view that could have explained how rewards were seen, but for many they could easily be a turning point in their community involvement.

On how rewards had affected the groups’ behavior in general there was a strong consensus that when the community was searching for the bloggers many who wanted to be included as the bloggers travelling around the world were involved only because of the external rewards of free flights. Ana wondered what happened, because almost all who travelled around the world had disappeared,

but she continued arguing that also other people had disappeared from the community and only those with strong interest in the topics were the ones who stayed.

Nikos said he thought people were mostly involved in the community for free trips, but explained that even when he knew he had been heavily involved in the community he was flattered when he was picked to go to workshops. He said it wasn't something he had expected or taken for granted. He argued that rewards were not going to get you the right people coming in the first place, but just people who want free trips and do not care about the community aspect. His thinking was that there were enough people in the community already without the need to dangle the carrot and that it was needed to make people feel part of the community without the need for free trips. He pointed it as the only way to get real results. Ian offered an opinion that rewards can help drive the conversation, but can also lead to a negative impact, because they might draw people who are interested in the rewards and aren't adding to the conversation. But his view on rewarding those who are active in the community was the companies should offer rewards to participants who are active in communities. His argument was that they offer valuable feedback to the brands, but mention that it needs to be done delicately so that it doesn't become community members only trying to get the rewards.

But not all shared Nikos's view of workshops being a nice extra reward to community involvement. Jens said he had a great weekend, but what's next? He said he wouldn't have the same conversations again and would need to think about it if he was chosen to another workshop. This was agreed by Ana, who said it was a tough one if she wanted to do it again. She mentioned her job being so close to what is discussed in the workshops that she might want to demand a payment for her part, since it was what she would do with real clients if her brain was picked for few days. But she understood that others might have been happy to come to Finland, as the community involvement wasn't as close to their jobs than hers was.

To get a clear picture of rewards affecting intrinsic motivations we can take a look at how they described their interactions with the community before the workshops started and during the workshops. Only one could be seen as saying they actually increased his interactions, while one was neutral about his involvement. Inka hadn't been a heavy discussor in the first place, so it made it half of the interviewees had their interactions decreased when the workshops were introduced. Part of the reason was mentioned in discussion decreasing in general, but a feeling was that the workshops had affected the community's ethos in some way.

One notion that arose from the interviews was that the openness of the community and the ideas that were shared wasn't there anymore. Both Ana and Nikos said they hadn't received any updates from what was discussed in the workshops and almost all of the discussions were not shared anymore. They both shared a view that some kind of update would have been nice. Only Ian disagreed with them. He said that in his view the workshops were discussed in blog posts after them enough, but he was lonely with his view.

The inclusion of the workshops had made Katharine less available and others shared her view of what used to be a vibrant co-creation community, was developed into a semi-secret community. Again only Ian said it had made the community more accessible. Even though his thinking differed from other, since he thought bringing people together for a shared experience and sending them back to the world would help initially drive the community. He said that you didn't really know the bloggers, but now you can meet other community members and there was more people meeting than there was bloggers anyway. But by bringing people to the workshop led to two of the interviewed to mention that they would probably not come again.

4.3.4 Motives that arise from group related activities

This section introduced motives related to community's affect on behavior. The community can be a strong influencer to consumer actions and Nikos said that the

sense of community is strong for those who are really into Quality Hunters. For Inka belonging to a community had always been important in her life, whether it was Quality Hunters or other organizations or communities. And Ana said the involvement in the community had first been based on pure interest to the topics, but changed to involve the group of people as most important to her participation.

From social relations aspect the Quality Hunters community offers a strong common ethos in making the travelling better. Social relations were mentioned as one of the reasons for participation in all interviews, only Jens wasn't as involved in discussions, but still said it was nice to notice the same passion towards their common interest in workshop. Group members referred to others by their names and the discussion about others were like the interviewees were talking about their dear friends, not only members of a community they all belonged.

