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Brand communities of Facebook: how do they create value?

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Brand Communities of Facebook: How do they Create Value?

A thesis submitted to the Graduate College of Management, Southern Cross University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Business Administration. January 2013.

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Statement of Original Authorship

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not currently been submitted for any degree and has not previously been submitted for any other degree.

I also certify that to the best of my knowledge any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used have been acknowledged.

Mahmud Hassan

January 12, 2012
Acknowledgements

“Growth is the goal of life. Power, knowledge, freedom, enjoyment, creativity – these and all other immediate ends for which we strive are contributory to the one ultimate goal which is to grow, to become.”
Eduard C. Lindeman, The Meaning of Adult Education

First and foremost, I would like to thank THE ALMIGHTY for giving us all the opportunity to breathe, to live and for the bounties that HE has bestowed upon us. Without HIS wish and will I would not be able to submit this thesis.

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Fourth, I dedicate this work to my parents who would probably be the happiest persons if I achieve this degree.

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Abstract

The increased competition in all markets coupled with the recent advances in communication and information technologies have empowered the customer. The market has become a forum in which consumers play an active role in creating and competing for value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000). The ways consumers communicate with each other has changed dramatically over the last decade including how they gather and exchange information about products (Kozinets 2009). Businesses are witnessing an explosion of internet-based messages and information transmitted through various social networking sites (SNSs from here on) (Mislove et al. 2007).

The social interactions with online context have served to develop brand communities, which are consumer’s aggregations that occurred in the internet because of their interest in some brand or product (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001). Although there are a great deal of interest on consumption behaviors with SNSs like Facebook but the shared consumption practices which reveals the process of collective value creation has not been properly explored within this context before. Moreover Marandi et al. (2010) indicate that Facebook users have from the beginning not only co-created value with the service provider, but also defined value in new ways. Hence, it appears likely that new value creating behaviors are apparent within Facebook brand communities which is worthy of further investigation.
Moreover, it is suggested that a more systematic process of brand community selection would deepen our understanding of value creation in this context (Schau, Muniz and Arnold 2009). To this end a useful starting point are the established theories of strategic brand management, for example, involvement and product positioning (Batra and Ahtola 1991; Keller 2007). This will allow the researchers to isolate the effects of this construct.

An exploratory research technique is utilized for the study. A netnographic approach (Kozinets 2002, 2009) guided the data collection. Facebook is chosen as the online forum because of its vast popularity and multicultural aspect. Automobile and soft drink are selected as a context because of frequent use and rich consumer attachments. Both deductive and inductive analysis is carried out to identify existing behaviors and explore new behaviors within these sites.

This study identified twenty one distinct value creating behaviors practiced within Facebook’s brand communities. Considerable differences between high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands are identified within most of these value creating behaviors. Furthermore, this study identified six new value creating behaviors that were not explored within the context of consumer behavior and SNSs before. These new behaviors are defending the brand, reassurance, volunteering time, amplification of company events, missing behavior and daydreaming.

**Keywords:** Value creating behaviors, Virtual community, Social networking sites, Facebook, customer to customer interaction, netnography, product involvement, hedonic and utilitarian product.
# Table of Contents

**Preliminaries**

Statement of Original Authorship .............................................................................................. ii

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................... iii

Abstract ..................................................................................................................................... iv

Table of Contents ...................................................................................................................... vi

List of tables ............................................................................................................................. xii

List of figures .......................................................................................................................... xiv

Chapter 1 ................................................................................................................................... 15

Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 15

1.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 16

1.2 Background of the study ................................................................................................. 16

1.3 Conceptual underpinning of the study ............................................................................ 17

1.3.1 Value creation .......................................................................................................... 17

1.3.2 Brand community and virtual community .............................................................. 18

1.3.3 Facebook- The number 1 social networking site ...................................................... 18

1.3.4 Product involvement ................................................................................................. 19

1.3.5: Product (Brand) positioning based on utilitarian and hedonic benefits ............... 20

1.4 Statement of the problem ................................................................................................ 20

1.5 Methodology ................................................................................................................... 21

1.6 Outline of the Thesis ....................................................................................................... 22

1.7 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 23

Chapter 2 ................................................................................................................................... 24
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Brand community</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 The virtual brand community</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Types of virtual communities</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Virtual communities as “social networking sites”</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Facebook</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Value creation</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 Customer citizenship behavior</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 Value creating Practice</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3 List of VCB</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Product Involvement</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1 Product involvement and brand community</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Product positioning based on hedonic and utilitarian product attributes</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.1 Utilitarian attributes</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.2 Hedonic attributes</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Expectations and propositions of the data set</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.1 Voice</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.2 Helping behavior</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.3 WOM</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.4 Display behavior</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.5 Forgiving behavior</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.6 Feedback</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.7 Competitive information</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.6 Feedback</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.7 Competitive information</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.8 Welcoming</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.9 Empathizing</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.10 Governing</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.11 Justifying</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.12 Staking</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.13 Milestoning</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.14 Grooming</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.15 Customizing</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3: Findings for research question 2</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 Defending the brand</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2. Reassurance</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3 Volunteering time</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.5 Missing behavior</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.6 Daydreaming</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 5 ................................................................................................................................. 211

Conclusion & Implications ..................................................................................................... 211

5.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 212
5.2 Summary of the previous chapters ................................................................................ 212
5.3 Discussions about each Research questions .................................................................. 213
5.3.1 Discussions for Research questions 1 ................................................................. 214
5.3.2: Discussions for Research question 2 ................................................................. 233
5.4 Contribution of the research .................................................................................... 241
## List of tables

Table 1 ................................................................................................................................................... 35
Table 2 ................................................................................................................................................... 39
Table 3 ................................................................................................................................................... 44
Table 4 ................................................................................................................................................... 49
Table 5 ................................................................................................................................................... 82
Table 6 ................................................................................................................................................... 96
Table 7 ................................................................................................................................................... 107
Table 8 ................................................................................................................................................... 108
Table 9 ................................................................................................................................................... 121
Table 10 ............................................................................................................................................... 126
Table 11 ............................................................................................................................................... 132
Table 12 ............................................................................................................................................... 136
Table 13 ............................................................................................................................................... 144
Table 14 ............................................................................................................................................... 148
Table 15 ............................................................................................................................................... 151
Table 16 ............................................................................................................................................... 155
Table 17 ............................................................................................................................................... 158
Table 18 ............................................................................................................................................... 161
Table 19 ............................................................................................................................................... 164
Table 20 ............................................................................................................................................... 165
Table 21 ............................................................................................................................................... 169
Table 22 ............................................................................................................................................... 172
Table 23 ............................................................................................................................................... 175
Table 24 ............................................................................................................................................... 179
| Table 25 | ......................................................................................................................... 187 |
| Table 26 | ......................................................................................................................... 191 |
| Table 27 | ......................................................................................................................... 194 |
| Table 28 | ......................................................................................................................... 199 |
| Table 29 | ......................................................................................................................... 203 |
| Table 30 | ......................................................................................................................... 207 |
List of figures

Figure 1 Figure 3.1: The brands undertaken for this study........................................................... 94
Chapter 1

Introduction
1.1 Introduction

The purpose of the current study is to examine value creating behaviors in Facebook brand communities across different involvement levels and product positioning criteria. This chapter introduces the justification for this research and the key issues in its implementation. First, the background of the study is introduced which signifies the importance of studying online communities to identify its members’ value creating behaviors. The next section introduces the concepts relevant to this study and provides a brief summary of value creation, virtual communities, social networking sites, product involvement and product positioning. Then research problems for the present study are introduced where the research gaps are identified and the specific research questions are laid out. The subsequent discussion entails a brief review of the methodology undertaken for this study. Finally the outline of the thesis and the conclusion to this chapter is outlined.

1.2 Background of the study

Significant changes in both marketing thought and the marketplace suggest that simply being customer oriented is not enough; firms must learn from and collaborate with customers to create values that meet their individual and dynamic needs (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000). Research across disparate streams of management literature—from new product development, to services-dominant logic, to consumer culture theory—leads to the view that customers can co-create value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004), co-create competitive strategy (Prugl and Schreier 2006) and collaborate in the firm’s innovation process (von Hippel 2005). In this regards, Wikstrom (1996) indicates, “the customer is no longer regarded as a passive receiver but is coming to be seen as an active and knowledgeable participant in a common process. This is why the company’s activities are focusing increasingly on support for the customers' own production, i.e. on their specific value-creating role.” (pp. 360).

Internet has become one of the most important communication channels in the world in recent years due to the vast increase of people with ready access to it (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu 2008). Rapid changes in information technology enabled consumer-to-consumer interactions
to integrate in our daily life more actively (Kozinets 2009). The social interactions in the online context have served to build and develop virtual communities (Andersen 2005), which are consumers aggregations that occurred in the internet because of their interest in some brand or product (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001). These communities encourage interaction within its members and can affect their behaviors in multiple ways (Kozinets 2002) and virtual communities is a growing phenomenon within social networking sites (SNSs from here on) (Ellison et al. 2011). Moreover recent studies (e.g. Marandi et al. 2010; Pagani, Goldsmith and Hofacker 2011) suggest that the virtual communities within SNSs and its contents through customer-to-customer interactions create value to its brands. Schau, Muniz and Arnould (2009) provide a detailed initial exploration into value creation in online communities and identified 12 practices, which they observed across a number of sites. The present study looks to build on this by taking a more nuanced view of a number of key factors and controls for SNSs (product involvement and product/brand positioning).

1.3 Conceptual underpinning of the study

1.3.1 Value creation

Increased competition in all markets coupled with the recent advances in communication and information technologies have empowered the customer. The traditionally passive role of the customer in market transactions has shifted towards a more active stance because of information availability, globalization and ability to network and the desire to experiment (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). Marketing communication has evolved into a two-way interaction between companies and consumers, where both parties influence brand building (Peters 1998). One key aspect of the customer’s ability to create value is the amount of information, knowledge, skills and other operant resources that they can access and use today (Normann 2001). In this regards Rowley, Kupiec-Teahan and Leeming (2007) further adds that today’s consumers are engaged in more value creating behaviors (VCBs from here on); as these consumers express their own views and opinions about personal consumption experiences, creating information that can benefit others.
1.3.2 Brand community and virtual community

A different form of consumption has begun to emerge as individual transactions are increasingly being augmented by community-based experiences (Mathwick, Wiertz and Ruyter 2008). Cova (1997) characterizes this as a fundamental shift from consumption oriented around the use value of products or services to consumption motivated by the desire to reinforce consumer-to-consumer bonds that deliver what he refers to as “linking value.” This sort of brand community participation strengthens customer relationships with the brand, other customers and enhances customer loyalty (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006).

Recently, it has become apparent that consumers are using the internet to communicate with each other (Goldsmith and Horowitz 2006). According to Andersen (2005) internet provides the infrastructure for enhancing social interaction and cyberspace has become a new kind of social terrain, crowded with virtual communities.

1.3.3 Facebook- The number 1 social networking site

SNSs are among major developments in the web of the twenty-first Century (Park et al. 2009). SNSs have altered human behavior on the web, resulting in reduced personal inhibitions of sharing information online (Ray 2007). Scholars from diverse fields have begun to analyze SNSs so as to understand the practices, implications, culture, and meaning of the sites, as well as users’ engagement with them (Ellison 2007; Marandi et al. 2010). Market researchers have agreed that SNSs are radically changing the marketing landscape and will continue to be a critical driver of successful marketing communication (Madden 2010). In 2010, the volume of goods sold through SNSs reached $5 billion, and this number is expected to rise six fold by 2015 (Anderson, Sims, Price and Brusa 2010) – indicating marketer’s renewed interest within these SNSs.

Facebook, which exploded onto the cyber scene in early 2004, has since become the leading online SNS with more than 1 billion registered users worldwide (Facebook 2012). Facebook
also have a large number of brand community sites managed by the companies since it allowed companies to register personal or corporate account (Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas 2009). The power of online communities in Facebook is that they, unlike the topically organized web in general are organized around users (Mislove et al. 2007) making it possible to exploit the interconnectedness of the members in reaching large users with relatively low costs. Many of these Facebook brand communities (FBCs from here on) have millions of members who interact on a daily basis and share brand and personal experience through these sites. Upon identifying such enormous potential of Facebook as a marketing tool 72% of companies in 2011 reported that they plan to increase their efforts on Facebook (Stelzner 2012). Moreover, new VCBs are also apparent within FBCs. In this regards various studies (e.g. Marandi et al. 2010; Pagani et al. 2011) contend that the members of these sites not only created value with the marketer, they have also defined value in new ways. Given the tremendous growth in this medium, and its member’s practices, this study seeks to identify the VCBs that are performed by the members of FBCs. As indicated a number of controls are also put in place. The following lends some precision to these.

### 1.3.4 Product involvement

Product involvement is important to understanding consumer attitudes and behavior because involvement is a central motivation factor that shapes the pre-purchase decision making process (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard 1993) and post-purchase consumption behavior (Ouwersloot and Schroder 2008). Product involvement is positively associated with awareness or knowledge of product attributes, perceptions of product importance, brand preferences, and consumer risk perceptions (Howard and Sheth 1969; Antil 1984; Zaichkowsky 1985). As Thorne and Bruner (2006) suggest, consumers of high involvement products “focus their time, energy, and resources intently on a specific area of interest” (pp. 53). Further, there is pleasure in using the product, as well as in ancillary activities such as product-related search or discussions (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). On the other hand low involved products are usually low priced; frequently purchased items where consumers pay little or no conscious attention to the information environment during the purchase (Elliot and Percy 2007).
There is inconsistency in the literature concerning brand community practices among high and low involved products (c.f. McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002, Cova and Pace 2006; Schau et al. 2009). For example, McAlexander et al. (2002) indicate that traditionally, only high involved products operating in niche markets (i.e. Mercedes, Harley Davidson, etc.) had a noticeable brand community. On the other hand, recent research (Cova and Pace 2006; Schau et al. 2009) indicate that brand community management might be an option for brands offering convenience products such as soap, tools, toys or soft drinks. The present study investigates whether differences within VCBs exist between FBCs based on high vs. low involvement products.

1.3.5: Product (Brand) positioning based on utilitarian and hedonic benefits

Consumers take decisions based on utilitarian and hedonic criteria attached to a product (Wallendrouf and Arnould 1988; Zhu et al. 2009) and brands position themselves accordingly (Hartmann, Ibanez and Sainz 2005). Utilitarian goods mostly offer functional, instrumental, and practical benefits to its consumers and hedonic goods offer aesthetic, experiential, and enjoyment-related benefits (Batra and Ahtola 1991; Wertenbroch and Dhar 2000; Chitturi, Raghunathan and Mahajan 2007). This indicates that hedonically motivated consumers are heavily influenced by emotions and not solely by reason (Pawle and Cooper 2006). By contrast, those motivated by utilitarian benefits seek products which fulfill necessary functions (Hirshman and Holbrook 1982) and more logical and rational features related to transactions (Batra and Ahtola 1991). In this regards, Babin, Darden and Griffin (1994) further postulate that consumers who purchase a utilitarian brand behave carefully and are efficiently oriented to the problem solving- indicating differences with their pre and post purchase consumption behavior. In light of these differences, the present study seeks to explore VCBs in FBCs based around hedonic and utilitarian positioned products (brands).

1.4 Statement of the problem

Today’s firms identifies the importance of engaging customers in such a way that they can create a long lasting bond with its brands, and one such way is to keep them connected is
through virtual communities (Andersen 2005). The virtual communities within SNSs enable organizations to establish distributed innovation models that involve varied customer roles including learning and knowledge creation through information exchange and new product development (Hall and Graham 2004; Pitta and Fowler 2006). The consumption practices that lead to value creation have only begun to be identified (see Schau et al. 2009; Yen, Hsu and Huang 2011; Pagani et al. 2011); this research seeks to add these studies by examining VCBs within parameters previously highlighted as important to consumption behavior.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify and explore the VCB of FBC members across a range of factors identified as established principles of strategic brand management. The framework for analysis is represented by a two (involvement: high and low) by two (product/brand positioning: utilitarian and hedonic) matrix. The following research questions guide this thesis.

RQ 1: Do brand community value creating behaviors differ according to product involvement and a brand’s utilitarian vs. hedonic positioning in Facebook communities?

RQ 2: Does the extant literature accommodate all forms of value creating behaviors within the brand communities of Facebook?

1.5 Methodology

A netnographic approach (Kozinets 2001, 2002, 2009) guided the data collection. This is a naturalistic inquiry, which captures individuals and groups in their natural settings, conducting their everyday life practices (Kozinets 2009). Netnography is chosen as it ‘allows the researcher to gain access to consumer discussions by observing and/or participating in communications on publicly available online forums’ (Nelson and Otnes 2005, pp. 90).

Facebook is chosen as the online forum to gather the data’s because of its vast popularity and multicultural aspect. Automobiles and soft drinks are chosen to represent the high and low involved product category respectively. These product categories have a great relevance for marketers, and have a rich history of consumer satisfaction; attachments and they also pose
certain image to their respective consumers. A total of eight brands are chosen from two different categories, i. on the basis of involvement (high and low involved category) and ii. on the basis of product positioning (utilitarian and hedonic category). The data for this study include naturalistic observation of community activities, and netnographic research within forums centered on brands. These brand community sites are closely followed for 2 years by reading the posts and watching the pictures and video’s posted within these online communities. This helped to apprehend the market-oriented behaviors and language of the online community.

This study observed forums for all the brands included and downloaded hundreds of thousands of messages, graphics (For example a picture along with the favorite brand) and visuals (for example a video) posted by brand users. Both deductive and inductive analysis is carried out to identify existing behaviors and also to explore new behaviors within these sites.

### 1.6 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis follows the standard structure as developed by Perry (1998).

**Chapter 1** provides the background of the study followed by the conceptual underpinning of this research. It also highlights the research problem and the research questions along with the brief methodology of this study.

**Chapter 2** reviews the existing literature on the parent disciplines of value creation and brand community and SNSs, along with the immediate discipline of Facebook, product involvement and product (brand) positioning.

**Chapter 3** of this thesis describes the methodology and procedures used to conduct the research. It starts with the discussion on the research paradigm and justifies the selected method and techniques. It also includes information about the data collection, data analysis and the ethical issues pertaining to the internet related data collection matter.
Chapter 4 reports the findings of this research and details out the analysis of the collected data.

Chapter 5 discusses the research findings and draws conclusions on the research questions. It also indicates both the academic and managerial contributions to this study and specifies the future research ideas.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the study. It can be seen that the research questions have considerable practical value to the brand managers for the virtual communities who want to engage their customers in a way to increase the value to the brand.

The identification of VCBs in brand communities has only just begun to draw attention from researchers and the context of Facebook has received no attention at all. Moreover, no research has ever endeavored to identify the differences between the VCBs of high and low involved product and also utilitarian and hedonic positioned brand’s communities. This study thus is designed to identify and explore the VCBs within the FBCs, and to identify the differences if any, between high and low involved product and also utilitarian and hedonic brands.

The next chapter presents a literature review which provides the basis for the formulation of the research questions.
Chapter 2
Literature Review
2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the theory of value creation is explored in relation to brand communities of Facebook. First, the notions of brand community, SNSs and Facebook are introduced. Consumer practices that create value both in offline and online contexts are then discussed. Two streams of literatures are introduced here; customer citizenship behavior and value creating practices and a list of value creating behaviors are generated later. Finally, the parameters of product involvement (high and low) and product positioning (utilitarian and hedonic) are discussed in light of these activities leading to expectations for the subsequent netnographic analysis.

2.2 Brand community

Today’s consumers are actively producing modern culture through consumption (Firat and Venkatesh 1993) and especially through brand consumption (Shembri 2009). This shared consciousness surrounding brand consumption is a recognized foundation of a brand community (Cova and Pace 2006) which is an essential position in the brand’s heritage (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001). These brand communities include a state of resonance, which is the highest level of connectedness a brand can achieve with its customers Keller (2001). In this state customers show ultimate form of loyalty, highly interactive and feel connected (Schouten and McAlexandar 1995). That in turn makes the customer experience a strong brand relationship - which leads to recommendations, emotional attachment and a feeling of being part of the brand (McAlexandar et al. 2002).

Recently, marketers have become more interested in learning about, organizing, and facilitating brand communities which are “based on a structured set of relationships among admirers of a brand” (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001, pp. 412). This is because through these brand communities marketers can identify the needs of its consumers (Kozinets 2002), help disseminate information (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003); recommend the brand (Schau, Muniz and Arnould 2009), help in new product development (Pitta and Fowler 2006), create
ongoing relationship with its consumers (Andersen 2005), make these consumers feel being part of the brand (McAlexandar et al. 2002) and helps to collaborate with highly loyal consumer base (Schouten and McAlexandar 1995; Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann 2005).