The social importance of the community was expanded to include Quality Hunters' community managers who take part in the conversations. Ana said that they had a big role in the community's development and growth, as well as them knowing all the community's myths and its history. She described the community managers as:

“So if Michael from QH left it's a huge risk because he knows all the people and all the conversations and the history. And if someone takes over now like Maria started a year ago and she is very nice but I can ask a question that she has no idea what I'm talking about and it changes the whole experience.” (Ana)

Ana wasn't alone with her view of Quality Hunters initiated interactions, as all the respondents had been involved to further discussion by the community managers. This was described as a nice gesture and something that made them not forget about the community, even if they had busy schedules. In the interviews other group members were discussed in positive tone and as Ian described Quality Hunters as a very positive community, that view was shared in all the interviews and social links were seen important. Ana even was sorry that she didn't get to go

to the same workshop as some of her community friends and said she still enjoyed the weekend with others.

But Ana's comment can be viewed from the cognitive angle of social behavior. It shows that she wants the community to be able to have the discussion according to their shared meanings and that everyone knows that she wants at least the Quality Hunters' side to understand her background in the community. This was the lonely example from the discussion about how other community members' behavior was explained. While the social aspect was present in all the interviews the understanding of one another was missing.

The other group related motive was the reciprocity that occurred in the community. The openness and positive atmosphere related to strong reciprocity, where community members could participate in many ways, even by writing blog posts like Inka and Nikos had done, but still get comments and recognition from the community. Ian explains the group actions as followed:

“I would say QH is very valuable community. I mean QH is a group of people that is very dedicated to making travel the best it can be. Mostly because we do it so often. I think the group is very motivated to have good experience on airplane and in airport, so people are very forth coming and say what's on their mind and come up with good ideas. And try to make things better.” (Ian)

Reciprocity was seen as one of key aspect on co-creation processes that had included many of the interviewed in prior seasons. Those co-creation processes were discussed as lively discussion where ideas and thoughts were changed between the community members. Everyone's contribution was said to be cherished and the biggest co-creation project, the book swap, had involved many community members and it had been a long project with all planning and interviewed talked about it like talking about own child, it was dear for them.

Reciprocity was seen in interviewees' interactions with Quality Hunters' community management as they reach out to community members for their opinion. Those

attempts were normally responded to and opinions were gladly included to the bigger discussion. Interviewees told that before Quality Hunters had done a really good job in telling them where the community was heading to. But Ana offered an opinion about how they have recently lacked interactivity:

“I don’t know. To be honest I don’t know what they want to do with it because they don’t want to tell us. They should manage expectations good or bad and its not just having a twitter conversations and talking about it. I spend two days sharing great ideas, ok so what you going to do with it. They need to come back to us.” (Ana)

This meant that some of that reciprocity that before was the driver of the community was lost this season. Her view was that they had used her knowledge for free in the workshops, but hadn’t really come back to her about what was going to happen next. She was clearly frustrated about this situation, and it annoyed her. Others mentioned the same thing, but it was dusted under the carpet, as they noticed that it was partly secret what was talked in workshops. And Nikos mentioned that he could probably just ask if he wanted to get that knowledge, but they all noted that the reciprocity from the company side had decreased this year.

While both individual and group related motives are clearly present in the actions of consumer’s in Quality Hunters community, there were factors mentioned that didn’t clearly fit into motives. Those factors are presented next.

4.4 Extending motivations framework

The goal of this study was to understand motives as explainers of consumers’ participation in social media communities. But the interview data brought new aspect to this study that show that we cannot thing motives as only factors that affect consumer behavior in postmodern communities.

4.4.1 Introducing MOA-model

Motives were discussed in the above section and while they offer a wide picture of consumer behavior in postmodern communities, they still cannot explain all behavior. While intrinsic motives play a great role in postmodern tribes and are needed for this participation, social media has changed the way the interaction occurs in social places in internet that it needs to be taken into account.

The findings from the interviews brought up two additional factors leading to participation besides motives. One was related to the discussion held in the introduction on how boundaries have disappeared from communities as internet and mobile technology has been introduced to consumers. Consumers have increased opportunity to access information in social media has both allowed a greater reach for different communities, but also limited those opportunities to interact with the community as the discussion is being held in the communities regardless of time in the world. Another factor that was both enhancing and limiting participation was the ability to participate. As opportunity can be related to consumer's availability at a certain time, ability can be related to more technological aspect of participation. Even if we have access to the internet around the clock, we still need to have the ability to gain that access and use for example social media platforms to our benefits. (Strader & Hendrickson 1999)

A MOA-model (MacInnis et al. 1991) can be a beneficiary approach to categorize factors in consumer participation in social media communities. It includes the motives factor that was a strong indicator of behavior as reasoned in previous sectors. But it includes opportunities and ability to complement pure motives. While it has originally been formed to understand consumer behavior in processing brand information and ads, it can be used in determining factors in social media community participation as well.

4.4.2 Social media emphasizing opportunities

Opportunities to participate was at least as important factor influencing daily or weekly participation to Quality Hunters' community. Work, work trips, holidays and pure time management were factors influencing the opportunities in participating. A common phrase in the interviews were that joining the conversation online was seen as something that was desirable, but sometimes there just wasn't an opportunity.

Originally opportunities were defined by MacInnis et al. (1991) as how limited exposure or distractions affected consumers' attention to ads, it offers a perfect opportunity to implement it to social media behavior. As limited exposure or distractions decreased the attention to ads, in this study it will be considered to limit or distract participation to the community. Opportunity can be considered as a missed chance to interact with a consumer or a gained contact in a positive way.

What was revealed in the interviews was, that usually the participants wanted to be able to participate and not being able to, was instead pointed out to not having an opportunity.

"There are situations that I just can't participate. If I'm not invited to participate, it depends on the time and place I'm at whether I can involve myself" (Inka)

How Inka explained her opportunities to involve herself to community actions can be expanded to consider the whole groups view. Everyone had their jobs and they were living in different time zones; some of them travelled quite a lot. The opportunities to be missed were found plenty. But no every time a missed opportunity was a lost opportunity.

Whenever they tell me I'm polite and I will respond, and if I'm really interested I will give them more time, and if they ask me a really interesting question I will tell them I won't have time for them. I will

respond with private message and tell them I will want to pick it up later. (Ana)

How Ana explained that she might not want to lose the opportunity to discuss something interesting could explain how the group is passionate about travelling, and wants to use every opportunity to discuss it. Nikos told his story on how he trying to follow the conversations when he might not have the opportunity to fully focus on the social media discussion. He said he checks the notifications depending on how busy he is and might take part in the discussion while doing something else simultaneously. And if something really interesting picks up he said he will turn to laptop to write, because it offers a better writing device, while at the same time checking notifications form his phone as they turn up on the phone quicker.

Jens, who cannot be considered a heavy user of the community increased his participation when he was on a work trip as he had an opportunity to fill his boring moments in the at the airports and taxis with community actions. Same aspect was Katharine's boring Tuesdays at work, when she anticipated the conversation to start at the time she was done with the work and heading home.

4.4.3 Consumer ability influencing participation

Ability to be connected to the world has lead to consumer carrying the world with them in their smart phones. While the original model involved ability as consumers' skills or proficiencies in interpreting brand information (MacInnis et al. 1991), it has also been seen from the perspective of consumers having the opportunity to use technology, but ability determining if they can (Strader & Hendrickson 1999). In this study ability will be considered as knowledge in using both technological devices to access the community and the knowledge in using social media platforms to be able to take part in the conversations.

Like most consumers these days, all interviewed had some sort of mobile device that they used to access internet. Inka was the only one to admit that she didn't

have a smart phone, but then she has an iPad that allowed her to use social media platforms. The ability as regarded as technological ability was not as strong factor in participation as opportunities were, but there were still few examples.

As Nikos told above in the group motives section, he changed from phone to laptop if he wanted to get deeply involved in the conversation, as phone didn't offer a good device in heavy writing. Similarly he mentioned that phone was quicker to notify about the discussion happening online than computer was. While no one else brought it up in the conversations, they talked about using different devices during the day. Inka mentioned being a heavy mobile device user during work days, while using mostly laptop in the evenings.

5 DISCUSSION

This second final chapter will bring together the theory and the empirical part. The central themes and findings will be presented and the research questions answered. After this chapter conclusions with research limitations and suggestions for future research are presented. The main research question addressed postmodern community participation from a motivational perspective. The findings showed that motives alone isn't sufficient to explain participation, but a wider approach was needed. This chapter will include my suggestions regarding how Quality Hunters needs to understand how consumers behave in postmodern communities and in their community particularly. Later in the chapter suggestions for future research and limitations of this study are presented.