As a result, more and more customer centric companies are developing brand communities to understand shared practice among its consumers and to understand how the consumers can co-create value, so that they can build better brand partners and create stronger image of their brand. In this regards, Payne, Storbacka and Frow (2008) indicate that brand identity is co-created with consumers and other stakeholders and this element of co-creation is especially apparent in consumer groups such as brand communities. Members of brand communities are considered as an especially valuable source of innovation because they are passionate about the brand and experienced with its products (McWilliam 2000; McAlexander et al. 2002; Sawhney, Verona and Prandelli 2005) and because they support each other in solving problems and in generating new product ideas (Herstatt and Sander 2004). Moreover, Nambisan (2002) points out that in general, members of brand communities are considered a desirable means for adding value along the firm’s entire innovation process and for contributing to various innovation activities—from identifying needs, generating ideas, and modifying concepts, to developing prototypes and testing products; and taking on different roles—all adding value to the brand.

2.2.1 The virtual brand community

The virtual community represents one of the most interesting developments of the net (Kozinets 1999; Balasubramanian and Mahajan 2001). In this regards, Farquhar and Rowley (2006) indicate the tools for computer-mediated communication have permitted the construction of low-cost, online virtual community infrastructures with a global reach. These social interactions in the online context have served to build and develop virtual communities (Andersen 2005), which are consumers’ aggregations that occurred in the internet because of their interest in some brand or product. In this regards, Porter (2004) indicated that more than 84 percent of internet users have contacted or participated in an online community, and this
growth in membership is expected to continue- which indicates consumers’ renewed interest to participate within these virtual communities.

This growing internet usage is motivating some changes in the consumer purchasing process (Casalo et al. 2008). Consumers are increasingly turning to computer-mediated communication in order to get information on which to base their decisions (Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels 2009). Moreover virtual communities can affect their members’ behavior (Schau et al. 2009) since individuals and organizations can use these communities to inform and influence fellow consumers about products and brands (Kozinets 2009). Moreover, Koh and Kim (2004) suggests, active participation in virtual communities may favor higher levels of individuals’ loyalty to the brand around which the community is developed. This indicates that the participation in these activities may promote the members’ identification with the community and consequently, the value of the community could be increased.

Furthermore, Porter and Donthu (2008) point out that the virtual community is an environment where the community members and visitors through individual and collaborative effort, create and co-create value for themselves, other members and/or organizations. In this regards, (Prügl and Schreier 2006) further contend that in many cases, online communities can be sources of innovation and these communities enable consumers to learn from (and teach) other consumer-creators and help form collective knowledge and memory systems that transcend the information and skills of any single individual (Jeppesen and Molin 2003). This clearly indicates that VCBs are apparent in these online communities; however previous research failed to identify the VCBs performed in these communities. Some sporadic work (e.g. Schau et al. 2009; Brodie, Ilic, Juric and Hollebeek 2011; Yen, Hsu and Huang 2011) identifies the behaviors that create value in virtual community context, although a detailed study is in need where concepts of VCBs for both online and offline world are incorporated to identify an exhaustive list of VCBs in the virtual brand communities.
2.2.2 Types of virtual communities

Online virtual communities have existed on the internet for almost a quarter of a century (Ridings and Gefen 2006). Typical computer-mediated community interaction includes news and information sharing in the form of posting or viewing opinions, problem solving (e.g., questions and information sharing) and routine communication (e.g., chat) (Koh, Kim, Butler and Bock 2007). Various studies have undertaken different approaches to classify virtual communities based on various criteria’s. Although it is not the intention of this study to find an exhaustive list of the types of virtual communities found in extant literature; however two of the most prominent one’s are discussed here.

a. Hagel and Armstrong’s classification based on consumer needs that they satisfy:

According to Hagel and Armstrong (1997) early virtual communities were started by enthusiasts who had certain interests and were the results of spontaneous social events. They pointed out four types of virtual communities based on the consumer needs that they satisfy:

(i) Interests: The interest need is targeted in the virtual community by aggregating a dispersed group of people who share an interest and expertise in a specific topic. For example for theatre related information and enthusiast (www.teatrevirtualmercatflors.net).

(ii) Relationship building: Some virtual communities specially satisfy the relationship need and give people with similar experiences the opportunity to come together and form meaningful personal relationships. For example: to encourage relationship among youth (www.youthnet.org).

(iii) Fantasies: Some virtual communities satisfy the fantasy need and provide an opportunity for people to come together and explore new worlds of fantasy and entertainment (www.secondlife.com)
(iv) **Transactions:** The transaction need is met online through the trading of information between participants. They sub-divide transactions based virtual communities into consumer-focused or business-to-business focused communities. Consumer-focused virtual publics can be subcategorized as geographic, demographic or topical. Business-to-business virtual publics can be sub-categorized as vertical industry publics (e.g. software developer users group), utilitarian publics (e.g. marketers), geographic publics (e.g. local business association), or business type virtual publics (e.g. small businesses). While Hagel and Armstrong’s approach is useful, their taxonomy is not exclusive with some virtual publics fitting into a number of categories simultaneously.

a. **Kozinets’ classification on virtual communities:**

One of the most detailed and sophisticated types of online communities are provided by Kozinets (2010). He categorized four different types of online communities.

i. **Cruising communities:** These communities are known for its weaker social relationships and the low centrality of any particular kind of consumption activity. Particular virtual worlds, chat-rooms, and certain gamespaces would fit into this cruising classification. They would satisfy the ‘relational’ and ‘recreational’ needs that draw people to online communities.

ii. **Bonding communities:** These online locations are known to have and create a very strong social tie between members, resulting in long-lasting relationships, but the members are not particularly focused on shared or unifying consumption behavior. Social networking sites, many virtual worlds and particular places in virtual worlds, as well as a number of forums would fit into this category. Bonding online communities would primarily fulfil their member’s relational needs.

iii. **Geeking community:** The reason for participation in these communities is to share information, news, stories and techniques about a particular activity- again it can be consumption or production or even presumption. Many newsgroups, website forums, social
content sites and services and blogs would be Geeking communities, offering their members and readers deeply detailed information about a particular set of activities, but not deeply engaging most of them in meaningful social relationships. The modes of interaction on these communities are predominantly informational.

**iv. Building communities:** These communities offer both a strong sense of community as well as detailed information and intelligence about a central, unified interest and activity. Although blogs, wikis, SNS interest groups and other forms of online gatherings could certainly be building communities these online communities can grow from website forums, devoted websites, and virtual worlds. The mode of interaction in these communities can be informational as well as relational. These categories mingle and for many participants become recreational and even for some transformational.

### 2.3 Virtual communities as “social networking sites”

Over the past few years, internet SNS has exploded in popularity as a means for people to post profiles of themselves and communicate with one another (Levy 2007). SNSs have become integrated into the milieu of modern-day social interactions and are widely used as a primary medium for communication and networking (Ellison 2007; Valkenburg and Peter 2009). The rapid rise of SNSs among various consumer groups is driven by the ways in which these tools provide the consumers with a powerful space for socializing, learning and participating in public life (Boyd 2006; Palfrey and Gasser 2010). In this regards (Ellison, Steinfeld and Lampe 2009) indicate that SNSs features are summarized as that, which allows individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks and establish or maintain connections with others.

The SNSs also provide a unique platform for the brands to keep an ongoing relationship with their fans through these sites. Many of these SNSs have millions of members and an official presence in these SNSs provides a good opportunity to have strong relationship with it members, to promote the product, create awareness about new offerings (Trusov et al. 2009).
For this reasons most of the major brands already have a fan page especially in Facebook and Twitter because of their popularity as a SNS. The power of these SNSs is that they, unlike the topically organized web in general, are organized around users (Mislove et al. 2007) - thus making it possible to utilize the interconnectedness of the users in reaching large audiences with relatively low costs (Trusov et al. 2009). In this regards, Wesson (2010) indicate that social commerce is going to be the next large and disruptive phenomenon in business by redefining the customer relationship and companies are increasingly using or planning to use SNSs for commerce related activities in the near future. The following list provided by Gillian (2007) indicates the marketer’s increased interest in social media:

I. Declining response rates: consumers increasingly ignore conventional online marketing such as banner and e-mail advertisements due to disinterest in spam,

II. Technology developments: The developing IT infrastructure, new tools and an increasing online population contribute to social media attractiveness.

III. Demographic shifts: people, especially young individuals, have moved online and the use of traditional media channels has declined.

IV. Customer preference: Trust is important on the internet and people trust their friends and other internet users more than companies. In 2003 22% people said they trust other people “like themselves” and in 2006 the percentage had grown to 68%.

V. Low cost: A good viral campaign can produce way more engaged customers than a television campaign at a fraction of the cost.

2.3.1 Facebook

Global communication culture is changing fast, rather than calling somebody by phone, many people today prefer using Facebook to leave a message/comment on the receiver’s profile wall (Gonzales and Hancock 2011). Facebook, which exploded onto the cyberscene in early 2004, has since become the leading SNS. Just six years after Harvard undergraduate Mark Zuckerberg helped found Facebook in his dorm room as a way for Ivy League students to
keep tabs on one another, the company has joined the ranks of the Web's great superpowers (Ellison, Steinfeld and Lampe 2007). Facebook has more than 1 billion active users; 50% of whom log on to Facebook in any given day and spend more than 700 billion minutes per month on the site (Facebook 2012). The typical user spends about 20 minutes a day and two-thirds of users log in at least once a day (Boyd and Ellison 2007). Facebook makes us smile, shudder, squeeze into photographs so we can see ourselves online later, fret when no one responds to our witty remarks, snicker over who got fat after high school, pause during weddings to update our relationship status to married or codify a breakup by setting our status back to single. Today’s individuals are comfortable living so much of their life on Facebook represents a tremendous cultural shift, particularly since 28% of the site's users are older than 34, Facebook's fastest-growing demographic (Wise, Alhabash and Park 2010).

Facebook has opened its registration process to organizations in April 2006, and more than 4000 organizations joined within 2 weeks (Waters et al. 2009). Since then all the major brands have started using the site to help launch products and strengthen their brand relationships with its consumers by establishing communities using Facebook pages. The brand communities on Facebook are a particularly popular and useful module that allows discussion forums and threads based on common interests and activities (Gordon and Stephens 2007). Well-known brands, such as Coke, Nutella, and Pringles attract millions of fans to their Facebook Pages, there are also more esoteric brands, such as Marshmallow Peeps and Bacon Salt that are leveraging their Facebook Pages to drive engagement with customers and build interest in their products (Dunay and Kroeger 2011). Coke has a number of communities on Facebook with some attracting millions of fans. As of 15\textsuperscript{th} September 2011, the Coca-Cola’s company owned fan page has close to 34 million members (www.facebook.com/cocacola).

Brands are increasingly getting engaged in a discourse with customers and in particular listen to their views through Facebook. Recently, Cadbury did just that when 93 Facebook groups, with upwards of 14,000 members between them, petitioned for Wispa (a bar discontinued in 2003) to be re-launched (Poynter 2007). Cadbury listened to their views and successfully re-launched the product in late 2007. This shows that brands are taking advantage of this new
situation to create value through Facebook which as seen through Cadbury - hence indicating that new VCB’s are practiced within FBCs.

A variety of new marketing practices are also prevalent in FBCs. Facebook recently introduced a campaign called as social ad, allowing the advertisers to come up with creative and more eye catching ads to be advertised. Various advertisers including Blockbuster, entered into partnerships with Facebook which allows the users to display their rented or purchased items on these ads, thereby implicitly recommending the products to other (Sankaranarayan 2011). Interestingly, these advertisements were received by users from their friends, who they trust- thus creating value to the brand. Such potential has resulted in great interest in social media and especially in Facebook as a marketing tool, with 72% of companies in 2011 reporting that they plan to increase their efforts on Facebook (Stelzner 2012).

Researchers are also emphasizing to use Facebook as a source of data collection. In this regards, Ellison, Steinfeld and Lampe (2007) indicates that for researchers, Facebook constitutes a rich site for those interested in studying the phenomena of social networks due to its heavy usage patterns and technological capacities that bridge online and offline connections. Moreover Casteleyn, Mottart and Rutten (2009) suggest that not only the data retrieved from focus groups discussing their Facebook actions could be dealt with accordingly but also some of the statements that Facebook users post on their group’s wall could prove to be interesting.

Academic interest concerning SNS and Facebook is on the rise (Boyd and Ellison 2010) and most of the major brands have communities on Facebook (Waters et al. 2009), many with millions of members. However, previous studies have not sought to identify VCBs within Facebook. Moreover, most of the previous work in the context of VCBs has been on niche sites (e.g. Wasko and Faraz 2000; Schau et al. 2009; Brodie et al. 2011; Yen et al. 2011) exhibiting much less traffic and member activity. New VCB’s are likely to be practiced in the brand communities of Facebook but they have remained largely unexplored until now.
The purpose of this study is to identify and explore the VCBs of brand community members within SNSs. In line with the objective, the concept of SNS and Facebook has been discussed in detail. Now the important concept of value creation will be introduced along with its implications to this study.

2.4 Value creation

Understanding sources of organization performance and their implications for organizational action is a well-established line of research in organization theory and strategic management (Rumelt, Schendel and Teece 1994; Thompson 1967) and value creation is an important aspect of organizational performance (Porter 1985). In line with this thought, Lin and Lin (2006) points out, value creation is considered to be the key to collaborative supplier–employee–customer relationships and customer-oriented management serves as a base for value creation.

In the traditional conception of process of value creation, consumers were “outside the firm” and value creation occurred inside the firm (through its activities) and outside markets (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). The recent advances through information technologies have empowered the customer and they have learned how to use these new tools to make their opinions and ideas heard, and involve themselves in the value creation process (Rowley et al. 2007). In this regard, Woodruff and Flint (2006) suggest that, customers have an obligation to assess the needs of the firm and to assess resources to deliver these needs as part of the value creation. According to a service-dominant view of marketing, “value can only be created with and determined by the user” (Lusch and Vargo 2006, p. 284); thus, the customer is always a co-creator of value. More than that, they can express their own views and opinions about personal consumption experiences, creating lasting online information that can benefit other consumers (Rowley et al. 2007) - thus adding value to them and to the brand. A list of some
previous work and the dimensions of VCBs identified in the context of online communities are shown in table 2.1.

**Table 1**

**Table 2.1 Previous studies in online communities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yen et al. (2011)</td>
<td>Recommendations, helping behavior and feedback.</td>
<td>Quantitative study with 469 members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chan and Li (2010)</td>
<td>Information sharing (Helping behavior) social and hedonic support (empathizing).</td>
<td>Exploratory netnographic survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chu (2009)</td>
<td>Information sharing and knowledge contribution (Helping behavior).</td>
<td>Quantitative study on nine online communities on 425 participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schau et al. (2009)</td>
<td>Welcoming, empathizing, governing, evangelizing, justifying, staking, milestoneing, badging,</td>
<td>Qualitative, in-depth interview and netnographic data collection, content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>documenting, grooming. Customizing, Commoditizing.</td>
<td>analysis was undertaken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodon, Cataldo and Christiaanse</td>
<td>Information sharing and knowledge contribution (Helping behavior).</td>
<td>Quantitative study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiertz, Ruyter and Streukens</td>
<td>Helping behavior, civic virtue and sportsmanship.</td>
<td>Quantitative analysis on healthcare professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2003)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasko and Faraz (2000)</td>
<td>Altruistic behavior, knowledge sharing and helping behavior.</td>
<td>Qualitative study; open ended responses and content analysis were conducted on three online forums.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The constructs of these studies match two different streams of literature. The first line of study is: customer voluntary performance (Bettencourt 1997), customer citizenship behavior (Groth 2005, Bove, Pervan, Beatty and Shiu 2009) and customer helping behavior (Johnson and Rapp 2010). All these three studies however, generated similar constructs and quite often overlapped between one another. Hence this stream of literature was reviewed together as customer citizenship behavior (CCB from here on).

The second line of study is specific to virtual communities (Schau et al. 2009; Hottinen 2010; Korkman, Storbacka and Herald 2010). The value creating practices (VCP from here on) typology suggested by Schau et al. (2009) is the most detailed and forms an important path of theoretical development in the area.

Both these streams of literatures CCB and VCP’s will be discussed in the following sections. This discussion will help us identity the constructs for this study. After detailing both the concepts the expectations of the data sets will be generated.

2.4.1 Customer citizenship behavior

CCB represents activity beneficial to the firm, which is performed by the customer and which is over above that expected of them in a typical exchange. The idea seems too good to be true yet firms appear to be achieving this in certain spheres. For example, Walkers Crisps ran a campaign in 2010 in the UK with their flavor cup competition in which customer suggested flavors that were actually produced and marketed in stores (The Independent 2011). This idea of “crowd sourcing” for new product ideas has been happening for some time now, however, with the development in SNSs, customer-firm interface possibilities have broadened significantly. For example, Skittles uses Facebook, in its highly successful “mob the rainbow” campaign, to ask consumers to vote for activities of worth to the community. Using skittles product, consumers are then helped by the brand to affect that behavior in the real world (Peppetta 2011). Further in 2010 Target used their Facebook site to lend precision to their customer social responsibility (CSR) campaign by donating one million dollars to a charity chosen by a majority of Facebook users (Kaushik 2011).
Today’s marketers are asking customers to do more than their prescribed roles (Johnson and Rapp 2010). In this regard, Keh and Teo (2001) point out that customers’ exhibit behaviors beyond what is expected of them and are spontaneously motivated to go beyond prescribed roles and perform above and beyond the call of duty. Empirical research shows that, customers recommend others about the brand (Bowers, Charles and Alan 1990) make more purchases (Verhoef 2003), help other customers (Groth 2005), are willing to pay higher price for the brand (Keller 1993), forget marketer’s negative experiences (Matilla 2001; Aaker, Fournier and Brasel 2004), participate in research (Aggarwal 2004), and even let the marketer know when a competitor is badmouthing them (Ahearne, Bhattacharya and Gruen 2005). These pleasing behaviors facilitate the company more than they benefit the customer and often involves a sacrifice on the customer’s part in terms of time, effort, material possessions or even physical welfare (Staub 1978) and are collectively referred to as CCB’s (Bettencourt 1997).

Researchers (Bettencourt 1997; Groth 2005; Bove et al. 2009) utilize the framework of social exchange theory to develop the model of antecedents for CCB. According to Blau (1964), social exchange refers to relationships that entail unspecified future obligations. Like economic exchange, social exchange generates the expectation of some future returns for contributions; however unlike economic exchange the exact nature of that return is unspecified. Although prior research on social exchange has mostly focused on exchanges between individuals; relationship marketing literature suggests that customers develop relationships with organizations as well (Berry 1995). When a customer interacts with an organization during product/service delivery, their exchange can similarly be considered a social exchange (Bowen 1990; Vaughan and Renn 1999). In this connection Groth (2005) further indicate that “the implications of a social exchange relationship between customers and organizations are straightforward. That is, when customers are satisfied with the product/service or feel that they have received exceptional treatment that goes beyond their level of expectation, they ought to be more likely to reciprocate by engaging in voluntary behaviors that may benefit the organization” (pp. 13).
2.4. 1.1 CCB in the context of virtual communities

Evidence shows that individuals do engage in various kinds of prosocial behaviors in online communities (Eastin and LaRose 2005). These prosocial behaviors on the net can be found among friends and family in private e-mail and buddy lists (Wellman and Gulia 1999), among organizational employees behind corporate firewalls in corporate intranets (Constant, Sproul and Kiesler 1996) and among people who may be strangers to one another in publicly accessible virtual communities and websites (Yen et al. 2011).