The research question stated to understand how motives explain participation to social media communities. The question has already been answered in previous chapter's last section, where motives were identified as only partly explainers of consumer behavior, and opportunity and ability were added to complement motives in understanding consumer's participation in social media communities. Next other research questions are answered and the main research question is discussed more thoroughly.

5.1 Passion as driving force in postmodern communities

First sub-question was how social media has affected consumer communities? This question can be answered more from postmodern consumers point of view and as was discussed in the last chapter, how postmodern consumer sees the world differently than many marketers want to believe and social media communities can be seen as a natural continuum to prior movement, which sees consumer as an equal value creator with companies (Vargo & Lusch 2004).

This thesis agrees with Kozinets et al. (2008) in how they described postmodern consumers as creative and innovative; and especially can be stressed the aspect that postmodern consumers join interactive groups. Those were adjectives that

would have defined all interviewees. Based on this study social media behavior can be seen as scattered around one's interests. The interviewed could participate to multiple group that were related to same common interest, but perhaps the group's angle to that interest changed from group to group. These groups attracted same people, but weren't competing with each other. This can be seen as difference from brand communities that are formed around interest to a brand and one could argue that rarely consumers like two competing brands to take part to both communities. This led to a conclusion that consumer tribes, communities formed around shared interests (Cova & Cova 2002) are gaining popularity and social media offers a platforms to invite consumers from different backgrounds to them.

For brands this study paints a darker picture, as consumers didn't embrace them like in good old days. Brands didn't see bringing any value for consumer if they weren't the ones that the participants used daily. The brand only as a brand wasn't a reason good enough to search for them or to follow them, they needed to be as interesting as all the rest. The interviews viewed brands in social media in very mutual was, consumers didn't actively seek for brands, but many of them waited for them to be brought to them. This was normally done by friend or someone who was followed in social media and is quite contracting view from traditional marketing communications were brands were the ones dictating the communications.

It was interesting to see how my own initial view of Quality Hunters as a brand community was changed immediately when the data collection started. It made it necessary to bring the tribal element to this study and confirmed Quality Hunters community in social media as a tribe that is formed around shared passion of making travelling a better experience. Even more I could argue that Quality Hunters shared much common features with Kozinets et al. (2008) inno-tribe as the community could be described as group of passionate people creating together elbows deep, to make travel better.

To conclude these thoughts social media offers a platforms for tribes to gather people around common interests. Brands on the other hand are losing their power

on consumers as has been discussed in recent literature. Consumers in tribes are people from all aspect of life, who can live one life in real life and take many roles in virtual tribes. In the tribe commercial aspects has been largely ignored by earlier studies, but this study can confirm Cova & Cova's (2002) argument that the presence of the market can gain the support of a tribe if it is clearly stated from the start and the only goal isn't to capitalize a tribe.

From these findings it can be suggested that companies should see tribes as a way to participate in groups of passionate consumers related to a brand. Consumers are more likely to identify with a tribe than with brands in social media, so tribe can be more beneficiary than brand community. However brands should acknowledge the limitations of market capitalization in tribes. This will call for new ways of tools to gain benefits from tribe participation.

5.2 Tribes rejecting commercialization

As noted above brining commercial ethos to a passion centered tribe can lead to all attempts to capitalize on it to this air. As was clearly seen in this study consumers reacted very differently to the presence of larger commercial ethos in a tribe, even if they could rationalize it presence.

Previously lively group was by many of the interviewed said to cooled down due to change in the group ethos. And it wasn't purely based on market capitalization, but many brand community elements were brought to a tribe. McAlexander et al. (2002) proposed that brand communities can be enhanced by events, but in this case the results were inconclusive how it affected the tribe. Events were largely embraced for their aspect of bringing consumers together and offering a reward from active community involvement. This leads to these findings on rewards affecting intrinsic motives partly supporting Deci (1971) proposed fact that some intrinsic factors are lost when extrinsic rewards are introduced.

This can be seen in how workshop involvement was debated in the interviews on their benefits and how they had changed the community's behavior. It wasn't only

the motivations that were lost, but interviewed described themselves little less available for community discussion, because the community was lacking its previous bonding elements: the lively co-creation and talk. Where the community was described as lively, innovative co-creation platform, now it lacked some of those elements. It led to previous reciprocity in the group and between its members to disappear.