In studies of online communities Wasko and Faraj (2005) point out that reputation, altruism, generalized reciprocity, and community interest play a key role in motivating members to engage in prosocial behaviors. In this regard, Sproul, Conley and Moon (2005) further add that in the online context the prosocial behaviors are very common for various reasons; firstly, people can do so in their own time and with the help of the internet people can participate in these contexts at any hour of the day or night from any place with technology and net access. Secondly, in virtual world, it is rather easy to control the extent of further involvement. For example, in the offline world, a person may hesitate to offer help for fear that a helpful response will lead to further demands on one’s time or emotional energy. However, in the online world, a person offering help may feel in complete control of how much further involvement will ensue; he or she can simply ignore further requests. It is a contention of this thesis that, because of the ease of practice, with the help of this new technology, new kinds of VCBs are taking place in these virtual communities. This notion is also supported by Gummesson (2008) who suggests that the internet is an enabler of customer-to-customer interaction which makes it possible for a diverse range of new practices and behavior from both consumer and also marketers in ways that were never possible without the world-wide-web.
A list of CCBs as identified in the extant literature, is provided in Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Gruen (1995), Bettencourt (1997), Keh and Teo (2001), Bove et al. (2009)</td>
<td>Voice refers to customers directing complaints to the marketer when problems occur, in order to give them the opportunity to correct the problems, retain their reputation, and/or maintain relationships (Singh 1988).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOM</td>
<td>Bettencourt (1997), Heckman and Guskey (1998), Ahearne et al. (2005), Groth (2005), Bove et al. (2009), Johnson and Rapp (2010).</td>
<td>WOM consists of informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers (Westbrook 1987).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Gruen (1995), Bove et al. (2009).</td>
<td>Flexibility refers to customers' willingness to adapt to situations beyond their control (Bettencourt 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolent acts</td>
<td>Gruen (1995), Bettencourt (1997), Keh and Teo (2001), Bove et al. (2009).</td>
<td>Benevolent acts are kind, charitable acts on the part of customers, within the immediate product/service exchange and may include tolerance, patience and politeness (Lengnick-Hall, Claycomb and Inks 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policing other customers</td>
<td>Gruen (1995), Bettencourt (1997), Bove et al. (2009).</td>
<td>Policing of other customers includes observing other customers' behaviors, as well as potentially reacting to these behaviors to ensure that appropriate behavior(s) occur (Bettencourt 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>References</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display behavior</td>
<td>Gruen (1995), Bove et al. (2009), Johnson and Rapp (2010).</td>
<td>Display behavior occurs when customers communicate to others of their relationship with an organization, through tangible displays on their person or in regards to their personal items (Gruen 1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiving behaviors</td>
<td>Keh and Teo (2001), Johnson And Rapp (2010).</td>
<td>Forgiving behavior relates to the release of negative feelings associated with a transgression and overcoming such resentments for restoring the relationship to its original state (Sells and Hargrave 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Gruen (1995), Bettencourt (1997); Heckman and Guskey (1998), Keh and Teo (2001), Groth (2005), Bove et al (2009), Johnson and Rapp (2010).</td>
<td>Feedback is the consumer activity which they provide to the organization with ideas and suggestions to track quality; locate quality problems and provide suggestions for improvement (Sampson 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing quantity</td>
<td>Lengnick-Hall et al. (2000), Johnson And Rapp (2010).</td>
<td>Increasing quantity occurs when satisfied customer shows the behavioral intention to return to the same brand and purchasing more in terms of quantity. (Bolton 1998; Oliver 1980).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive information</td>
<td>Ahearne et al. (2005), Johnson And Rapp (2010).</td>
<td>Loyal customers are found to be a good source of providing competitor information when it is available to them (Lackman, Saban and Lanasa 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing price</td>
<td>Bettencourt (1997), Johnson And Rapp (2010).</td>
<td>Increasing price occurs when consumers are willing to pay a price premium as there is an additional bond between the customers and the marketer (Keller 1993).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising activity</td>
<td>Heckman and Guskey (1998); Johnson and Rapp (2010).</td>
<td>Fundraising is activity of soliciting and gathering contributions as money or other resources, by requesting donations from others (Fertman and Allansworth 2010).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not all of the constructs reported in Table 2.2 are applicable within the online context. As goods or services are not physically sold and delivered within the context of Facebook a number of CCBs are not relevant. The discussion of these follows.

Flexibility takes place when the customers wait for a specific service staff and are ready to change their schedule if that particular service staff is not available (Bove et al. 2009). Such behavior occurs when a consumer develops special bondage with a specific service employee and depends on the particular employee for his need to be fulfilled. For example, a customer may develop a special bond with a hairdresser in a salon and may change the schedule if that employee is absent on that particular day. Hence, purchase of the service to enable face to face interactions and service delivery is necessary for flexibility to occur. This is not possible within the context of Facebook; for which flexibility is excluded from further analysis.

Benevolent acts of service facilitation occur when the customer is happy with the performance of a service staff during the actual encounter (Bove et al. 2009). The customer here reciprocates by being particularly tolerant, polite and patient. This behavior is not possible in Facebook where encounter with the service employee does not take place (buying and selling and subsequent consumer behavior is not practiced within Facebook). Hence benevolent acts are excluded from further analysis.

Policing other customers takes place within a consumption setting where customers try to control the behaviors of other customers (Bove et al. 2009) (e.g. in a restaurant where many customers dine in together). This sort of atmosphere does not prevail within Facebook; hence this item is excluded from further analysis.

Through increasing quantity a consumer purchases more of the brand as part of their satisfaction and loyalty to the brand (Oliver 1980). This is possible in a retail setting where actual purchase takes place and then the goods are delivered. However within Facebook, purchase do not take place, and hence this item is excluded from further analysis. Increasing price of the product is also excluded for similar reason.
Given the requirements of real time purchase experience; flexibility, benevolent acts of service facilitation, increasing quantity, increasing price and policing other customers are excluded from further analysis. Moreover fundraising activity were developed in the context of charitable context and not for a commercial setting. Hence this dimension is also not applicable for the current study which considers only commercial brands.

Having clarified the concept of CCB literature review will focus on the notion of VCP.

2.4.2 Value creating Practice

The strong interest in practice within social science (e.g. Wenger 1998; Orlikowski 2008) has prompted some researchers to apply the concept of practices in various area of marketing: for example in the context of consumption practice (Holt 1995; Warde 2005) and practices in service marketing (Korkman 2006). Recently, consumer practices have been presented as units of value creation, where each practice is a vehicle for the consumer to create value for him- or herself (Schau et al. 2009; Hottinen 2010; Korkman et al. 2010). Practices are formed as the resources of customers and providers interlink with different contextual elements (Reckwitz 2002)-these interlinks define value creation (Korkman et al. 2010). Hottinen (2010) defines value-creating practice, “as a context-laden arena for value creation, integrating a specific socio-cultural, spatial, and temporal context; mental states and bodily activities of consumers; a meaning structure; operant and operand resources and their use”.

Schau et al. (2009) has undertaken a research in the context of brand communities to reveal common VCPs among networked firm-facing actors in brand centered communities. By using meta-analytic approach, they have aimed to systematically categorize VCPs within brand communities, identify the role of each type of practice in the value creation process, and suggest templates for bundling practices to enhance collaborative value creation in an empirical context. They revealed 12 VCPs across the sample brand communities and organized these practices under four thematic categories, i.e. (1) Social networking, (2) impression management (3) Community engagement and (4) Brand use.
Social networking practices are those that focus on creating, enhancing, and sustaining ties among the online brand community members (Schau et al. 2009). The social networking practices highlight the homogeneity of brand community or the similarities across brand community members and their normative behavioral expectations of themselves and one another. These practices operate primarily in the domain of the emotions and reinforce the social or moral bonds within the community. Three related practices under social networking were identified i.e. welcoming, empathizing and governing.

**Impression management** practices are those that have an external, outward focus on creating favorable impressions of the brand, brand enthusiasts, and brand community in the social universe beyond the brand community (Schau et al. 2009). Evangelizing and justifying practices were developed under the impression management category.

**Community engagement** practices are those that reinforce members’ escalating engagement with the brand community (Schau et al. 2009). Community engagement practices emphasize and safeguards brand community heterogeneity, or the distinctions among brand community members and subsets of members. These practices are competitive and provide members with social capital. Four VCP’s were generated under community management category i.e. staking, milestoning, badging and documenting.

**Brand use** practices are a construct which relates to the member’s tendency to help other members with newer improved and enhanced ways to use the focal brand (Schau et al. 2009). Grooming, customizing and commoditizing practices were developed under brand use category.

All these twelve practices under these four thematic categories i.e. social networking, impression management, community engagement, brand use are introduced in table 2.3 along with the instances of these items within the previous research.
### Table 3

#### Table 2.3 VCPs and prior research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Prior research instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social networking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming</td>
<td>Welcoming occurs when members greet new members, beckon them to the fold and assist in their brand learning and community socialization. (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
<td>Newton users welcoming new users to the fold and pointing them to important community resources (Muñiz and Schau 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lomo users welcoming one another and also giving guided tour of the site (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathizing</td>
<td>Empathy is defined as other-oriented hedonic response congruent with another’s perceived welfare; if the other is oppressed or in need and include sympathy, compassion, tenderness, and the like (Batson 1991).</td>
<td>Saab drivers helping stranded Saabs through moral responsibility (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consumers of StriVectin empathizing other members about aging (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing</td>
<td>Articulating behavioral expectations within the brand community and ensuing the behavioral norms within the brand community (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
<td>Asserting the norms of volunteerism, reciprocity and social trust in the community. (Mathwick et al. 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Members of Xena’s community emphasizing the norms of disagreement and brotherhood. (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impression Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evangelizing</td>
<td>In evangelizing, members act as altruistic emissaries and ambassadors of good will. It can be used as sharing the brand “good news,” inspiring others to use, and preaching from the mountain top (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
<td>Saab and Mac enthusiasts telling others of the virtues of the brand (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001). Mini users evangelizing about the brand’s performance in a missionary zeal (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justifying</strong></td>
<td>Justifying is noted as an obsessive-compulsive brand related behavior that deploys rationales for devoting time and effort to the brand and collectively to outsiders and marginal members in the boundary (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
<td>Justifying file sharing in Napster because boycotting the music business is what “any real music fan” would do (Giesler and Pohlmann 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers (TPATH) fans justifying their devotion towards the brand (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staking</strong></td>
<td>Staking refers to as recognizing variance within the brand community membership and marking intragroup distinction and similarity (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
<td>Claiming distinct and multiple femininities within the Harley “hyper masculine” community (Martin, Schouten and McAlexander 2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milestoning</strong></td>
<td>Milestones are standout brand experiences that refer to the practice of noting seminal events in brand ownership and consumption (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
<td>Saab drivers relaying tales of their cars’ odometers hitting 100,000 miles (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Badging</strong></td>
<td>Badging is the practice of translating milestones into symbols (Schau et al. 2009). This is also a competitive achievement within the community sphere that gives the member a sense of social satisfaction.</td>
<td>Garmin members’ milestoning their first purchase and how the brand has since become a part of his/her life (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documenting</strong></td>
<td>Documenting occurs when brand community members construct a narrative of their brand experience, staking their social space, participating in milestones, badging the milestones for posterity, and finally evolving a cohesive personal brand narrative Schau et al. (2009). This involves detailing the brand relationship journey in a narrative way.</td>
<td>MG owners displaying photos of trips to national events and other driving related activities (Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mini users displaying their badges through the community sites (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newton users sharing tales and tricks of battery rejuvenation (Muñiz and Schau 2005).</td>
<td>Mini users detailing the installation process of the front control arm (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Brand use

| **Grooming** | Grooming for the brand is denoted as caring for the brand or systematizing optimal use patterns (Schau et al. 2009). This may involve in engaging extensively in cleaning the product. | MG owners trying to restore cars to original authentic, “showroom quality (Leigh et al. 2006).”

Garmin users detailing the cleaning processes of their product (Schau et al. 2009). |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Customizing** | Customizing involves modifying the brand and includes all efforts to change the factory specs of the product to enhance performance (Schau et al. 2009). | Taking doors off of Jeep Wrangler for an open air feeling. (McAlexander et al. 2002).  
StriVectin users documenting the mixing behavior with other products to receive better performance. (Schau et al. 2009). |
| **Commoditizing** | Distancing/approaching the marketplace. A valence behavior regarding marketplace. May be directed at other members (e.g., you should sell/should not sell that). May be directed at the firm through explicit link or through presumed monitoring of the site (e.g., you should fix this/do this/change this) (Schau et al. 2009). | Camp Jeep participants impressed at company’s respectfulness, not giving hard or soft sell. McAlexander et al. (2002).  
Criticizing other Newton users regarding brand related issues (Schau et al. 2009). |

For the purposes of this research, the practices reported in Table 2.3 need to be assessed in light of those presented as CCBs in order to develop a single list of behaviors which are then identified collectively as VCBs.

**Conceptual similarity between WOM and Evangelizing**

Schau et al. (2009) describes that in evangelizing, member’s act as altruistic emissaries and ambassadors of good will. Evangelizing can be used as sharing the brand “good news,” inspiring others to use, and preaching from the mountain top. Through WOM consumers
recommend the product to others, educate others about its features and try to create a favorable image of the brand to others (Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner 2010). Both these concepts talk about consumer’s intention to say positive things about the product and to recommend it to others, hence both these concepts are considered under the WOM concept for this study.

**Conceptual similarity between badging and display behavior**

Badging occurs when a semiotic signifier of a milestone is created—for example, when a fan buys a concert T-shirt (Schau et al. 2009). Kozinets (2001) also provides the example of Star Trek who wears the “Bajoran earrings” and did not care about looks from others under “Badging” construct. Both these examples are similar to the concept of “display behavior” where passionate members wear brand related merchandise i.e. T-shirts, or create brand replica and publicly show them to illustrate their attachment to the brand (Pimentel and Reynolds 2004). Hence both these concepts are considered under display behavior construct.

**Conceptual similarity between documenting and helping behavior**

The examples that Schau et al. (2009) provided to illustrate the concept of documenting closely matches with the concept of helping behavior. For example: Mini: “This is how to install the front control arm (wishbone) bushings without dropping the sub frame. I used power flex bushings Tools; Jack and stands, medium pry bar (about 18 inches long), 10mm socket, 13mm socket, 13mm ratcheting wrench, 16mm ratcheting wrench, BMW tool 31 5 150 (and 27mm socket or wrench), Support the front as high as possible on stands and remove the wheels. Remove the two bolts that hold the outer ball joint to the hub with the 13mm socket…” (5th Gear, No ID) (pp.45). This sort of message is considered to help other members in providing technical advice so that they know what needs to be done. Hence the concept of documenting is considered under helping behavior in this study. Hence this concept is considered under helping behavior construct.
Conceptual similarity between commoditizing and feedback

According to Schau et al. (2009) “the idea of commoditizing may be directed at other members (e.g., you should sell/should not sell that) and it may also be directed at the firm through explicit link or through presumed monitoring of the site (e.g., you should fix this/do this/change this)” (pp 46). This sort of behavior is consistent with the idea of feedback where members suggest product or service related advice to the company (Stockdale and Borovicka 2006). Moreover, Schau et al. (2009) proposes the following examples of commoditizing as – “when Newton, Xena, and TPATH communities monitor and restrict the price of community-created resources to encourage diffusion of technologies and items deemed to be community building; when Jones Soda drinkers rant about corporate distribution or Pepsi and Coke products but advocate offering Jones in Target, Walgreens, and Starbucks; and when Garmin users stretch the useful life of firm-offered maps with local patches given as freeware but anxiously anticipate firm-updated map packages” (pp. 35). All these examples are feedbacks provided by the consumers (members) to the company either to upgrade the product quality or change the distribution related activities. Similar behavior to upgrade and improve products is one aspect that is seen under the feedback construct (Stockdale and Borovicka 2006). Hence this study considers the concept of commoditizing is a subset of the bigger concept of feedback provided by the customers. As a result both these concepts are considered under the heading of “feedback” for this study.

2.4.3. List of VCB

The literature review has identified concepts of VCBs both in online and offline context. The relevant literature of CCB and VCP has been introduced. The common concepts in both these studies are also identified and excluded from further analysis. The list of VCBs identified by the literature review is shown in Table 2. 4.
Table 4

Table 2.4 List of VCB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiving behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcoming</td>
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<td>Empathizing</td>
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<td>Milestoning</td>
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<td>Grooming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customizing</td>
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Two of the main contributions of this study are to identify the differences of value creating behaviors between high and low product involvement and utilitarian vs. hedonic brands. The focus now turns to these variables.

2.5 Product Involvement

The concept of involvement has received widespread attention in the marketing domain over the last few decades, particularly in the fields of advertising and consumer behavior (Arrington and Shim 2000). Previous studies (e.g. Howard and Sheth 1969; Antil 1984; Zaichkowsky 1985) show that product involvement has been positively associated with awareness or knowledge of product attributes, perceptions of product importance, brand preferences, and ability to elaborate on product/brand advertising claims. Moreover, involvement has been shown to influence a number of behavioral outcomes, including search behavior and information processing (e.g., Bloch, Sherrell and Ridgway 1986; Celsi and Olson 1988; Mantel and Kardes 1999).

Researchers (e.g. Lastovicka and Gardener 1978; Zaichkowsky 1985) suggest that, individual consumers, as well as segments of consumers, differ in levels of involvement with product classes. According to them, the higher level the consumer consideration of the product is called high involvement and the lower level is called low involvement. Zaichkowsky (1985) defines high involvement products as the products that are purchased only after very careful consideration as against impulse purchasing and low involvement products as products that are bought frequently with a minimum of thought and effort because they are not of vital concern nor have any great impact on the consumer's lifestyle.

Research also identified the link between high and low levels of involvement and customer purchase behavior. In this regards Assael (1987) indicates, customers who purchase a high-involvement product are generally required to conduct research prior to their purchase in order to gain an understanding of the product. When a low-involvement product is under consideration, the consumer will already have a good understanding of the product; will
therefore probably carry out the purchasing action with a lower level of pre-purchase consideration of the product.

2.5.1 Product involvement and brand community

According to Ouwersloot and Schroder (2008) consumers may participate in a community to express their involvement with the branded product. High-involvement product categories typically are those with which the consumer wants to feel connected (Zaichkowsky 1985) even beyond the moment of consumption. Consumers generally search extensively for high-involvement products (Arnould, Price and Zinkhan 2002) and then feel a need to share the consumption experience in retrospect (Ouwersloot and Schroder 2008) and online communities are extremely well suited to this aspect (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2002). In line with this thought Ouwersloot and Schroder (2008) further add, “brand communities in general can help consumers share their experiences with high-involvement products. In this sense the community serves to intensify or elongate the consumption experience” (pp. 573). These suggestions raise a valid question: whether low involved products can develop brand communities where they can successfully engage their members through valuable interaction between the organization and the members and also among the members of the brand community? As Cova and Pace (2006) indicate, “although many studies have focused on the re-empowerment of consumers grouped into communities revolving around cult brands delivering niche products like Ducati, Harley-Davidson or Mercedes, even going as far as to highlight a more equal balance of power between these brand communities and the companies managing the underlying brands, none has adventured into the semi-virgin territory of brand communities for convenience (low involved) products”. (pp. 1088).

However, recently marketers of low involved products are also developing brand communities, and academicians are taking interest in how these brand communities are performing. For example, recent research (Sicilia and Palazon 2008; Schau et al. 2009) has shown that brand community management might be an option for brands mainly offering low-involved products such as soft drink, soap, breakfast cereal and toys.
In a study concerning brand community, McAlexander et al. (2002) state that, the existence and meaningfulness of the community is in the customer experience rather than in the brand around which that experience revolves. In line with this thought Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) envision brand community as a customer-customer-brand triad formed by two types of relationships, those established between the brand and the customers, and those that emerge between community members. But Sicilia and Palazon’s (2008) study finds out that there is a lack of the first type of relationships in case of brand communities for low involved products. In this regard, Sicilia and Palazon (2008) points out “this is not the case of Coca-Cola. Consumers do not talk about their experiences with the product; their members are instead mainly friends sharing opinions and leisure activities in a virtual space supported by Coca-Cola” (pp. 261) - indicating that a different form of behaviors are apparent in brand communities of low involved products. These findings generate further questions; do the members of these low involved product communities behave in the similar manner to the high involved product communities? Moreover, can we generalize and transfer the findings of the brand communities of high involved product categories to the low involved product category? Above all is the VCB performed by the members of high involved product communities the same as low involved product communities?

In summary, this section examines how product involvement influences consumer behavior and subsequent action. As identified here, high involved consumers behave differently than low involved products in both pre and post purchase consumption behaviors and activities. It is now important for this study to focus on the next important issue- as one of the main purposes of this study is to identify whether considerable differences exist within the VCB’s on the basis of product positioning (hedonic and utilitarian brands). It is believed that consumers of hedonic brands (products) behave differently than consumers of utilitarian brands (products) in variety of consumption related experiences. Having identified the important issue of involvement the notion of product positioning based on hedonic and utilitarian brands are now introduced to this literature review.
2.6 Product positioning based on hedonic and utilitarian product attributes

Product positioning is an important aspect of marketing that helps the firm to differentiate its brand from the other brands in the marketplace (Zhang and Markman 1998; Keller 2003; Kotler and Armstrong 2003). Aaker and Joachimaster (2000) define brand positioning as the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience. Products positioning is based on the interaction of all marketing tools, with an accentuated role for marketing communications because of its relevance in the process of shaping distinct consumer perceptions (Hartmann et al. 2005).

Wallendrouf and Arnould (1988) indicate that consumers take decisions based on utilitarian and hedonic criteria’s attached to a product, and hence some brands position itself on the basis of utilitarian criteria and some brands position itself on the basis of hedonic criteria’s (Aaker 1996; Hartmann et al. 2005). Both hedonic and utilitarian goods offer benefits to the consumer, the former primarily in the form of experiential enjoyment and the latter in practical utilitarianity (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Batra and Ahtola 1991; Mano and Oliver 1993). Consumers choosing among new automobiles, for example, may care about utilitarian features (e.g. gas mileage) as well as about hedonic attributes (e.g. sporty design). This indicates that Hedonism and utilitarianism are not necessarily two ends of a one-dimensional scale (Voss, Spangenberg and Grohmann 2003). Different products can be high or low in both hedonic and utilitarian attributes at the same time (Crowley, Spangenberg and Hughes 1992). Consistent with Okada (2005) this study does not examine the measurement of hedonism and utilitarianism per se but rather study how the aggregate perception of a good as either hedonic or utilitarian affects behavior in ways that are theoretically explainable and predictable.
2.6.1 Utilitarian attributes

The purely utilitarian role served by many consumer objects is widely acknowledged (Holman 1986; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Prentice 1987). Products play a utilitarian/functional role in the life of the consumer by fulfilling necessary functions, permitting control of the environment and allowing the solution of externally-imposed problems (Fournier 1991). The utilitarian aspect represents a brand’s more intrinsic, objective, functional and tangible facets (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982) including consumers’ perception of its quality and performance (Keller 2003). According to Lageat, Czellar and Laurent (2003) the concrete product features contributing to utilitarian attribute perception are typically “search” features; that is, consumers may identify them without actually experiencing the use of the product. For this reason, the assessment of the sources of utilitarian attribute perceptions is often described as straightforward. For example, if the goal is to design a clock radio that consumers perceive as practical, attributes such as “display color” and “display clearness” attributes can be manipulated to identify their best combination in terms of consumer preference (Snelders and Schoormans 2001).

2.6.2 Hedonic attributes

Literature that has considered the hedonic component of the consumer-object interaction suggest that ‘emotion’ includes aspects of arousal and felt experience (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982) as well as investment or degree of hedonic attachment (Holman 1986). The experiential aspect refers to a brand’s extrinsic, subjective, emotive, and intangible facets (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Keller 2003) including its resonance and imagery (Keller 2001). Such consumer objects provide sensory pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment and generalized hedonic arousal (Settle and Altrecak 1989; Wallendourf and Arnould 1988). The reference to “feelings” suggest a link between product and emotions (Reynold and Gutman 1984), which is a particularly germane connection in circumstances where consumers have difficulty obtaining objective measures on product attributes, or where product closed cannot be differentiated or positioned on the basis of distinct benefit appeal. In
either of the case, the hedonic appeal of the product would seem likely to play a significant role (Dobni and Zinkhan 1990).

Consumers looking for utilitarian products seek utilitarian benefits (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986, Lageat et al. 2003) and hence it can be inferred that their brand community experience should also evolve around looking for utilitarian benefits out of the relationship. Similarly, the consumers of hedonic products look for getting hedonic benefits out of that brand experience which should be eminent in their brand community experience (Monga and John 2010). So a valid research question now arises: are the consumer practices that lead to value within the brand community sphere of utilitarian products same as the brand communities of hedonic products?

Moreover, in the context of brand communities Sicilia and Palazon (2008) found that a virtual community enables their users to obtain utilitarian value (e.g. advice, information, and expertise); social value (e.g. friendship, hedonic support, self-esteem, social status, social enhancement) and entertainment value (fun and relaxation) out of brand community experience. From this above findings it can be understood that brand community members receive both utilitarian value and also hedonic values (social value and entertainment value) through their participation in a brand community. However, their study did not try to identify whether members of utilitarian brands show similar behavior as members of hedonic brands or not. Moreover, their study focused solely on low involved products, so we are yet to know whether the same can be applied in the context of high involved products or not. In the wake of these varied research findings concerning brand communities of different product attributes; it is important to identify whether meaningful differences exist between the brand community practices of utilitarian and hedonic product categories.

The available literature highlighted the importance of identifying the consumer practices that create value (Schau et al. 2009; Marandi et al. 2010). However none of the previous literature endeavored in identifying these VCBs within the popular SNS of Facebook. Given the exponential growth of SNSs and our involvement within these sites, it is deemed important to
identify the VCBs through FBCs. As a consequence there are significant gaps within the literature that are identified throughout the literature review. The following section outlines expectations for behavior in actual FBCs that make up the data set for this study.

2.7 Expectations and propositions of the data set

This study suggests that a consumer’s involvement (high/low) with a brand coupled with the brand’s positioning (utilitarian/hedonic) will affect the consumer’s actions and behavior in their respective brand communities. The following expectations relate to the involvement (high vs. low) x product positioning (utilitarian vs. hedonic) matrix within which VCBs are considered.

2.7.1 Voice

Topfer (2004) indicates that voice involve communicating the dissatisfaction to the company hence giving the organization a chance to recover and improve. Social exchange theory presents a cost benefit analysis with respect to social interaction (Thibaut and Kelley 1959). If the exchange is perceived to be beneficial, then the individual is likely to enter into an exchange relationship. As Facebook enhances the social life of many of its members (Valenzuela, Park and Kee 2009); the members should reciprocate with voice behavior that gives the organization the opportunity to improve.

Empirical evidence certainly indicates that product importance is a significant determinant of voice behavior (Richins 1985; Singh 1990). Consumers of high involved products consistently show significant amount of involvement with the band and focus their time, energy, and resources intently on these brands (Thorne and Bruner 2006) - indicating a higher level of importance than the low involved products. As a result voice should be more prevalent within high involved products than in low involved products.
It is a well-established phenomenon that consumers experience negative emotions when products fail to meet expectations (Westbrook 1987; Mano and Oliver 1993). In this regards, (Lazarus 1991 and Roseman 1991) contend that when a product fails to meet a utilitarian expectation, consumers are likely to experience intense negative emotions that are high in arousal. In contrast the failure to meet hedonic expectations is likely to evoke low arousal feelings of sadness and disappointment, leading to dissatisfaction (Inman, Dyer and Jia 1997). Moreover, Chitturi, Raghunathan and Mahajan (2008) point out that, not meeting minimum utilitarian expectations of functionality generates a much more intense negative feeling, such as anger, than a less intense feeling, such as disappointment or dissatisfaction that results from not meeting minimum hedonic expectations. Hence, this study suggests that consumer voice within utilitarian brands should contain more intense negative emotions than hedonic brands of FBCs.

**High involved/utilitarian context**

Previous research (e.g. Richins 1987; Singh 1990) posits that likelihood of successful complaint positively influences voice behavior. When consumers believe that their voice will be accepted by the firm, they are likely to express their complaining feelings to the firm (Kim, Kim and Shin 2003). However, if they believe that the firm does not have any interest in their complaints, they may think the voice will be meaningless and therefore be silent. Brands develop Facebook communities with the intention to create an ongoing relationship with its consumers (Dunay and Kroeger 2011); hence any negative publicity via these sites may develop a negative image towards the brand. As a result brands try to accommodate consumer’s voice by considering recovery effort to the complainers’ actions. Similar behavior is expected from the high involved/utilitarian brands; hence, this study expects to see more voice behavior to be apparent within this context.

Being a high involved product voice behavior should be more prevalent than the low involved product and being a utilitarian brand members’ voice behavior should show more intense negative emotions within this context.
High involved/ hedonic context

Fornell and Wernerfelt (1987) suggest that members usually calculate the perceived value and tend to voice more when they expect a high amount of benefits out of the complaining. Members of high involved/hedonic brands should justify their voice behavior by identifying that complaining in such a situation will yield them higher amount of value compared to any low involved situation. Hence this study suggests that consumer’s voice behavior will be more prevalent in this context.

Being a high involved/ hedonic brand, members’ voice behavior should be more prevalent than the low involved products; however as this is a hedonic brand the intense negative emotion in voice behavior will be less apparent here.

Low involved/ utilitarian context

Singh (1989) indicates that if the cost of voice is low; consumers will engage in more complaining behavior. The cost of voicing in FBCs is very low. Here, all the consumer has to do is to open their Facebook account and write his/her negative experience with the brand in its brand community site. Hence this study expects members’ voice behavior to be practiced within low involved/utilitarian context as well.

Being a low involved/ utilitarian brand, members’ voice behavior should be less prevalent than the high involved products; however members’ voice behavior should contain more intense negative emotions in this context.

Low involved/ hedonic context

Consumers who are dissatisfied with relatively unimportant product will be less motivated to ask for a refund or an exchange (Singh 1988). For this reason some consumer may choose not
to complain within low involved situation, as voicing for such a product category will not yield much of a benefit. As a result voice should be less apparent within this context than its high involved counterpart.

Being a low involved/ hedonic brand, members’ voice behavior should be less prevalent than the high involved context; and the degree of intensity in members’ negative emotions should be less here.

**Proposition 1**

Voice will be it more prevalent in high involved products than in low involved product. Moreover this study expects consumer’s voice behavior should include more intense negative emotions within utilitarian contexts than in hedonic context. It is however important to clarify that this proposition is no way claiming that voice will be more prevalent within utilitarian context; rather it is suggesting that intense negative emotions within voice will be more prevalent within utilitarian context’.

### 2.7.2 Helping behavior

Helping behavior is seen as one of the most dominating activities in many online communities (Wasko and Faraz 2000) and researchers have noticed that online interaction draws people together and cause them to open up and offer help (Mathwick 2001). Previous studies within online context (e.g. Raban and Rafaeli 2007; Chu 2009) consistently found helping behavior through information and knowledge sharing activities. In this regards, Raban and Rafaeli (2007) suggest online communities as self-organizing systems of informal learning, that allow members to interact and learn together by engaging in joint activities and discussions, helping each other, and sharing information. In this regards, Mislove et al. (2007) indicates that SNSs like Facebook facilitate to create and join special interest groups where the users can post messages and help each other by sharing information. Hence, helping behavior should be apparent within FBCs.
The high involved products usually have more features compared to a low involved products (Bloch 1982); and consumers of high involved products have more information on the various features of the brand and the product category (Howard and Sheth 1969; Zaichkowsky 1985). Raban and Rafaeli (2007) further suggest that helping behavior is only provided in response to posts requesting assistance in online communities. As the consumers of high involved products are more knowledgeable about various features of the brand they should be able to provide the help seeker with the information when they need it. On the other hand low involved products have limited features compared to the high involved products (Nkwocha, Bao, Johnson and Brotpies 2005) and they pay little or no conscious attention to the information environment during the purchase (Elliot and Percy 2007) - indicating that even though someone is seeking help within the community other members may not have any knowledge to help the information seeker. As a result this study suggests that helping behavior should be more apparent within high involved products than in low involved products.

Babin, Darden and Griffin (1994) further indicate that consumers who purchase a utilitarian product behave carefully and their decision making is mostly influenced by the utilitarian features of such product. This indicates that consumers of utilitarian brands are not only concerned about utilitarian features they are more knowledgeable and familiar on such features. On the contrary, the hedonic value of the product is decided based upon feeling or hedonic pleasure than to solve a problem, and it is decided subjectively (Babin et al. 1994); which indicates that consumers of hedonic brands are less concerned on utilitarian features. Hence this study suggests that as members of utilitarian brands are more concerned with the utilitarian features of these brands – hence members helping behavior within utilitarian products should involve more utilitarian features than the hedonic brands.

**High involved/ utilitarian context**

Uzzi and Lancaster (2003) and Rodon et al. (2005) suggest that helping behaviors involve the notion of willingness to contribute. One particular advantage of consumer’s involvement in
helping behavior within online SNSs that it is rather easier to offer help to someone in need. In this regards, Sproul et al. (2005) suggest that it is convenient to offer help within online context as people can do so in their own time and with the help of the internet people can help others through information sharing at any hour of the day or night from any place with technology and net access. As many consumers spend significant portion of their daily time within Facebook (Ellison et al. 2009) and it is easier to offer help within this context; this study expects to see members helping behavior within high involved/utilitarian context of Facebook.

Being a high involved/utilitarian brand this study expects that more helping behaviors should be noticed than low involved products and members should helping behavior should be around more utilitarian features.

**High involved/ hedonic context**

Social learning theory suggests that prosocial behavior is learned (Bandura and McDonald 1963; Bandura 1977; Batson 1998). The social institutes (e.g. Schools, parents) encourage us to extend our help if we see someone in genuine need. Moreover, within a group context, helping behavior has a social recognition (Fisher and Ackerman 1998) which should encourage people to help others. This indicates that consumers of high involved/hedonic brands also help each other out by providing information to someone in need.

Being a high involved/hedonic brand this study expects that more helping behavior should be more apparent than the low involved context.

**Low involved/ utilitarian context**

Internet and SNSs has made the helping process and involvement easier for the individuals. In this regards Sproul et al. (2005) adds that, “it is rather easy to control the extent of further involvement. For example, in the offline world, a person may hesitate to offer help for fear
that a helpful response will lead to further demands on one’s time or emotional energy. However, in the online world, a person offering help may feel in complete control of how much further involvement will ensue; he or she can simply ignore further requests” (pp. 144). Hence this study suggests that members’ helping behavior should be apparent within this context as well.

Being a low involved/utilitarian brand this study expects that the helping behavior should be less apparent than high involved products and members helping behavior should be around more utilitarian features.

Low involved /hedonic context

Subramani and Peddibhotla (2004) suggested that helping behavior, generalized reciprocity and community interest created by the ongoing interaction of the members of these online groups are important motivations for participation. As a result when someone experiences product or service related issues and get help from others regarding how to solve the issue within Facebook; the generalized reciprocity advocates that these members (who received help from others) will be helping others. Due to such reciprocal actions; helping behavior should be apparent within this context as well.

Being a low involved/hedonic brand this study expects that helping behavior should be less apparent than the high involved context; moreover helping behavior related to utilitarian features should be less apparent within this context.

Because of the nature and complexities associated to high involved products; helping behavior should be more apparent within high involved products than in low involved products. Moreover, members helping behavior within utilitarian brands should concentrate on more utilitarian features than hedonic brands.
2.7.3 WOM

Marketer’s appreciate the importance of social networks (Rogers 2003; Algesheimer et al. 2005) and expect that consumer’s WOM activities will succeed on social networks (Ansari, Essegaier and Kohli 2000; Garbarino and Strailevitz 2003). In this regards, Wang, Thongpapanl, Wu and Ting (2011) indicate that social networks are extremely important for WOM behavior as information exchanges between consumers in these brand communities have become increasingly easier and quicker. Moreover, Dunay and Kroeger (2011) documents how marketers use Facebook to take advantage of the viral power of this SNS to generate WOM opportunities to its members. These views suggest that members’ WOM behavior shall be apparent within FBCs.

Consumers tend to be influenced by their social interactions with others when they make purchase decisions (Kozinets et al. 2010). They can learn from and be affected by other consumers’ opinions and/or others’ actual purchase decisions (McGrath and Otnes 2005). WOM communication is central to the exchange process because consumers often rely on others for assistance with purchases, especially for products with high or psychic risk (Gershoff and Johar 2006) and high involved products are usually more expensive and involve more risk compared to low involved products (Nijssen and Lieshout 1995). Moreover, when the forums are consumption-related, the members may share enthusiasm and knowledge about a specific consumption experience or related group of activities (Kozinets 1999); such enthusiasm is seen more in high involved product’s communities (Ouwersloot and Schroder 2008); hence this study suggests that WOM behavior will be more prevalent within high involved contexts of Facebook.

Previous studies (Hunt 1977; Oliver 1997) contend that products that meet or exceed utilitarian expectations will evoke low-arousal feelings of confidence and security, leading to satisfaction—an emotion that is also low in arousal. On the other hand products that meet or exceed hedonic expectations will evoke high arousal feelings of excitement and cheerfulness, leading to delight—an emotion that is also high in arousal (Roseman 1991). As WOM is
carried out more when consumers are delighted rather than just satisfied (Chitturi et al. 2008) such behavior should be more prevalent within hedonic brands than in utilitarian brands of Facebook.

*High involved/ utilitarian context*

Brand community members are brand loyal consumers (Algesheimer et al. 2005) and there is a positive relationship between brand loyalty and WOM (Srinivasan, Srini, Anderson and Ponnavolu 2002) and brands can also build a loyal group of followers through the FBCs (Dunay and Kroeger 2011). Hence members WOM behavior should be apparent within high involved/ utilitarian brands within Facebook.

Being a high involved/utilitarian brand this study expects that members’ WOM behavior should be more apparent than the low involved context; however being a utilitarian brand the WOM should be less apparent than the hedonic brands.

*High involved/ hedonic context*

The self enhancement motivation (Engel et al. 1993) is driven by one’s desire for positive recognition from others. In the context of SNSs, this may take the form of being viewed as a consumption expert or intelligent shopper by other consumers (Henning- Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler 2004). This indicates that consumers who are motivated by enhancement motivation (Engel et al. 1993) should provide information so as to be viewed as an expert within such product category within Facebook. Consumers with such a motive should also be present within high involved/hedonic context; hence WOM behavior should be apparent this context.

Being a high involved product this study expects that members’ WOM behavior should be more apparent than the low involved context; and being a hedonic brand the WOM should be
more apparent than the utilitarian context; hence members WOM behavior should be most prevalent within this context.

**Low involved/ utilitarian context**

Satisfied customers participate more for the cause of the marketer and increasingly get involved through brand community participation (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006). Consumers also influence others when they are satisfied with the product by participating in WOM behaviors (Anderson 1998). Satisfied consumers also take part in SNSs like Facebook (Dunay and Kroeger 2011). As a result member’s WOM behavior is expected within low involved/utilitarian context.

Being a low involved/utilitarian brand this study expects that members’ WOM behavior should be less apparent than the high involved/hedonic context.

**Low involved/ hedonic context**

Trusov et al. (2009) specified that internet provides numerous venues like SNSs for consumers to share their views, preferences, or experiences with others and these online communities are a good way of spreading the word to millions of members. In this regard, Bradley (2011) indicates that one of the core strengths of Facebook is the WOM approach to information dissemination; which makes Facebook a remarkable marketing tool. This view leads to suggest that WOM behavior should be apparent within low involved/hedonic brand communities of Facebook.

Being a low involved product this study expects that members’ WOM behavior should be less apparent than the high involved context; however being a hedonic brand the WOM should be more apparent than the utilitarian context. Hence, although this context should show less WOM behavior than the high involved context; however more WOM behavior than the low involved/utilitarian context is predicted here.
P 3 WOM behavior should be more prevalent in high product involvement contexts than in low involved context. Moreover this study expects WOM behavior to be more prevalent within hedonic contexts than in utilitarian context.

2.7.4 Display behavior

Social identity theory (Turner 1999) postulates that in articulating their sense of self, people typically go beyond their personal identity to develop a social identity. Previous researchers (Scott and Lane 2000) indicate that in line with social identity theory, people seek out organizations for identification purposes even when they are not formal organizational members (i.e. employees). Such behavior suggests that these consumers identify themselves as members of the social group of devotees—a group that through a strong commonality transcends economic or social class distinctions (Holman 1986; Belk 1988; Fiske and Taylor 1991). By wearing brand related merchandise, collecting brand items and showing off these pictures consumers identify themselves as part of organizational community and show their devotion towards the brand (Kozinets 2001; Pichler and Hemetsberger 2007). Many of the FBCs have millions of members and posting consumers display behavior (through pictures) within Facebook will satisfy their need to show their devotion towards their brand to others; hence display behavior should be equally evident within both high and low involved products.

Some consumers can transcend the mainstream loyalty framework where their commitment to the object reaches an extreme or ultimate level that is strong, self-sustaining, and virtually permanent (Oliver 1999; Funk and James 2001) and these loyal consumers are referred to as brand fanatics (Belk 2004; Pimentel and Reynolds 2004) who are ready to go extra mile. In this regards, Belk, Wallendourf and Sherry (1989) indicates that some of the display behavior demands higher degree of consumer devotion from the members’ part and committed customers sustain the sacred nature of their commitment by making significant sacrifices for the brands. The fact that tattoos are permanent, that it involves a great deal of pain during the process of getting it, shows the degree of sacrifice that a member is willing to make to canvass a brand also leads to a sacralization of the body (Bengtsson, Ostberg and Kjeldgaard
In this regards, Roseman (1991) indicates that products that meet or exceed hedonic expectations will evoke high arousal feelings of excitement and cheerfulness, leading to delight—an emotion that is also high in arousal; whereas meeting a utilitarian expectation will evoke low-arousal feelings of confidence and security, leading to satisfaction—an emotion that is also low in arousal (Oliver 1997). Hence, this study contends that such arousal of feelings within hedonic brands should influence more of their members to demonstrate extreme display behaviors like tattooing their body.