Managerial implications from this can be seen as tribe offering a very limited room for market capitalization. A tribe has a strong ethos around common interest and passion, where commercial ethos doesn't belong to. This conclusion agrees with previous literature and makes a suggestion that bringing commercial ethos to the community should be done with a view of not disturbing the non-commercial ethos. In this case Quality Hunters should have continued as they were, as it had been very successful and consumers were liking it very much. Kozinets (1999) have argued that online communities cannot be used to control the information as Quality Hunters clearly did when they introduced the workshops and limited the discussion. What Kozinets proposed and what I can agree with to make an managerial implication is that Quality Hunters should have been more open with their approach and give away things from those workshops that are easy to copy anyway. It was said in the interviews that much the same things were discussed in the workshops as were during previous years, then those could have be given to the community to continue co-creation and make the community feel as they were still an important aspect of the Quality Hunters. And Quality Hunters could have kept those ideas to themselves that they thought were hard to copy and could have led to new innovations. After all Jens said it in the interview that in the aviation business he doesn't see infinite innovation potential, but a very limited one.

5.3 Understanding community participation with MOA-model

The main research question was how motives can explain consumer participation in social media communities. And like mentioned earlier in this chapter, they cannot on their own. Motives can explain large part of consumer behavior in social

media communities or tribes, but the discussion chapter discussed the limitations that were present. Interviews showed that participation to a tribe includes strong intrinsic motives as it's their passion and they have a great interest in the topics and subjects of tribes. But while they had interest in joining the conversations that was ongoing, they sometimes lacked either an opportunity or ability to take part.

Intrinsic motivations explained largely why consumers join tribes. They are based on shared experiences and passion, which can also be noted as hedonic consumption behavior. Joining tribes was done for fun and reliving their fantasies, the interviewees didn't include any extrinsic motivations to why they had joined the community, or at least they weren't there when they engaged themselves to the community. Another strong motive for community participation was seen in the group itself.

The community can be said to have strong social capital elements in it. Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998) divided social capital to three elements: relational, cognitive and structural. Structural element was strongly visible in how interviewed talked about the group. They had formed very close interpersonal relationships with each other that had led to formation of reciprocity in the group. Group's structural bond was so tight that it could become a limiting factor as new members are joining the group. There was a clear understanding among certain members on who were regarded as original Quality Hunters, even if it was used referring to their own close friends in the group.

Previous literature on social capital had seen community's biggest challenge as supply of knowledge if consumers didn't share knowledge with others (Chiu et al. 2006). But their arguments holds no truth in Quality Hunters' community as supply of knowledge can be mentioned as one of the main characters in the community. It was mentioned in the findings that group members could participate in different ways and all of them would be discussed. Social capital, at least the reciprocity can be seen as one of the main reasons for commercial ethos rejection that was discussed above. The group functioned so well and had a strong social capital that any disturbance to it led to complications in behavior towards the community.

Motives related to other than self and group were visible in daily participation, where motives like knowledge gains and informational value were noted. These motives were reasons for behavior in the group, not coming to group. Conversations in the group were followed to learn new things or others' viewpoints. Gained knowledge can be understood from the backgrounds of the participants in this thesis. Some of the interviewed worked in the industry and had professional reason for gaining knowledge. As for others the informational value was more a benefit from participation in the conversations. All interviews agreed with the knowledge sharing point that if they were contacted to take part in the discussion, they would have done it not depending on whether they knew about the topic or not.

An interesting factor in daily participation was revealed in this study. Almost all the interviews proposed that they weren't active followers of the community actions online. They might have taken a look, but weren't actively participating or looking for a way to join the conversations. This was an interesting notion since the community, or the tribe was formed around shared passion. This facts that consumers weren't active participants in these discussions rising from social media was a surprise and made the researcher think about the ethos of the community once again. But partly this was overcome by the opportunity factor that explained come of that behavior, since the conversations were forming rapidly in social media that there was no way to take part in all of them.

Another extrinsic motive that was sometimes involved was beating boring moments during interviewees' days. Whether it was being bored at work, in commute or chatting while on business travels, the group was a way to get out from those boring moments. It was to kill time, but also was mentioned discussions' ability to take one's thoughts away from the present and make them dream or relive their good or bad moments. This shows how one same moment can be a utilitarian way of dealing with nothing to do, or a way to fantasize one's dreams and goals.