Members display behavior will be equally evident within high and low involved product categories; however extreme display behavior like tattooing is expected to be more prevalent within hedonic brands than utilitarian brand communities.

2.7.5 Forgiving behavior

Literature in connection to forgiving behavior suggests that consumers in close relationships with marketers are more willing to forgive marketer transgressions (Matilla 2001). According to Patel (2010) marketers can create relationship with its consumers through Facebook. Hence this study suggests that the members of FBCs should also forgive its marketers, following marketer transgression.

Previous studies (e.g. Beverland, Chung, Kates 2009) indicate that consumers are more likely to forgive small failures if they have strong relationship with the brand. According to Dunay and Kroeger (2011) SNSs can create stronger relationship with the existing members; hence such relationship will foster the members to forgive small failures of the brand. In this regards, this study suggests that such a small failure can occur to both high and low involved contexts. Consumers may view different transgressions “small” in that context (High or low) and forgive the marketer accordingly. Hence this study expects forgiveness to be equally evident within both high and low involvement products and a considerable difference is not predicted.
Chitturi et al. (2008) suggest that whereas the failure to meet a utilitarian expectation leads to anger, the failure to meet a hedonic expectation merely leads to dissatisfaction. This suggests that a negative experience within a utilitarian product will lead to greater level of negative emotions than with a hedonic brand; as the consumers held the marketer responsible for the failure with a utilitarian benefit whereas they held themselves responsible for a failure with a hedonic feature. For example if a consumer purchases a microwave oven (utilitarian brand) and finds that the product is faulty then he is going to be dissatisfied; however if a consumer purchases a designer sofa (hedonic brand) for his family lounge room and the other family members do not find it cute, the consumer is going to blame himself for not making the right choice. In this connection, this study suggests that consumers of hedonic brands should forgive the marketers more as they blame themselves for many hedonic product failures; on the other hand marketers of utilitarian brands has to do more to achieve the consumers’ forgiveness as these consumers have stronger negative emotions attached to a product failure. As a result this study suggests that forgiveness should be more prevalent within hedonic brands than the utilitarian brands.

This study however acknowledges the fact that even for a hedonic brand the failure may be triggered by a utilitarian cause and similarly for a utilitarian brand the failure may be caused by a hedonic reason. With this acknowledgement to take them into account the following expectation is proposed.

P 5 Forgiving behavior will be equally evident in both high and low involved products; however this behavior should be more prevalent within hedonic brands than in utilitarian brands.

2.7.6 Feedback

Gathering feedback from customers has become a recent but prevalent phenomenon on the internet (Sampson 1998) and recent studies confirm that members of online communities also provide feedback to the manufacturer as they want to get involved with the development and governance of the online community (Yen et al. 2011). In this regards, this study further
suggests that providing feedback through FBCs is easier and can be done within minutes. For example: if the member of FBCs want to share his/her product/service related idea then all he/she needs to do is to open up the Facebook page and write his ideas within the brand community site so that the site administrator can notice the feedback. As many of these consumers spend significant portion of their daily time within the FBCs (Ellison et al. 2009) and motivated to share their ideas about the product development process (von Hippel 2005); such behavior should be apparent within FBCs. It is however important to notify that, although consumers of high involved products are eager to create both consumer-to-brand and also consumer-to-consumer interactions (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001); Sicilia and Palazon (2008) suggest that within low involved context consumer-to-brand interactions are limited. As feedback is considered to be an interaction between the members and its brand-this study projects that such behavior will be less apparent within low involved products.

Making presence in SNSs has proved to be an important aspect of getting important feedback from loyal consumers who view these brands as part of their lifestyle (McAlexander et al. 2005) and consistently provide ideas to upgrade the product or service quality (Yen et al. 2011). Loyal customers of both utilitarian and hedonic brands also take part in FBCs (Dunay and Kroeger 2011); hence this study expects that members of both utilitarian and hedonic brands should provide product or service related feedback data to the organization and a considerable difference is not predicted.

P 6 Members feedback data will be more prevalent within high involved products; however such behavior will be equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brand communities of Facebook.

2.7.7 Competitive information

Social exchange theory presents a cost benefit analysis with respect to social interaction (Thibaut and Kelley 1959). If the exchange is perceived to be beneficial, then the individual is likely to enter into an exchange relationship. As Facebook enhances the social life for many of its members (Valenzuela et al. 2009); they should reciprocate with information which is
valuable to the marketer. Furthermore, Bolotaeva and Cata (2011) suggest that businesses have an advantage of brand intelligence conducted on SNSs and some members share competitor information once it becomes available. Hence this study suggests that members of FBCs should provide competitor information back to the brand if it becomes accessible to them.

Product involvement has been positively associated with awareness or knowledge of product attributes, perceptions of product importance, brand features, brand preferences etc. (Howard and Sheth 1969; Zaichkowsky 1985) and high involved consumers usually search for more information through sources like advertisement, brochures, sales people and friends (Bettman, Johnson and Payne 1990). This indicates that consumers of high involved products have more information on the brand, its competitors or the industry as a whole. Hence more detailed and in-depth information is expected within high involved products than in low involved products; as far as members competitive information is concerned.

It has been suggested that utilitarian purchasing behavior is more logical, rational, related to transactions (Batra and Ahtola 1991). Moreover utilitarian purchase is associated with more information gathering on important functional features compared to hedonic purchasing behavior (Bloch and Richins 1983). Hence this study expects the competitor information within utilitarian brands should include more utilitarian features than in hedonic brands.

P 7 Competitive information is expected to be more detailed and informative within high involved products; moreover members’ competitive information within utilitarian brands should include more on utilitarian features than the hedonic brands.

2.7.8 Welcoming

Welcoming has long been observed as a part of human behavior in a social situation (Firth 1972) and we usually welcome a new member to the social setting to make him or her feel comfortable. This indicates that when a new member joins Facebook; others should welcome the neophyte to the fold of the brand community. This is consistent with Firth’s (1972)
suggestion that the primary function of welcoming is the establishment of the other person as socially acceptable. In this connection Stommel and Koole (2010) noticed that when a new member joins in such a community and introduces them; others welcome these new members. Similar behavior is expected within all these FBCs who have thousands of members and many new members join these sites frequently.

However this study predicts that members welcoming behavior should be different within high involved products than in low involved products. For example: within high involved products it may happen that many members join the Facebook site after purchasing the brand; and introduces them as a new owner of that particular brand- hence other members should welcome these new owners upon joining the FBCs. However Quester and Lim (2003) suggest that low involved products are low priced items which are bought frequently and these products are purchased with minimum of thought as they are not of vital concern for the consumer - hence the intention to let others know that they have purchased the product for the first time may not be a major concern for these consumers. Hence this study contends that members’ welcoming behavior should be more prevalent within high involved products than in low involved products.

There is widespread evidence that welcoming is an integral part of communication and member behavior in any community (Duranti 1997). In this regards, Goffman (1971) and Firth (1972) further suggest that greetings in all societies are about continuities of relationships. One of the reasons why members of both utilitarian and hedonic brands use these SNSs is to broaden their social network and Facebook is used to maintain existing relationships and also to create new relationships (Boyd and Ellison 2007). Hence welcoming should be practiced within both utilitarian and hedonic brands and a considerable difference is not predicted. So, for welcoming behavior the researcher’s expectations for the data as follows:
This study expects welcoming to be more prevalent within high involved products than in low involved products; moreover this study predicts that welcoming should be equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands.

**2.7.9 Empathizing**

Weiner (1980) on empathy suggest that it is easier to feel empathy for someone who is not responsible for his or her plight, someone who is entirely innocent victim. This sort of situation may be noticed within FBCs as members share consumption experiences with others. For example: a member who purchased a new automobile may experience product related failure right after purchasing the car which is not the fault of the member. After posting such a message within Facebook others may come forward to show empathy to the grieving member, who considers him/her as an innocent victim. Similar behavior may also be noticed within a low involved product where a consumer bought a bottle of soft drink and after coming home he finds that the product is flat. Hence this study suggests that empathizing will be equally apparent within both high involved and low involved product communities of Facebook and a considerable difference is not predicted.

Blau’s (1964) social exchange theory postulates that if someone receives a help from another member he/she is also reciprocates or intends to reciprocate with similar behavior. This shows that once someone receives an empathetic message; he/she should do the same to others going through similar suffering. Hence member’s empathetic behavior should be noticed within both hedonic and utilitarian brands and considerable difference is no predicted.

Empathy will be equally evident in all of communities specified by the involvement by product positioning matrix.

**2.7.9 Governing**

Norm formation within a group suggests that certain individuals (e.g. firm leaders, heads of departments, supervisors) or institutions (e.g., boards of directors) are authorized to prescribe and enforce norms, thereby regulating the behavior of the individuals operating within the
group (Flynn and Chatman 2003). Within Facebook the site administrators are responsible to lay down the behavioral expectations within the group and every site has a written set of norms regarding how the members should behave within the site. Moreover, individual members also communicate verbally to ensure group norms by actually talking about what is and what is not normative of the group (Hogg and Tindale 2005); and these kinds of behavior is important to ensure behavioral parameter within the online context (Dyson and Stewart 1999; Schau et al. 2009). Hence this study suggests that some members of FBCs should also remind others to behave in a manner that is consistent with the site’s group norm.

The features of Facebook further encourage its members to enact governing behavior within these sites. For example: within Facebook members can designate a message as spam and notify the site administrator regarding abusive message or even write his/her comment within the message wall; hence giving power to the members to react when they see such behavior. Moreover, each and every brand community sites under Facebook has a detailed “terms” page where it is specified that the Facebook members should not post content that infringes someone else’s rights or violates the law. This should encourage its members to notify the site administrator if any negative remarks are posted. Moreover, the entire message postings within FBCs are open to all its members; as a result any abusive message should be picked up by others as many of them spend significant time of their daily life within Facebook (Ellison et al. 2009). Hence this study suggests that members of both high and low involved and also utilitarian and hedonic brands should remind others about the behavioral parameter within FBCs and a considerable difference is not predicted.

P 10 Members’ governing behavior will be equally evident in all of communities specified by the involvement by product positioning matrix.

2.7.11 Justifying

Brands can reflect deeper, symbolic, sometimes spiritual meanings that can lead the consumers to have an extensive attachment (Brown et al. 2003; Muniz and Schau 2005). Consumers’ extremely high level of emotional bonding with the brand justifies the distinction
of devotees from the rest of loyal and committed consumers (Pichler and Hemetsberger 2007). Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) consider such kinds of consumers as brand devotees who are ready to go extra mile for these brands. Within the context of virtual communities such devotion is noticed whereby members were engaged in obsessive-compulsive brand directed behaviors by spending time and justifying such effort behind these brands (Schau et al. 2009). As consumers who join these Facebook sites seem to develop a strong relationship with these brands (Ellison et al. 2009) such kinds of devotion is expected to be present within Facebook.

The characteristics of the products/brands themselves or their usage contexts may systematically act to arouse consumers’ involvement (Martin 1998). High-involvement product categories typically are those with which the consumer wants to feel connected even beyond the moment of consumption (Zaichkowsky 1985) as there is pleasure in using such product (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). Moreover, Thorne and Bruner (2006) indicate that high involvement consumers focus their time, energy, and resources intently on a specific area of interest- indicating a higher level of devotion towards these brands. However this sort of connection and involvement is absent within low involved context (Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Zaichkowsky 1985) where the involvement towards the brand is typically low (Elliott and Percy 2007). This indicates that the member’s justifying behavior which is seen after consumers develop a higher degree of attachment with the brand should be more apparent in high involved context.

Previous studies documents that consumers often look for opportunities to justify their choice (Simonson 1989; Shafir, Simonson and Tversky 1993); and it is easier to justify utilitarian goods than the purchase of hedonic goods (Prelec and Loewenstein 1998). In this regards, Okada (2005) indicates, hedonic goods deliver benefits primarily in the form of experiential enjoyment, which may be more difficult to evaluate and quantify than the practical, functional benefits that utilitarian goods deliver. Hence this study suggests that members’ justifying will be more apparent within utilitarian brands. Consequently the expectation for justification behavior is:
Justifying will be more evident in high involved product communities of Facebook; moreover this study expects to find it more prevalent in utilitarian brands than in hedonic brands.

**2.7.12 Staking**

Social identity of a person represents the aspects of an individual self-concept that are derived from membership in social groups (Tajfel 1978, 1982). People tend to be classified in various categories, and different individuals may utilize different categorization schemas and these categories are defined by prototypical characteristics abstracted from the members (Turner 1985). According to social identification theory, people tend to classify themselves into various social categories, such as psychological traits, abilities, religious affiliation, gender, and age cohort (Turner 1999). In this regards, Hickman and Ward (2007) further postulate that when a member identifies himself or herself as an associate of a social group (e.g., a young person or an old person) that member will have a natural tendency to seek information that positively delineated his own group from other groups within the community. As the FBCs are considered a social group (Ellison 2007) and many of them have millions of members; they should delineate their own domain according to the categories suggested by social identity theory.

Furthermore, Ashforth and Mael (1989) postulates that social classification enables the individual to locate or define him- or herself in the social environment. According to social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel and Turner 1979) the groups to which people belong are an important source of identity and self-esteem. When individuals adopt a social identity, they are motivated to think of themselves as positively distinct from other groups (Hickman and Ward 2005). Moreover, self-categorization theory; which is regarded as a subcategory of social identity theory (Hogg 1992) emphasizes the “operation of the categorization process as the cognitive basis of group behavior, and focuses more on intra-group processes than on macro-social intergroup relations” (pp. 93). This theory further indicates that people tend to categorize themselves as a ‘group’ if the salience of differences among them is minor relative
to the differences that they perceive in respect to other individuals not belonging to that group (Tajfel 1978, 1982). All these band communities under consideration (both high and low involved and also hedonic and utilitarian) have members from various parts of the world; hence this sort of behavior where members stake their domain will be apparent within all FBCs and a considerable difference is not predicted.

**P 12** Staking will be equally evident in all of communities specified by the involvement by product positioning matrix and a considerable difference is not predicted.

### 2.7.13 Milestoning

Previous studies (e.g. Crites 1978, Thompson, Pollio and Locander 1994) considered consumers as “self-narrators” whose stories impose a meaningful historical order onto life events and who selectively highlight particular facets of these experienced events in their narratives. Such narratives and stories of consumption experiences are abundant in virtual community sphere (Kozinets 2001; Schau et al. 2009). These consumers dedicate various forums concentrating their first purchase, and mark various other ownership and consumption milestone. Members of FBCs also share their consumption experiences with others and participate in the community through posting, commenting and sharing content (Ellison et al. 2009). Hence, this study expects to see milestoning behavior within FBCs.

Thorne and Bruner (2006) suggest that consumers of high involved products consistently show significant amount of involvement with the brand and focus their time, energy, and resources intently on these brands. Moreover, Ouwersloot and Schroder (2008) indicate that consumers of high involved products are generally more motivated to share their consumption experiences with others within online communities- hence this study suggests that milestoning will be more prevalent within high involved products.

Milestoning behavior is considered as the describing of significant episodes in brand and community relationships (Schau et al. 2009). As members want to share their brand involvement and brand devotion with others (Pichler and Hemetsberger 2007) and SNSs
provide a new platform to show members’ involvement (Kozinets et al. 2010); consumers of both utilitarian and hedonic brands should indicate seminal events of brand ownership through FBCs. Hence this study expects milestoneing to be equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands communities Facebook.

**P 13** Milestoning behavior will be more prevalent within high involved products than in low involved products; however this behavior should be equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands and a considerable difference is not predicted.

2.7.14 **Grooming**

It is a human nature to groom his/her possessions as getting surrounded around clean and beautiful product is identified as the key to success (Peiss 1993). According to Rook (1985) consumer’s grooming behavior is about communicating specific messages about an individual's social status, maturity, aspirations, conformity, even morality. In this regards Elliott (1997) further contend that the functions of the symbolic meanings of products operate in two directions, outward in constructing the social world: social-symbolism, and inward towards constructing our self-identity: self- symbolism and beautifying a product through grooming practices satisfies consumers both social symbolism and self-symbolism. Hence this study suggests grooming to be evident within Facebook.

However it is highly unlikely that grooming practices will be practiced within the low involved product categories. The characteristics of these low involved products are such that grooming practices within such contexts is improbable. For example: it is highly unlikely that consumers of low involved products like soft drinks would spend time in cleaning the cans of these brands and share it within FBCS. This sort of behavior should not make any sense; hence grooming behavior should not be practiced within low involved products under this study.

According to Chernev (2004), whereas functional attributes help attain prevention goals, hedonic attributes help attain promotion goals. According to the regulatory focus theory (Higgins 1997), prevention is characterized by desires such as “behaving in a safe and secure
manner” or “being responsible,” and promotion is characterized by desires such as “looking cool” or “being sophisticated.” Moreover, consumers of hedonic brands are interested about receiving sensory pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment through their consumption experiences (Wallendourf and Arnould 1988; Settle and Altrecak 1989) and grooming is associated with such arousal; hence this study projects grooming to be more prevalent within hedonic brands within Facebook.

**P 14** Grooming will be evident only in the high involved product communities; however this behavior should be more prevalent within hedonic brands than in utilitarian brands.

### 2.7.15 Customizing

The individual in postmodern society is threatened by a number of “dilemmas of the self” (Giddens 1991, pp. 201) fragmentation, powerlessness, uncertainty and a struggle against commodification. These dilemmas are driven by the “looming threat of personal meaninglessness” as the individual endeavors to construct and maintain an identity which will remain stable through a rapidly changing environment (Elliott 1998). As consumption plays a central role in supplying meanings and values for the creation and maintenance of the consumer’s personal and social world (Elliott 1998); the attempt by a consumer to change its factory settings is the need to satisfy his motive to construct a unique identity of himself through his possession. This indicates that individuals will assemble their own unique identity with a product if they are able to do so. In this regards, McCracken (1988) further points out that individuals personalize their possessions in various ways in order to bond more fully the product and make these products a more direct expression of who they are. Similarly, Schau et al. (2009) contends that individuals modify and change the factory specs of the product to enhance performance and to give the product a unique look.

Brand devotees intend to show their dedication to their brand to others (Kozinets 2001; Pichler and Hemetsberger 2007). By posting consumer’s customized product within FBCs these members will be able to show it to millions of other members, which will help them satisfy their need to show their devotion towards their brand to others. Hence this study
suggests that members who will customize their products would like to share such behavior within FBCs. Consumers who customize their product do so to inject their personality or self into the object produced (Campbell 2005), moreover this sort of behavior injects creativity and self-expression. It is logical to assume that consumers of both high and low involved situation and also hedonic and utilitarian products should practice such behavior. Hence this study expects to see this behavior within both high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands and a considerable difference is not predicted.

P 15 Customizing will be equally evident in all of communities specified by the involvement by product positioning matrix.

2.8 Conclusion

The building and operating of the virtual brand community can be an important method in strengthening customer relations (Hagel and Armstrong 1997; Krishnan and Ulrich 2001) and in engaging customers in product innovation through emphasizing co-creation with customers (Nambisan 2002; Sawhney et al. 2005). It emerged from the review that there is a severe shortage of studies in the context of VCBs in an online brand community. This chapter has thus demonstrated the importance of undertaking this study within the context of Facebook. Moreover, it is shown in the literature that both involvement and positioning criteria play a significant role in consumer’s decision making process and subsequent consumption practices with relates to the brand. In light of this it is suggested that there should be renewed interest on identifying the differences between VCBs within the brand communities of high and low involved product and also utilitarian and hedonic brands.

The next chapter will review the theoretical framework intended to provide a foundation for the methodology which aims to identify the VCBs within FBCs. The netnographic approach detailing the data collection involving observation method will be introduced. Moreover, the specific data analysis tools used for this research and also the ethical considerations involving this netnographic study to deal with various ethical issues will also be identified.
Chapter 3
Research Methodology
3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and justifies the use of qualitative exploratory netnography approach as the appropriate method in addressing the research questions for this study. The structure of the chapter is as follows: first, introduction to the research methodology is provided then the research paradigm is discussed. This section also provides the justification for choosing qualitative research methodology for this study. Following this, more specific issues concerning relevance and explanation for using netnography as a method for this study is discussed.

The next section outlines the steps in netnography process undertaken for this study. Subsequently, the challenges and strategies carried out to overcome issues related to Entrée are discussed. Succeeding discussion includes the data collection techniques for this study. The logic behind using archival data is provided in this section followed by a discussion on how the data is retrieved and the timeline of data collection.

The subsequent section discusses the data analysis method undertaken for this research. Here the data categorizing and coding process are explained in detail followed by discussions on comparison and categorization of the data. The concerns about using archival data are also discussed to identify what would be done to safeguard the data. Later the ethical issues pertaining to this study and strategies undertaken to overcome such issues are discussed. In the end conclusions for this chapter is presented.

3.2 Research paradigms

A research paradigm is the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigator in conducting research (Guba and Lincoln 1994). This section justifies the use of the positivist approach as a suitable paradigm for this study.
There are various research paradigms and all research needs to be placed within an appropriate paradigm. Table 3.1 presents a summary of philosophical assumptions behind these paradigms.

**Table 3.1 Basic belief systems of alternative inquiry paradigms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Interpretivism</th>
<th>Critical Theory/ Postmodernism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumption</td>
<td>Objective world which science can 'mirror' with privileged knowledge</td>
<td>Intersubjective world which science can represent with concepts of concepts of actors; social construction of reality</td>
<td>Material world of structured contradictions and/or exploitation which can be objectively known only by removing tacit ideological biases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key focus or ideas</td>
<td>Search for contextual variables which cause actions.</td>
<td>Search for patterns of meaning</td>
<td>Search for disguised contradictions hidden by ideology; open spaces for previously silenced voices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal of Paradigm</td>
<td>Uncover truth and facts as quantitatively specified relations among variables</td>
<td>Describe meanings, understand members' definitions of the situation, examine how objective realities are produced</td>
<td>Uncover hidden interests; expose contradictions; enable more informed consciousness; displace ideology with scientific insights; change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of knowledge or form of theory</td>
<td>Verified hypotheses involving valid, reliable and precisely measured variables</td>
<td>Abstract descriptions of meanings and members= definitions of situations produced in natural contexts.</td>
<td>Structural or historical insights revealing contradictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods and Types of</td>
<td>Experiments; questionnaires; secondary data analysis; coded</td>
<td>Ethnography; participant observation; interviews; conversational analysis;</td>
<td>Field research, historical analysis, dialectical analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>documents</th>
<th>grounded theory</th>
<th>Quantitative: regression; Likert scaling; structural equation modeling</th>
<th>Case studies; conversational and textual analysis; expansion analysis</th>
<th>Qualitative: grounded theory testing</th>
<th>PM: deconstruction, textual analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Source:** Gephart (1999).

### Positivism

The positivistic paradigm of research originated in the 19th century as an attempt to apply the methods of the natural sciences to social phenomena (Smith 1983). Positivism has been prevailing paradigm and is rooted in the natural sciences, which have a longer history than social sciences (Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran 2001). Positivist research involves “… precise empirical observations of individual behavior in order to discover … causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human activity” (Neumann 1997, pp. 63). Positivism is philosophy of science based on the view that in social as well as natural sciences, data derived from sensory experience and logical treatments of such data are together the exclusive source of all authentic knowledge. Obtaining and "verifying" data that can be received from the senses is known as empirical evidence (Endres and Rombach 2003). The positivist paradigm is characterized by: the replicability of the results, specificity in the definition, that is, a sound hypothesis; environmental control; a rigorous research design; and control of extraneous variables (Limerick and Cunnington 1993).

### Interpretivist

Interpretive paradigm is fundamentally concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand social members' definition of a situation (Schwandt 1994). Interpretive theory involves building a second order theory or theory of members' theories (Schultz 1973). Interpretivist research sees people experience physical and social reality in different ways and try to describe different meanings as well as understand members’ definitions of the situation since
interpretivism assumes the world is largely what people perceive it to be and the reality and socially and intersubjectively structured (Gephart 1999).

**Critical theory**

Critical theory aims to empower creating a better world by uncovering and going beyond surface illusion (Kinchelow and Mclaren 2011). Different from Interpretivist research which tends to describe different meanings, Critical theory research tries to uncover myths and revealing hidden meanings (Cavana et al. 2001).

Among these paradigms, the positivism paradigm is considered appropriate for this research because it allows a clear understanding to identify the VCBs that are practiced within virtual communities. Positivism can be applied to human beings which illustrates that the behavior of people is determined by social restrictions and through observation and external cues, patterns are developed and produce consistent results (Sarantakos 2005). The purpose of this study is to identify and explore the VCBs of brand community members within SNSs. To identify the social world that people have produced and to uncover socially constructed meaning by understanding of individual or a group of individuals a positivism paradigm is regarded to be the most appropriate basic assumptions underpin this research. Moreover, positivist studies generally attempt to test theory, in an attempt to increase the predictive understanding of phenomena (Myers 1997). This study seeks to investigate the differences of VCBs between high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands within FBCs. Moreover, this study attempts to test the current concepts related to the VCBs within virtual communities, hence a positivist approach is suitable for this study. Moreover, previous research (e.g. Yin 1992) indicates that the positivist paradigm includes elements of deductive and inductive approaches. This study also intends to apply both deductive and inductive reasoning to identify and explore the VCBs performed in virtual communities. Hence a positivist approach is deemed suitable for a study like this.
3.3 Qualitative Research

The two broad categories of method to academic research are the qualitative and the quantitative research methods (Bryman 2008). The quantitative method involves statistical analysis and focuses on measuring, confirming or validating relationships between variables to develop generalizations that contribute to theory (Leedy and Ormrod 2005). It therefore relies on numerical evidence drawn from a relatively large sample (e.g. large numbers of people or organizations) to analyze the data and draw conclusions about the population from which the sample was drawn (Ticehurst and Veal 2000).

On the other hand, qualitative method is used to obtain “a more naturalistic, contextual and holistic understanding of human beings in society” (Todd, Nerlich and McKeown 2004, pp. 4). This approach focuses on studying phenomena in their natural settings and striving to make sense of or interpreting phenomena with respect to the meanings people bring to them (Bannister et al. 1994; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). At the same time, the qualitative method emphasizes the exploration and seeks a deeper understanding of complex situations in order to build theory from the ground up (Leedy and Ormrod 2005) and involves an analysis of words rather than numbers (Bryman 2008). Creswell (1994) defines qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.

Ticehurst and Veal (2000) summarizes the following advantages of qualitative research

I. A method enabling the researcher to understand and explain the personal experiences of individuals,

II. emphasizes people’s understanding and interpretations, and can be used for very narrow studies as well as holistic studies that examine the totality of a situation,
III. allows the researcher to experience research issues from a participant’s perspective,

IV. uses a combination of techniques and may even invent methods to provide a broad understanding of a social situation and tends to focus on human interest issues that are meaningful to everyday managers.

Now the justification of using qualitative research as an appropriate method for this study is provided.

3.3.1 Justification of qualitative study

The following discussion explains the rationale for selecting qualitative research method for this study.

Firstly, the limited study concerning VCBs in brand communities (Schau et al. 2009) suggest that the concept of VCB is poorly understood in the online context. In this regards, Lee (1999) indicates that research which involves poorly understood phenomena is better approached through qualitative method. In addition, this study aims to gather rich information in order to explore and understand the situations, activities and perspectives of VCBs experienced in virtual communities. Qualitative research is more suitable in achieving in-depth understanding of a situation (Lee 1999; Carson et al. 2001); hence qualitative study seems to be more appropriate for this study.

Secondly, this study emphasizes the discovery and verification of theories on VCBs in the virtual communities. Such an emphasis is best approached by qualitative research (Lee 1999; Denzin and Lincoln 1998).

Thirdly, this study wants to examine the acts (sayings and doings) of individuals performed in virtual communities as part of their everyday life. In other words this study wants to understand the behavior of individuals from a natural setting. Therefore it is more suitable to
approach this condition by using qualitative research rather than quantitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 1998).

Based on the above mentioned points qualitative research is considered appropriate for this study. Now the specific choice of the methodology for this research needs to be discussed. Hence the use of ethnography and netnography is introduced in the following section.

**3.4 Ethnography and netnography**

Ethnography, from the Greek, ethnos = people; graph= writing is a discovery-based research method borrowed from cultural anthropology utilized by both marketing scholars (Arnould and Wallendourf 1994, Schouten and McAlexandar 1995) as well as practitioners (Khermouch 2001, Mariampolski 2006). It is a qualitative design which describes and interprets shared and learned patterns and of values, behaviors and beliefs and language of a culture sharing group (Jordan 2003). Moreover, ethnography involves extended observations of the group, in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants Creswell (2007). Flexibility is one great advantage of ethnographic approach. In this regards, Kozinets (2002) indicates “the rich qualitative content of ethnography's findings and the open-endedness that makes it adaptable to a variety of circumstances have led to its popularity as a method. This flexibility has allowed ethnography to be used for more than a century to represent and understand the behaviors of people who belong to almost every race, nationality, religion, culture, and age group—and even behaviors of some nonhuman species groupings” (pp. 62).

The examples of positivist research are also found within qualitative studies (Yin 2011; Benbasat et al. 1987; Straub, Gefen and Boudreu 2004) and ethnography includes both qualitative and quantitative methods (Whitehead 2004). In this regards Denzin and Lincoln (1994) indicate the effective ethnographer should be a bricoleur, a jack of all trades, one who uses whatever tools and techniques are at hand in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question. According to Kozinets (2009) ethnography is thus inherently assimilative practice, which is interlinked with multiple other methods. In this regards,
Whitehead (2004) further indicates that ethnographers should be open to a variety of methods, including methods that are positivist in their epistemologies. This indicates that a positivistic approach through ethnography is possible and ethnographers should be open to utilizing any of the method.

The issue of ethnography is introduced. Now it is important to initiate the notion of netnography as the preferred methodology for this research.

### 3.4.1 Netnography

"Netnography," or ethnography on the internet, is a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications (Kozinets 2006). Netnography is used to understand virtual communities in the same ways that anthropologists seek to understand the cultures, norms and practices of face-to-face communities (Sandlin 2007). Kozinets (2002) has defined netnography in terms of both product and process. As a product, a netnography is ‘a written account of on-line cyber culture, informed by the methods of cultural anthropology’ (pp. 470). As a process or research methodology, netnography is a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications.

This study proposes to use netnographic approach as it is suggested that netnography can offer greater insight into the virtual communities in relation to consumers’ needs and wants, choices, symbolic meanings and more (Xun and Reynolds 2010). The following section lends some precision to this choice of method.

### 3.4.1.1 Justification of netnographic study

Kozinets (2009) indicates that netnography is a standalone method when it comes to doing research with online communities. As this study wants to identify the VCBs within online communities – a netnographic method appear to be appropriate. Some important issues of choosing netnography for this research are discussed herewith.
Time saving and economic

Traditional ethnographic research is incredibly time consuming, typically consisting months of field work, in-depth observations and interviews; on the other hand netnography is far less time consuming and elaborate (Wolcott 1994). Moreover, netnography is costless compared to ethnography which requires physical travel and face-to-face fieldwork costs; thus making more ambitious studies potentially more feasible (Xun and Reynolds 2010). This indicates that the data collection will involve less time and money with netnography, for which netnography is chosen.

Researcher affect

In addition, traditional ethnographic research requires a considerable amount of time to become immersed in the field and always carries with it a potential ‘researcher effect’ whereby the presence of the researcher affects or interrupts the natural, normal practices of everyday life (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Netnography, on the other hand, can be conducted entirely unobtrusively, if desired (Kozinets 2002) and in this kind of netnographic research there is no scope of any ‘researcher effect’ which is why netnography is a favorable method for this study.

Raw impression

Members’ comments within these virtual communities are considered as raw impressions of them within these sites (Kozinets 2009) which is a unique advantage of using netnography for this study. In this regards Xun and Reynolds (2010) adds, “in a real face-to-face interview or focus group, there is limited chance for self-reflection before speaking. Correspondingly, there might be natural concern for the possible loss of first reactions, with respondents purposefully polishing their written answers. However, the ability to directly quote online respondents, or make use of references to other members or to related links in their posts, for
instance, could add greater explanatory power” (pp. 19). This is another great advantage of using netnography for this study.

Justification for choosing netnography is discussed now the steps in netnographic process are discussed and specific strategies carried out under each of these stages will subsequently be addressed.

3.5 Steps in netnographic study

The following methodological stages and procedures for netnographic studies are employed (Kozinets 2002):

I. Entrée: Formulation of research questions and identification of appropriate online forum for study.

II. Data collection: direct copy from the computer-mediated communications of online community members and observations of the community and its members, interactions and meanings.

III. Analysis and interpretation: Classification, coding, analysis and contextualization of communicative acts

IV. Research ethics: various issues related to ethics in online medium.

V. Member checks: presentations of some or all final research report’s finding to the people who have been studied in order to solicit their comments.

Details of these five methodological issues are presented within the following sections.
3.6 Issues related to Entrée

This section explains the issues relating to entrée and the remaining steps of data collection and analysis will be examined in the subsequent sections. The challenges associated with entree in a netnographic study are different from a traditional ethnography. The discussion begins with the issues related to access in a netnographic site, followed by the justification of choosing covert role for this research. In the end the specific reason for choosing Facebook as a context for this study is enlightened followed by a discussion on the choice of the brands for this study.

3.6.1 Issues related to Access

The SNS of Facebook is the context on which virtual communities are examined in this study. Chosen because if it profound impact on social media on the web, these sites have the added advantage of being relatively easily accessed.

One of the key and yet most difficult steps in ethnography is gaining access to a social setting that is relevant to the research problem in which one is interested (Bryman 2008). In this regards, Feldman (2007) indicates that the problem of obtaining access often comes as a rude surprise to researchers who have not anticipated the difficulties that could be involved.

However entering the online community is distinct and different to traditional ethnography on many aspects. In this regards, Kozinets (2009) indicates that the access in netnography is relatively easier from face-to-face entrée. One of the major advantages of using Facebook is that becoming a member of these FBCs is relatively easy as they are free and can be done within minutes. Moreover, anyone can view the entire comments posted by an associate within FBCs as long as they are a member of Facebook. If any Facebook member wants to post a message within any of these FBCs they need to be a member of that site which can be done just by clicking the “Like” option of that site. The ease of access within FBCs guides the decision to choose Facebook as a context for this study.
3.6.2 Overt versus covert role

Research for this study is undertaken covertly and participation in any of the discussion is not carried out. Previous studies (e.g. Brown et al. 2003, Fuller et al. 2007) have indicated in performing the netnographic study covertly and assert that covert studies of online communities are desirable. Of most significance is that external influence may lead the members of these communities to change their behavior once they are aware that someone else is watching them (Bryman 2008) and netnography is a good method of observing participants in their natural setting (Kozinets 2009) - for which a covert role is opted.

3.6.3 Online forum

As indicated, Facebook is chosen as context for this research. The following criteria developed by Kozinets (2009) are used to assess suitability of this SNS.

I. Relevant: they (the online forums) relate to the research focus and question.

Facebook is uniquely designed for this study. The purpose of the current study is to examine VCBs in FBCs across different involvement levels (high/low) and product positioning (utilitarian/hedonic) criteria. Hence, it is important to locate a SNS that have a huge number of brand communities with variety of product types. Facebook has the most number of fan pages since it is used by business and non-business organizations (Waters et al. 2009; Marandi et al. 2010). In 2009, there were more than one million developers and entrepreneurs from more than 180 countries on Facebook (Marandi et al. 2010) - indicating variety of brand communities available within the site; for which it is chosen.

II. Active: they have recent and regular communications.

Facebook is the most popular SNS with a huge number of members and unique member visits. Facebook has 1 billion members (Facebook 2012) while Twitter has only 200 million accounts (Chiang 2011). According to a latest survey in October 2012, Facebook is the no. 1
SNS with 750 million unique visitors every month ([www.ebizmba.com](http://www.ebizmba.com)), Myspace and Twitter are 2nd and 3rd respectively with 250 and 110 million unique visitors respectively ([www.ebizmba.com](http://www.ebizmba.com)). This indicates Facebook has most number of recent memberships and communications for which Facebook is chosen for this study.

III. Interactive: the members have a flow of communications between participants.

Facebook has a unique feature called ‘thread’ by which other Facebook friends can re-post within a message written by a member. If someone posts a message within FBCs other members of that site can also take part within the same discussion and this conversation will be part of that particular thread. The ease of using this feature develops various discussions among the users. As many of the FBCs have millions of members and these members want to increase their social value through Facebook (Boyd and Ellison 2010) there is a great flow of communication between these members – for which Facebook is chosen.

IV. Heterogeneous: they have a number of different participants

Anyone who is over thirteen can join Facebook (Ripley 2011) and people from all age group, gender, ethnic background join Facebook (Boyd and Ellison 2010) which makes Facebook a collection of heterogeneous group of people. This is another great advantage of using Facebook.

V. Data rich: offering more detailed or descriptively rich data

As Facebook has the most number of members compared to any other SNSs (Dunay and Kroeger 2011); these members often try to share their personal feelings and emotions through their message post (Ellison et al. 2009). Moreover Facebook is used as to maintain and create new relationships (Ellison 2007); as a result when someone asks about a particular issue within FBCs others want to share their experiences with detailed message post, which in turn offers a descriptively rich data for the researcher. Moreover a maximum number of characters for a twitter post are hundred and forty characters (Ogasawara 2009) whereas in Facebook a message post can take up to sixty three thousand characters (Protalinski 2011). This huge
message option gives the members the freedom to express them in a more narrative manner – indicating a descriptively rich data. All these positive features make Facebook a unique choice for this study.

Justification of using Facebook as a context for this study is explained, now the use of the specific brand within high and low involved category and also utilitarian and hedonic brands are discussed.

3.6.4 Justification for choosing soft drink and automobile for this study

Automobile and soft drink are chosen as a context for data collection of this study. A significant portion of our day to day consumption is attached with both these product categories which make them a suitable context for this study. The following discussion will shed more light for such a decision. Figure 3.1 shows the industries and also the specific brands chosen for this study.

Figure 1

**Figure 3.1 List of brands under each category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utilitarian Brands</th>
<th>Hedonic Brands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High involved Category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>Chrysler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honda</td>
<td>Volvo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low involved Category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatorade</td>
<td>Sprite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PowerAde</td>
<td>Fanta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: developed for this study.
Every year Interbrand publishes the “Best Global Brands” and provides a ranking of the Top 100 brands in the world. The latest ranking published in 2011 shows that Coca Cola is the number one brand and since 2001 the first spot belongs to Coca Cola (Interbrand 2011). The data indicate that among twenty five top brands; six of them represent two different product categories; automobile and soft drink (four brands of automobiles and two soft drinks). For brand community research it is very important to select product categories with a rich history of customer retention and brand image (Cova and Pace 2006); hence this study aims to focus on these two product categories that enjoy such attribute.

Another important reason to select these two product categories are the frequency of use; as most consumers generally use both automobiles and soft drinks frequently. Automobile is part of our everyday life and the automobile industry is one of the most interesting business sectors in the global environment for analysis (Weihrich 1993). Moreover, Belk (2004) states “there are few possessions as important to many adult American men as their cars. They often lavish more time, money, emotion, and effort on acquiring, learning about, and caring for these vehicles than they do on their family members” (pp. 31). According to a study in 2010, 95% of the US households own a car and 85% of the US population goes to work every day with their car (Chase 2010). Similarly, the “2003 Global soft drinks report” reports that in 2003, 467 billion liters of soft drinks were consumed which is 75 liters per person per year or more than 200 ML’s per person each day (mindfully.org). Hence the use of these two product categories in the current research will help identify the VCBs as both these product categories play a significant role in our day to day consumption and consumers have a certain degree of attachment with these products.

3.6.5 Justification of choosing the specific brands

This study acknowledges Crowley, Spangenberg and Hughes (1992) remark that different products can be high or low in both hedonic and utilitarian attributes at the same time. However, this research takes a more holistic approach and conceptualizes hedonism and utilitarianism in terms of the brands positioning (Okada 2005, Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000; O’Curry and Strahilevitz 2001). Consistent with Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000) this study
examines consumer choice between two set of brands which is seen as positioned on hedonic dimensions and the other is seen as positioned on utilitarian dimensions.