But what implications from this section are made, it that a tribe has an enormous intrinsic motive involved as consumers join the tribe. They are passionate about

the tribe and they seek enjoyable experiences with the tribe. While the overall motive is based on intrinsic motives, the daily participation can range from being bored and looking for someone to take them out from there to gaining new knowledge in following the conversations. But it cannot be stressed enough that motives only explain one part of participation as social media offers rapidly evolving conversations that can be formed in the heat of the moments by consumers and more scheduled by brands, opportunities must be understood to have an effect on participation.

The other factor that must be present is ability that refers to consumer's ability to take part in the conversations. It can be regarded as devices that enable taking advantage of the opportunities, or how different devices were mentioned in being better for writing like computers compared to phones that can limit the ability to keep up with the rapid discussion.

5.4 Rewards as double-edged sword for motives

Intrinsic motives have been regarded as the deepest way to engage with a community and it can be said to be present in tribes. Quality Hunters introduced an extrinsic motive to complement the intrinsic motives that were present in inviting active community members to join them for workshop in Helsinki. That led to some interesting implications on how the original intrinsic motives changed.

Almost all participants who had joined the community and has been rewarded had disappeared and those who had joined due to interest in the group were left. But now those members had been given a reward from their loyalty to the community and it had very different implications to their participation. Together with decreasing communications in the community, the rewards had a negative impact on some of the participants and a inconclusive on others. Problematic with rewarding active members is that people in the tribe are from various walks of life, which led to some appreciating the trip to Helsinki, while for others it was so work related that they wondered if they should have been paid for it.

The general consensus among interviewed was that rewards aren't going to bring the right people to the community. They can lead to consumers who don't have real passion to the community to try only get the reward. The final conclusion here is that when forming a community around passion rewards should not be used. Community should be able to attract the right kind of people to it without the need to dangle the carrot.

5.5 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study used a qualitative research method, phenomenology in specific, to offer insight to one specific social media community. The methodology of this study has clear advantages in gaining a deep understanding of the lived experiences in this particular community, but lacks in generalization the findings to a larger audience. The interpretive approach also means that the analysis of the interviews is the researchers own interpretation and explanations of their lived experience.

The interviewees can be considered relevant for this study as they had experienced it and had long history in the group. The fact that six people cannot tell the whole group's story is present and therefore a limiting factor. It could be debated if the people selected presented a good sample of this group. The interview method, Skype calls, cannot be seen as ideal way of conducting interviews as it lacks the human element of seeing others' reaction, limiting the researcher's ability to interpret emotions. The two face-to-face interviews gave a much more complete picture of emotions and expressions on topics discussed that could be taken in the account in analyzing the interviews.

The suggestions for future research can be two-folded. One possibility would be to broaden the scope of this study and use similar studies on different sample groups. One possibility could be to include consumers in the group with less experience and compare the results on how they behavior can be explained. This would give the topic a new understanding why consumers with less experience see the community and why they take part to the community. The same study could be taken to further communities to find similarities or differences between

groups. One possibility would be to compare a tribe and a brand community on how the motives between them differ.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has attempted to understand consumers' motives in social media community participation. Previous literature had not studied community participation from motives aspect and how motives can explain behavior in social media. Also social media was regarded, as such a young phenomena that research on it have been limited.

This research illustrated that in order to understand consumer's behavior in social media and participation in social media communities, motives alone cannot explain it. Social media characteristics made it necessary to introduce motives, opportunities and ability model to explain the behavior in the communities more thoroughly. Regardless of new aspects to benefit our understanding, it can be noted that motives still played a large role in explaining behavior in social media communities.

In addition this study has agreed with previous studies on postmodern consumer that indeed brands need to understand consumers as hedonic experiences seeking individuals that do not primary seek to be attached to brands. Instead social media offers a platform for consumer tribes to be formed around shared interests. These tribes were found in this study to form lively, co-creating communities that companies can take advantage of, if soft market capitalization plans were included.

Another discovery was that if a brand involved in a tribe it should know the limitations of how much it can use it to introduce commercial elements to it. Changing the ethos of a tribe too much can lead to disappearing initial intrinsic motives and also group's reciprocity.

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