Figure 3.1 outlines the specific brand chosen for this study. These brands are considered for overall market share, brand awareness, value of the brand and image of the brands. The justification behind choosing these four brands is explained herewith:

- **High involved/utilitarian brands (Honda Fit and Ford Fiesta)**

Honda and Ford are renowned for producing high performance vehicles with cutting edge technology in the automobile industry. Table 3.2 indicates that both these companies are consistently placed among the top ranked most valued global car brands and close competitors with fourth and fifth position. Hence, these two automobile icons are chosen for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toyota</td>
<td>24,837</td>
<td>22,673</td>
<td>20,784</td>
<td>19,448</td>
<td>18,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercedes-Benz</td>
<td>20,006</td>
<td>21,331</td>
<td>21,371</td>
<td>21,010</td>
<td>21,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMW</td>
<td>17,126</td>
<td>15,886</td>
<td>15,106</td>
<td>14,425</td>
<td>12,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honda</td>
<td>15,788</td>
<td>14,874</td>
<td>15,625</td>
<td>15,064</td>
<td>14,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>13,159</td>
<td>14,475</td>
<td>17,066</td>
<td>20,403</td>
<td>30,092</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volkswagen</td>
<td>5,617</td>
<td>6,410</td>
<td>6,938</td>
<td>7,209</td>
<td>7,338</td>
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<tr>
<td>Porsche</td>
<td>3,777</td>
<td>3,646</td>
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<td>a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audi</td>
<td>3,686</td>
<td>3,288</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyundai</td>
<td>3,480</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nissan</td>
<td>3,203</td>
<td>2,833</td>
<td>2,495</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a- Not featured among top 100 global brands for the year

Source: Strach and Everett (2006).
The Honda Fit is a five-door hatchback subcompact car manufactured by the Honda Motor Company of Japan introduced in June 2001. Honda Fit positions itself within the subcompact car segment and it is the first entry level car for Honda (Williams 2010). The new 2011 Honda Fit is the cheapest priced gas–electric vehicle in Japan and focuses on its fuel efficiency of 71 MPG (Loveday 2010). All these factors are considered as utilitarian qualities; hence this study considers Honda Fit as utilitarian product and not a luxury product.

The Ford Fiesta is a front wheel drive subcompact car manufactured and marketed by Ford Motor Company to compete with other small vehicles like Mazda 2 and Honda Fit (Patton 2010). Ford Fiesta positions the brand on features like keyless entries, 40 miles per gallon (MPG) and hands free SYNC (allows users to make hands-free telephone calls and control music and other functions using voice commands) (McNamara 2010) – all of which are utilitarian benefits for its members. Hence this study considers Ford Fiesta as a utilitarian brand.

Researchers (Assael 1987, Nkwocha et al. 2005) indicate that high involved products are less frequently purchased durable products that are usually high priced and involve higher level of risks. Both Honda Fit and Ford Fiesta have similar features hence they are considered as high involved products.

**Reason behind choosing Honda Fit and Ford Fiesta as utilitarian brand**

Previous studies has documented and categorized both these brands as utilitarian option. For example: Tremblay, Tremblay and Kosin’s (2013) study evaluates individual *car consumer’s enthusiast rating* which assessed things such as driving pleasure, ability to thrill, styling beauty and the ability to impress others. Honda Fit performed poorly in such dimension and received a rating of 5 out of 10; however other brands with higher ratings were Dodge Challenger (8), Porsche Boxster (9) and Lotis Elise (10). Such findings confirm that consumers perceive Honda Fit as low in hedonic dimension. Furthermore, various other consumer reports indicate that they view these brands as high on utilitarian dimension. For example a New York Times article indicates that consumers are switching to compact or
subcompact, smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles in recent years and two of the choices for these consumers are Honda Fit and Ford Fiesta (Vlastic 2008). Both these models are rated at more than 30 miles per gallon for highway driving and consumer’s decisions to purchase these brands are mostly guided by such a value added option (Vlastic 2008). Hence this study states that both Honda Fit and Ford Fiesta are high on utilitarian dimension for which both of them are categorized as high involved/utilitarian brand.

**Why high involved/utilitarian product is a valid option**

Various studies (e.g. Petty and Cacioppo 1984; Nkwocha et al. 2005, Thorne and Bruner 2006) contend that consumers of high involved products tend to focus more highly diagnostic cues such as attribute and performance information to evaluate products and make more product comparisons to ensure product quality and value. This indicates that marketers can position products based on such criteria as consumers are willing to purchase products claiming such benefits. Moreover, Sherif and Hovland (1961) suggested various possible antecedents of involvement; one of which is intrinsic importance of an issue. An intrinsic product cue can be any product characteristic inherent in the product itself, such as engine capacity for a car or mileage capacity (Lee and Lou 1996; Teas and Agarwal 2000). Furthermore, in their development of an involvement scale, Laurent and Kapferer (1985) view perceived risk to be an antecedent of involvement and Dholakia (2001) indicates five types of risk arise from objective features of the product or service such as cost (financial risk), performance features (performance risk), possibility of bodily harm (physical risk) and the possibility of excessive investment of time (time risk). Such refutations indicate that both high and low involved products can be positioned from a utilitarian dimension as consumers place greater importance on such factors.

- **High involved/hedonic brands (Chrysler Crossfire and Volvo)**

Chrysler Crossfire and Volvo are considered for this category. Both these brands are renowned within automobile brands and manufactures superior quality products (Waterman 2006; Zhou and Zhang 2011). This is why both the brands are chosen under this category.
Chrysler is one of the 20 largest automobile companies worldwide and considered as the smallest of the "Big Three" U.S. automakers along with Ford and General Motors. (New York Times 2012). The Chrysler Crossfire is a rear-wheel drive, sports car marketed by Chrysler which is the first all-new vehicle to emerge from the union between auto giants Chrysler and Mercedes-Benz known as DaimlerChrysler (Sessions 2003). The Crossfire was produced beginning in the last quarter of 2003 until 2007. The total number was built around 80,000 making it a somewhat limited production car (Waterman 2006). Chrysler Crossfire is the true luxury sports model that Chrysler has had within a decade and Crossfire targets the thrill seeking achievers with an interest for power and luxury (Sessions 2003). Hence, Chrysler Crossfire is considered as a hedonic brand.

Volvo is one of the world’s 20 largest automobile companies and enjoys high prestige in excellent quality and performance in northern Europe especially known for its safety and environmental protection (Zhou and Zhang 2011). However within the years Volvo has successfully rebranded itself to a more luxury brand and working against the competitors like Audi, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz. In this regards, Rubin, Schultz and Hatch (2008) indicates that Volvo has evolved from eccentric ‘practical’ car brand to luxury brand. Similarly Strach and Everett (2005) consider Volvo as one of the five premium brands under Ford. All these factors indicate that Volvo is a luxury brand for which this study considers it as a hedonic brand.

Researchers (Assael 1987, Nkwocha et al. 2005) indicates that high involved products are less frequently purchased durable products that are usually high priced and involves higher level of risks. Both Volvo and Chrysler Crossfire have similar features hence they are considered as high involved products.

**Reason behind choosing Chrysler Crossfire and Volvo as Hedonic brand**

Various studies have considered both Chrysler Crossfire and Volvo as a luxury brand with higher perception within hedonic dimension. For example Mazali and Rodrigues- Neto (2007) considered various automotive types, segments and sub segments and categorized Chrysler
Crossfire as a luxury and luxury/sports model. Various other consumer reports also indicated similar point. For example Sessions (2003) states that consumers perceive Chrysler Crossfire as a premium sporty two-seater; considering its interior equipped with standard leather upholstery, sleek panels and dashboard along with a heated glass rear window. Moreover, the Crossfire features a 3.2 liter, supercharged version of the V6 and a mighty 330 horsepower engine which can make 60 miles within 5 seconds (www.businessweek.com). Sessions (2003) further specifies that the price of Chrysler Crossfire starts with $36,000 in USA and its major competitors are Porsche Boxter, BMW Z4 and Nissan 350Z- indicating that the brand is targeting the luxury end of the market. Furthermore, Rubin, Schultz and Hatch (2008) indicates that Volvo has evolved from eccentric ‘practical’ car brand to luxury brand and Strach and Everett (2005) consider Volvo as one of the five premium brands under Ford. Hence this study categorized both Chrysler Crossfire and Volvo as high involved/hedonic brand.

- **Low involved/utilitarian brands (Gatorade and PowerAde)**

Gatorade and PowerAde is chosen under this category as they are the market leader and the follower within the lucrative and fast growing sports drinks industry (Fredrix 2008). Gatorade and PowerAde dominate the sports drink industry with 99.4% of the market share of the U.S market (MacArthur 2006).

Gatorade is the market leader in the $6 billion sport drink industry with 77.2% market share in 2008 (Fredrix 2008). With the increasing dominance of sports drinks as popular refreshments, the carbonated soft drink industry actually had its first volume loss in 2005 (0.6%) while Gatorade’s volume increased by 21.5% (MacArthur 2006). Gatorade claims that it is backed by more than 40 years of scientific research which replace body fluids, hydrates 90% better than water, enhances muscle action, fights fatigue and boosts brain fuel (Howard 2007). All these claims are in favor of providing utilitarian benefits to its target market, hence Gatorade is considered under utilitarian product category.

PowerAde is a sports drink manufactured and marketed by The Coca-Cola Company. First introduced in 1988, its primary competitor is PepsiCo’s Gatorade. PowerAde is the market
follower in the sports drink market and has 13.2% market share in 2008 (Fredrix 2008). PowerAde incorporates similar idea to its target audience by claiming that it is a complete sports drink. The latest advertising message informs that PowerAde ION4 replenishes the key electrolytes lost in sweat, and that their ingredients calcium and magnesium are “critical” electrolytes (Hein 2009). The tagline of the ad message is “Upgrade Your Formula. Upgrade Your Game.” – indicates in favor of a utilitarian benefit rendered to its consumers by which they can upgrade their game. Hence PowerAde is considered as a utilitarian brand.

Researchers (Bloch 1982; Elliott and Percy 2007) indicates that low involved products are more frequently purchased products that are low priced and involves low level of risks. Both Gatorade and PowerAde have similar features hence they are considered as low involved products.

**Reason behind choosing Gatorade and PowerAde as utilitarian brand**

Previous studies have documented that both Gatorade and PowerAde is a utilitarian choice for sports athletes. For example: Maier, Moskowitz, Beckley and Ashman (2009) indicates that functional beverages include calcium-fortified orange juice, herbal iced teas, sports drinks, soymilk, medicinal teas, powdered drink mixes, cranberry and prune juices. Furthermore, Chung (1999) indicates that a sports-drink is a functional drink for athletes as the main purpose of this product category is to replenish body fluid and provide energy sufficiently during exercise to minimize the risk of injury. Studies also confirm that both Gatorade and PowerAde contain carbohydrates and electrolysis which helps athlete regain important body fluids lost within sweat and workouts (Gwacham 2011). Moreover, Forbes et al. (2007) showed that using these products can delay fatigue and/or improve the quality of a resistance training workout. All these studies show that consumers use these products for various utilitarian benefits like replenish body fluids, provide energy, delay fatigue, minimizing risk of injury etc. for which both these brands are considered as utilitarian brands.
• Low involved / hedonic brands (Sprite and Fanta)

Both Sprite and Fanta hold first position in terms of sales in their respective categories. Sprite leads lemon-lime segment in the U.S and Fanta leads the fruit flavored drink segment (McWilliams 2010). In 2010 Sprite and Fanta were 6th and 10th brand respectively in Carbonated Soft drink category as far as sales are concerned (Hartlaub 2010). Sprite and Fanta are chosen under this category because of their strong market share, unique identity and image and its association with the consumer base.

Sprite positions itself with honest and straightforward attitude that sets it apart from other soft drink. Sprite’s "obey your thirst" campaign, featuring the popular slogan "Image is nothing; thirst is everything," is consistent with the image portrayed within its target audience (Edwards 1997). Moreover, Malar, Krohmer, Hoyer and Nyffenegger (2011) indicate that Sprite has used an authentic branding approach to generate a stronger hedonic attachment among its consumers. Hence Sprite is considered as a hedonic brand for this study.

Fanta is one of the Coca-Cola Company’s biggest brands, with annual sales in 190 countries that are estimated at more than $12 billion (Elliott 2011). Fanta integrated a new campaign centered on its ‘More Fanta, less serious’ proposition and designed to encourage spontaneous fun (Gough 2002). The campaign seeks to build on ads bearing the “Less serious” theme that have been running for five years in regions like Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America (Elliott 2011). Jonathan Mindehall (Vice President of Global marketing strategy and creative communications of Coca-Cola) indicates that Fanta is presented as the epitome and enabler of “a more playful attitude” (Elliott 2011) – all these represent Fanta as being a hedonic brand.

Researchers (Bloch 1982; Elliott and Percy 2007) indicates that low involved products are low priced and more frequently purchased products and involves low level of risks. Both Sprite and Fanta has similar features hence they are considered as low involved products.
**Reason behind choosing Fanta and Sprite as hedonic brand**

Maison, Greenwlad and Bruin’s (2001) study concentrated in identifying consumer attitude towards soft drinks and fruit juice. Their findings revealed Sprite and Fanta scored high in ‘Good for thirst’ and ‘Tasty’ dimension (mostly a hedonic benefit) whereas performed low in both ‘natural’ and ‘healthy’ dimension (utilitarian benefit). Such a finding clearly indicates that consumers perceive these brands as high on hedonic dimension (refreshing and tasty); however do not consider them as a healthy option (utilitarian dimension). Various other studies (e.g. Wyshak 2000, Mistry and Grenby 1993; Harrison and Roeder 1991) also indicated that Carbonated Soft Drinks like Sprite and Fanta have immediate and long term health hazards (low in utilitarian benefit); however consumers drink these brands to gratify their immediate thirst motive (high on hedonic benefit). As a result both Sprite and Fanta are considered as hedonic brands for this study.

**Why low involved/hedonic product is a valid option**

Lastovicka and Gardener (1978) indicates that the consumers of low involved products not only thinks of the product class as trivial, but they further have little bond to such a brand choice. In this regards, (Petty and Cacioppo 1984; Nkwocha et al. 2005) specify that consumers of low involvement context evaluate products based on some superficial analysis of readily available and salient cues like brand image - indicating that a hedonic choice is a valid option within low involved context.

**3.6.6 Knowing the online community**

It is important that market researcher learn as much as possible about the forums, the groups, and the individual participants they seek to understand (Kozinets 2002). The researcher has been a member of FBCs since June 2010 and closely followed these sites by reading the posts, following the threads, watching the pictures and video’s posted by the members. This prolonged observation also helped to comprehend and categorize the messages that are purely social in nature and out of context for this study. Ultimately, this assisted to understand the
kind of vocabulary being used in the particular sites, the culture and shared meanings that are unique to each and every brand communities of Facebook.

3.7 Data Collection technique

Whereas quantitative data deals with numbers, qualitative data deals with meanings (Dey 1993). As Sayer (1992) suggests, “meanings are mediated mainly through language and action. Language is not a matter of subjective opinion. Concepts are constructed in terms of inter subjective language which allows us to communicate intelligibly and interact effectively” (pp. 32). In this regards, Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) suggest that the goal of understanding a phenomenon from the point of view of the participants and its particular social and institutional context is largely lost when textual data are quantified. The following section explains why observation is considered as the source of data for this study.

3.7.1 Observation

One of the two most prevalent forms of qualitative data is observations of the data in the real world (Fine and Elsbach 2000). Observation focuses on naturally occurring constellations of consumption behaviors (Boyd and Levy 1963; Baudrillard 1968; Solomon and Assael 1987; McCracken 1989) and provides a perspective in action that manifests internalized cultural norms, values and beliefs (Snow and Anderson 1987). In this regards Arnould and Wallendourf (1994) suggest that ‘instead of observing people doing what they might do or say if real-world complexities did not impose on them, as in laboratory experiments, ethnographers observe actual people's behavior in real time; and rather than asking respondents to generalize about their behavior as in survey research, ethnographers record the particulars of naturally occurring behaviors and conversations’ (pp. 486).

The actual methods of observation—spending time in a natural setting and recording what occurs (Jorgensen 1989) is the method that is applied in this study; which involved downloading large amount conversational cultural data from archives. In this regards, Kozinets (2002) further indicate that archival cultural data provide what amounts to a cultural baseline and saved communal interactions provide the netnographer with a convenient bank
of observational data that may stretch back for years or in some cases well over a decade. In many of these brand communities members’ conversations in a written form are posted and archived for many years. This study is benefitted from these prior transcriptions of the posted text, images and video’s.

3.7.2 What kinds of data are downloaded?

All the messages posted in these online communities apart from the following messages are downloaded during the data collection phase:

a. Spam messages,

b. Posts that was not written in English,

c. Messages that are purely social in nature are not included, for example: I had a good time with my girlfriend last night or I am having taco with Mexican sauce yammmmmmm etc.

This however resulted with a huge number of data for further analysis. In this regards, Kozinets (2002) suggests that the netnographer should consider only the “on topic” massages and exclude the “off topic” messages to deal with the huge amounts of data. As one of the major purposes of this study is to explore the new VCBs (If any) that are performed in these brand communities; it is important to critically analyze every possible messages that may refer to a new VCB. Hence all the other messages are downloaded and considered for further analysis except the three types provided above.

3.7.3 Visual and graphical data

Members of these brand communities upload their photos and videos to show their attachment to the brand. These photos and videos denote various consumption events and provide a rich description of consumption behavior (Kozinets 2009). In this regards Chalfen (1987) indicates that photos taken during a consumption event by participants can help identify culturally
**significant moments** that encode shared emotions, meanings, and transitions. Hence, these photos and also the videos are downloaded and considered for further analysis.

Special attention is given to the background color and font styles as well as more overt graphical representations like drawings, emoticons and photographs, as they carry some special qualitative meanings to be considered during data analysis (Kozinets 2009). The participants’ postings are captured exactly as they appear on screen, in the original font, without any corrections of spelling, grammar or punctuation. This is consistent with Markham’s (2004) suggestion that the researchers literally reconfigure these people when they edit their sentences, because for many of them, these messages are a deliberate presentation of self.

### 3.7.4 Issues with timeline with data collection

For this study, eight different brand community sites in Facebook are considered for data collection through naturalistic observation. The amount of data varied greatly depending on the specific brand community sites. These messages are considered in between February 2010 to August 2011. These brands have a significant number of followers ranging from 3000 to 8.7 million and huge amount of downloaded data is generated. To manage this massive amount of data; among two of the brands under each category (high and low involved; utilitarian and hedonic) for one of them twelve months of data is considered for analysis and for the other brand six months of data are analyzed. However, more data are downloaded for PowerAde and Chrysler Crossfire (14 months and 18 months respectively) as both these brands have smaller number of members compared to the other brands. This resulted in a total of more than three thousand pages of data. Moreover, the photos and video’s posted in between February 2010 to October 2011 is considered and the meaningful visual data’s are kept for further analysis. This constructed a huge number of texts, pictures and video’s. Table 3.3 shows the details on various aspects of the data under each brand.
The amount the messages downloaded and the timeline of the data collection for some previous research involving virtual communities is listed in table 3.4.
### Table 8

**Table 3.4 Data collection timeline with previous netnographic studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Number of communities and users</th>
<th>Time engagement</th>
<th>Amount of messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perkins (2010)</td>
<td>1 fan community for a renowned metal band.</td>
<td>1 (one) month</td>
<td>113 posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kozinets et al. (2010)</td>
<td>1 brand (83 blogs for one mobile phone)</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Followed 83 blogs and data included 920 messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osti (2010)</td>
<td>1 (virtual mountaineering communities) with 25 users.</td>
<td>Not indicated.</td>
<td>203 posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton and Hewer (2009)</td>
<td>1 (online ‘Salsa’ dance forum) with 3382 users.</td>
<td>4 years.</td>
<td>1750 message posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Max: 7 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Reilly, Rahinel, Foster and</td>
<td>1 (forum for an undergraduate marketing unit)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1577 messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterson (2007)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandlin (2007)</td>
<td>1 online forum.</td>
<td>7 months</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langer and Beckman (2005)</td>
<td>1 online community.</td>
<td>14 months</td>
<td>896 messages with 164 pages of data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kozinets (2002)</td>
<td>1 (online forum for coffee drinkers).</td>
<td>33 months</td>
<td>179 messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kozinets and Handleman (1998)</td>
<td>11 (internet newsgroups)</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>68 postings; 136 pages of data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table indicates that the current study deals with a huge number of downloaded data. The maximum number of pages that any of these studies have considered is 164 pages whereas the current study deals with almost three thousand pages of data. Moreover, the number of members under this study is huge compared to any of the previous studied undertaken online. The maximum number of members considered is 3382 members whereas three of the brand communities under the current study has more than millions of members.

The previous section introduces the data collection techniques applied for this study and justifies the reasons for which such techniques are undertaken. The following section includes the various issues related to data analysis for this study.

3.8 Data analysis

Raw data can be very interesting to look at, yet they do not help the reader to understand the social world under scrutiny, and the way the participants view it, unless such data have been systematically analyzed to illuminate an existent situation (Basit 2003). Some have depicted qualitative analysis as craftsmanship, others as an art, and still others as a process of detective work (Patton 2002). In this regard, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) notes that qualitative research is distinct from such forms of quantitative inquiry because, among other things, qualitative strategies analyze phenomena from the individual’s perspective and secure richer descriptions of the social world than do quantitative researchers relying on “remote, inferential empirical materials” (pp. 5).

The data analysis process requires a skilful interpretation and handling of the data, and relies on a systematic and rigorous method (Srinivasta and Hopwood 2009; Miles and Huberman 1994). In this regards Leech and Onwueguzie (2007) indicate, “data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories” (pp. 564).
The following suction includes the data analysis process undertaken for this study.

3.8.1 Processes involved with data analysis

The following data analysis processes are undertaken following the guidelines provided by Miles and Huberman (1994).

3.8.1.1 Coding

Coding is the starting point for most forms of qualitative data analysis (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003; Bryman 2008) and also the fundamental analytic process for many types of qualitative research. This study considers Seidel and Kelle’s (1995) view about the role of coding as noticing relevant phenomena; collecting examples of those phenomena; and analyzing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns and structures. Specific emphasis is given so that no data falls between two categories or fit into more than one category Graneheim and Ludman (2003).

- Inductive and deductive reasoning

Both inductive and deductive processes of coding are important to identify the existing categories and also to explore new categories for VCBs (Kondracki, Wellman and Amundson 2002). The preliminary categories and codes are developed during the literature review phase to ensure a better understanding of the data (Bryman 2008). Apart from coding the current items a constant emphasis is made to look for new themes that may emerge from these textual data’s (Miles and Huberman 1994). Once a new code is identified the new code became part of data analysis.

- What is to be coded?

According to the suggestion of Gibbs (2008) this study intends to code “specific acts and behaviors - what people say or do” (pp. 47) in the online communities. The downloaded messages from these brand communities are coded and categorized.
• Coding and Comparison

This study concentrated on identifying and generating as many codes as possible by reading through the downloaded messages, identifying data that are related to the research questions without worrying about the variety of categories Bogdan and Biklen (1992). Some portions of the transcripts contained information that is not relevant to the research question and was not coded at all (Spriggle 1994). To develop further insight about the data sets and the concept under investigation coding process involved re-visiting, re-coding and re-categorizing data (Miles and Huberman 1994). To follow these suggestions; data coding process for this study was done in three phases.

First phase

In this phase all the downloaded messages under the particular brand are photocopied and every single message is read several times to identify the codes. In this period, if a message refers to several different themes than it is coded for all the different relevant themes (Spriggle 1994). In these cases all the related codes are highlighted and written within the text. Some new issues became evident and emerged as the coding process progressed. All the new themes are given a separate name and are included in the coding frame which became the part of the analysis.

Second phase

After the initial reading, the same textual data’s are examined for a second time. Three important aspects are considered during this period. First, all the new themes are compared to already coded instances to determine if the new instances belong to the existing category. Second, special attention is given to the messages that are not coded during the first phase. These messages are read over and over again to identify whether these messages belong to any new codes (identified through inductive analysis) or to any existing codes that the first phase of analysis somehow missed. Third, concentration is given to identify the core meaning
of the messages that generated several codes. Here the messages are read a number of times to identify which of the various codes represent the message the best and each of the messages are assigned with one singe code. In this phase the photos and videos are also examined and assigned a code where appropriate.

**Third phase**

A gap for a month between the second and the third phase of data coding is taken so that the previous ideas do not impact the data coding and a fresh set of data’s are photocopied this time. During this period each and every message are coded only for once. Hence the long messages are also read several times before attaching the associated code which depicts the major underlying theme of the message. The pictures and videos are also scrutinized once again and related codes are assigned.

After doing so, both the codes developed in the written documents (second phase) and the codes developed in the computer files (third phase) are matched to ensure consistency within the coding process (Miles and Huberman 1994).

**3.8.1.2 Retrieving text from codes**

One of the many challenges facing anyone undertaking qualitative research is how to organize and analyze the copious amount of data generated (Morse and Field 1995). Kozinets (2009) indicates that if the netnographer wants to deal with a large amount of data then qualitative data analysis software program can be used to assist with coding and organizing the data. Although the present research dealt with a huge amount of data (almost three thousand pages), but still preferred a manual coding. This took more time compared to the software program however ensured rigorous analysis, quality and consistency.

The next step provides detail description of the sorting and categorizing process undertaken for this study.
3.6.1.2 Sorting and categorizing

It is important that the data are kept in file and sorted in such a manner that retrieving the data is easier. A meticulous process is undertaken to ensure that the data are sorted and categorized in a professional manner. The following steps are taken to ensure improved sorting and categorizing process:

**Step one**

The raw data are categorized, sorted and filed based on each and every brand. All the monthly data under that particular brand are kept within a single file. The title of the file says the brand name and under this file the monthly data’s are kept. The title of these sub files includes the year and month. In this section files for all the eight brands are generated and under each of the file the monthly data’s are kept. For example: here the title of the file is Honda Fit raw data; under this file twelve sub files are generated i.e. Honda Fit March 2010; Honda Fit April 2010, Honda Fit May 2010 and so on. This is the first step in the filing process which will help to retrieve the data’s belonging to the individual codes in later parts.

**Step two**

In this step all the data belonging to a single code for that particular brand are retrieved and kept in a separate file. Here eight files are generated belonging to each brand, under these brands a total of 21 files (15 old and 6 new codes) are kept. For example: here the main file was named Honda Fit and under this file twenty one more sub files were kept; for example: Honda Fit/helping behavior/all data; Honda Fit /Voice /all data etc.

**Step three**

In this step all the data’s belonging to a particular code for each brand is kept in a separate file. In this step 21 different files are generated and under each file eight more files for each
brand is kept. For example in this case a file name is given: helping behavior/ all data; under this file there were eight more files that carried helping behavior data for each brand. For example: Honda Fit /helping behavior, Ford Fiesta /helping behavior, Volvo /helping behavior, Chrysler Crossfire/helping behavior etc. In this way the data’s were categorized based on the VCB’s and all the brand’s data under that particular VCB is kept within one single file. This will help to retrieve these data’s based on the particular VCB.

3.8.2 Concerns with textuality and identity in netnographic data

Netnographic data present challenges because they are textual and not unequivocally associated with particular people. The textual nature of much online communication has often been cast as a limitation of culturally oriented internet research (Kendall 2004). This emphasis on the radical differences between online and face-to-face cultural environments tends to link the textuality of online communication to the disembodiment of the online experience. In this regards Kozinets (2009) indicates, “within a textual reality, the anonymity that is sometimes advantageous at obtaining disclosure can also prevent us from having confidence that we understand the context of our communications. What age, sex, ethnicity is the person who is communicating with us? How can we compare difference in culture members? How do online and offline worlds relate? It can be difficult to definitively link data one draws exclusively from an online community to particular gender, social classes, ages and races” (pp. 130).

However the purpose of the current study is to examine VCBs in FBCs across different involvement levels and product positioning criteria and is not concerned about revealing the association with age and or gender of the participant with the VCBs. As a result the above concerns do not apply to this study. At the same time this study will be guided by Mead’s (1938) interactionist approach, where the unit of analysis is not the person, but the gesture, the behavior or the act, which includes the speech act or utterance.
3.8.3 Concerns about artificially and falsification in netnographic data

Because netnographic data have the option of anonymity, or pseudonymity, concerns are raised about the ability of people to alter their identities, and present themselves untruthfully. In addition, netnography seems to unfavorably compare with in-person ethnography, in that ethnography allows us to compare culture members’ spoken perspectives on their actions with the actions that the researchers actually observe (Tedlock 1991). However, in response to above criticism Whitty (2004) indicates that, although it is widely believed that people falsify self-related information on the internet, the data suggest that this does not occur as frequently as previously assumed. She also suggests that these differences are contingent, to instance, that ‘men tend to lie online more than women, typically exaggerating aspects of themselves, such as education, occupation and income, which are aspects of men often tend to exaggerate off-line in order to attract women’ ( pp. 206). Moreover, Schau and Gilly (2003) asserted that the online representations are generally accurate. Their suggestions came after they met, in person, people who they had first contacted through their personal internet web-pages. They also suggested that online representation may not be a major concern, and that people online are not extravagant liars.

The critical issue of data analysis process is explained in detail. The following section discusses the ethical issues pertaining to this netnographic study.

3.9 Ethical issues

Internet research ethics (IRE) is an emerging and fascinating research field a sphere of inquiry that has been growing steadily since late 1990’s with many disciplinary examinations of what it means to conduct research-ethically- in online or internet based environments (Buchanan 2010). It is thus important to conduct an ethical online survey and know the related issues in the context of ethical netnography. In this regards, Kozinets (2009) indicates, “conducting a netnography that is ethical and adapted to the unique environment of the internet is far from simple. There are perplexing and difficult questions that scholars from philosophy, legal issues, and various academic departments are working to answer in an emergent filed called
internet research ethics or IRE” pp 139. Some of the concerns of these ethical issues are discussed herewith:

3.9.1 The public vs. private fallacy

All the FBCs considered for this study is completely a public site and anyone with an internet facility are free to join and post their comments here. Within each and every of these FBCs it is explicitly written that “the contents of this page are public in nature”. Moreover, it is not necessary to be a member to read the comments of the group; hence the contents can be seen by any other Facebook users, making these pages a public forum.

Moreover this study intends to download the archival data’s available in these public sites for analysis, and hence this research qualifies for a human subject exemption. As the research uses spontaneous conversations, if gathered in a publicly accessible venue, is not human subject’s research according to the Code of Federal Regulations definition (Kozinets 2009). According to him “if the research involves collecting and analyzing existing documents or records that are publicly available, this research qualifies for a human subject exemption. Much of the archival, observational research is a netnography would therefore be of this type” (pp. 141).

3.9.2 Informed consent in cyberspace

It is important to understand that the informed consent is different in cyberspace and sometimes it may be viewed in a different manner too. In this connection Kozinets (2009) indicates, “it is apparent that the archival research and download of existing posts does not strictly qualify as human subject’s research. It is only where interaction or intervention occurs that consent is required” (pp. 142). As this research done covertly and no interaction between the members and also the participants are taking place, hence an informed consent is not necessary.
3.9.3 Citing, anonymizing and crediting research participants

The member’s whose messages are used as a quote for this research is to be given a pseudonym to protect their identity. The first letters of their name are used along with their gender which will be denoted as (M) for male and (F) for females. It is also important to mention here that this research is not dealing with any vulnerable group at the same time the purpose of the current study is to examine VCBs in FBCs across different involvement levels and product positioning criteria - which pose no potential risk and harm to the members of this research.

3.10 Member checks.

Member checks involve presenting some or all of a final research report’s findings to the people who have been studied in order to solicit their comments (Arnould and Wallendourf 1994; Hirschman 1986; Lincoln and Guba 1985). However as this study considered FBCs which have millions of members and hence soliciting information from this huge group of consumers may not be a viable option for which member checks are not carried out.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodology used in this research. In this chapter the justification for choosing qualitative research methodology and using netnography as a method for this study is discussed. Moreover, specific issues related to data collection are presented in this study which includes the use of non-participant observation and the use of visual and graphical data’s. The processes of coding, categorizing and sorting of data’s are provided in detail to identify how the data analysis for this study is carried out. Finally, the consideration of ethical issues for this research is presented. The next chapter presents the findings and analysis of this study.
Chapter 4
Findings and Analysis
4.1 Introduction

The major findings of this study, identified through both inductive and deductive analysis is presented in this chapter. The current chapter is organized in the following way: first of all the findings for research question 1 is presented. This involves presenting data for each of the fifteen VCBs identified during literature review (table 2.4). These data are listed based on the four product involvement and positioning matrix followed by relevant explanation. Subsequent section identifies the findings for research question 2 which addresses the new VCBs ascertained through the inductive analysis. In this section the data examples along with the conceptual underpinning and relevant explanation for these new VCBs are provided based on the four product involvement and positioning matrix. Finally the conclusion to this chapter is presented.

The research questions that guide this study are restated here:

RQ 1: Do brand community value creating behaviors differ according to product involvement and a brand’s utilitarian vs. hedonic positioning in Facebook communities?

RQ 2: Does the extant literature accommodate all forms of value creating behaviors within the brand communities of Facebook?

The previous chapter explained how exploratory qualitative netnographic design is used to deal with these research questions. Now the findings of this study identified during the data collection stage will be systematically introduced.

4.2: Findings for research question 1

This section addresses the findings for research question 1. The literature review identified a total of fifteen items under the VCBs (Table 2.4). Evidence of the data collected through this
study confirms that among these fifteen VCBs identified all but “Justifying” is practiced within FBCs.

This section is organized this way: first of all, under each of the item a table is presented which includes the definition and the major findings of that item. After that an introduction for the item is presented which entails the expectations presented during literature review along with an overview of the findings. Following this the data is presented under each involvement and product positioning matrix. The following sequence is maintained to present that data: high involved/utilitarian; high involved/hedonic; low involved/utilitarian and low involved /hedonic. Unless specified, each of these involvements and positioning matrix include one data example followed by pertinent explanation. In some cases if the data is not found for a particular matrix; it is mentioned within the table and also notified during the introductory phase under that VCB. In some instances two or more examples of the data under the same involvement and positioning matrix is given which is duly instructed before the data is presented. At the end a summary note that entails the synopsis of the findings is also provided.

4.2.1 Voice

Table 4.1 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for members’ voice behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is outlined and then the example of the data with necessary explanation for voice is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for voice is presented.
Table 9

**Table 4.1 Major findings of voice**

Voice refers to customers directing complaints to the marketer when problems occur, in order to give them the opportunity to correct the problems, retain their reputation, and/or maintain relationships (Singh 1988).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voice is more apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Voice is more apparent within this context.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voice is directed to various product related issues (e.g. product design, engineering</td>
<td>Voice is directed to various product related issues (e.g. product design, engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>issues, engine capability, transmission, oil and water leaks, fuel gauge, hazard</td>
<td>issues, transmission, engine related issues, gear box related issues, brake system,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lights, rusting, airbag, battery issues, remote starter, use of cheap quality material</td>
<td>wiper blade, GPS navigation etc.), dealership and customer service issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>etc.), customer service, pricing and delivery related issues.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voice involves showing intense negative emotions.</td>
<td>Voice involves showing intense negative emotions.</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voice is less apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Voice is much less apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voice is directed to product quality (e.g. taste, use of artificial flavor and color,</td>
<td>Voice is directed to product quality (taste), vending machines, packaging and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>salt and sugar etc.) price, and distribution issues.</td>
<td>availability issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intense negative emotions within voice are less apparent.</td>
<td>Intense negative emotions within voice are much less apparent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study expected voice to be more prevalent within high involved products; and predicted that within utilitarian brands members’ voice will show more intense negative emotions than hedonic brands, however, findings were only partially consistent with expectations.
Consistent with the expectation it is noticed that voice is more apparent within high involved products and includes more product and service related issues than the low involved products. Contrary to expectations, intense negative emotions concerning voice were not more apparent within utilitarian brands, with the data indicating that such behavior is equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands.

In this section the data examples are given in the following manner. First of all two sets of data examples are provided under high involved/utilitarian brands. After that one example of the qualitative data is presented for the remaining contexts.

It is noticed within Ford Fiesta’s brand community that; when a member complains about issues pertaining the brand; the brand manager Sam De La Garza addresses the matter and tries to solve the problem personally. Consider the following excerpts where the brand manager intervene consumers’ issues to provide better service (high involved/utilitarian brand):

JN (F) *Anyone else unhappy with their "automatic" transmission? I find it to be very jerky in the lower gears, especially in rush-hour type traffic. I also find it to be lacking any get-up-and-go when I need it in tight situations. I am seriously thinking about getting rid of my car as soon as I can.* August 23, 2010 at 7:57 am.

*Ford Fiesta* Hey, JN (F). *I would be interested in speaking with you about the transmission performance. Please send me an email with your phone number. My email address is fiestamovement@gmail.com. Thanks.* Sam De La Garza (Ford Fiesta Brand Manager) August 24, 2010 at 12:12am

It can be determined from the brand manager’s statement that he reads these Facebook posts regularly to ensure a better service. It is interesting to find out that the manager himself is taking time out from his busy schedule to personally address the issues raised by the members.
This shows Ford’s effort to take the relationship marketing approach to a new level by incorporating the new media – Facebook.

Member’s comments indicate that they tend to ask for more upon realizing that venting in FBCs makes the marketers trying to resolve such issue. These opportunistic members recognize that complaining is highly instrumental in achieving some desired consequence; hence they escalate the voice as seen within the next excerpt (High involved/utilitarian brand):

GT (M) According to Sam, it's "me, myself and I" that are assigned to take care of these issues. Ford needs to invest in some additional trouble shooters or this launch is going to fail. Good sales numbers so far with more than 3,000 units sold, but if this trend of poor customer relations continues, a firestorm will result that will result in decreased sales.

Ford: you're running out of time to do the right thing for those of us that believed in you. We will tell the other 37,000 Facebook fans and potential customers about our experience. It's a very big deal and we expect you to put as much money into customer relations as you have into marketing and PR. Having one person, Sam, to deal with these issues is beyond belief. Invest some money and your profits will continue. I promise one thing: you will continue to read more from the dissatisfied customers, which will definitely impact your future sales as we head into the new model year. That's not a threat, but a promise. August 24, 2010 at 9:56am.

GT (M)’s comment indicate that he is not satisfied with the brand manager’s action overlooking the site and wants a dedicated staff to address the issues raised within Facebook. Following Ford’s interest in solving product related matters through the online community, many consumers realized that the benefit of complaining is more with this brand; and GT (M)’s remarks indicate such opportunistic behavior. It is interesting to further note that GT (M) is threatening the marketer if they do not consider putting more trouble shooters to handle their concerns. Such intimidating behavior is practiced as members are leveraged by Sam
(brand manager) through personally addressing various situations and showing genuine intention to take care of their problems.

Data within FBCs indicate that high involved purchase leads to forming a higher level of expectations and if the performance of the product does not match; then voice is imminent. The following message observed in the high involved/hedonic brand indicates how a young woman is irritated at the failing of her Volvo’s product quality and service.

HAG (F) My 2005 XC 90 volvo is stuck on the Kennedy in Chicago (right now) -- Waiting for the tow truck. This is the 12th time in the past 4 years i had to take my Volvo to the shop because of ongoing problems - - 2 years ago, as i was going down the ...ramp of a parking lot, it stalled and all lights went out. I was about to have an accident and crash the car with my kids in the back seat. I spent hours waiting for a tow truck (your service is awful) The car and the service has been a nightmare on all fronts. I hope someone contacts me immediately from your company. I am happy to show all the documents and service bills that have piled up. I paid over $50K for a car which is a lemon. February 18 at 1:23 am.

HAG (F)’s comment indicates how dissatisfaction through product performance is resulting in voice behavior. The statement “I paid over $50K for a car which is a lemon”- indicates the level of expectation formed through the payment of higher price. As actual performance of the product did not match with the perceived quality, the reaction was obvious. Moreover, the after sale services left a bad taste in her mouth as a better service is expected from such a reputed brand. “The car and the service has been a nightmare on all front”- is intensely articulating words to describe HAG (F)’s negative feeling towards the brand; and it is noticed within FBCs that members articulate voice when a functional product failure like this takes place.

Members’ comments within FBCs indicate that they consider these products as important part for their daily routine; however their concern about product ingredients may determine product use and purchase (Low involved/utilitarian brand):
ABC (F) *All the people I know that drink Powerade Zero are diabetics and really don't want the color. Why do you think color makes them more "appealing"? Can't you add more color to the label and leave it out of the drink?? I'd guess your target market should be diabetics and health conscious people. It's typically either Powerade Zero or diet soda for diabetics. I limit my son's intake of Powerade Zero because of the artificial coloring and he gets no soda.* January 20 at 4:17am.

ABC (F)’s remarks indicate that she believes in the overall performance of the brand; however she is concerned about one of its ingredients. By bringing such issue ABC (F) is trying to specify that more people will buy the product if the brand considers not using color as part of their product ingredient. This is the expression of a loyal member who wants the brand to thrive hence let the marketer know about its negative points. Moreover, ABC (F)’s remark “Can't you add more color to the label and leave it out of the drink??” - indicates that loyal customers provide solutions to the issue and show sincere concern for these brands.

Many of the comments within low involved/hedonic brands indicate that voice includes relaying product related issue to the marketer. The following excerpt shows how members’ notify the marketer about the declining quality (taste) of the brand in order to improve the situation.

TSD (M) *Bought a case of Fanta Orange proof of purchase 4900003073 the soda is flat : ( This has never happened before, hope it doesn't happen again!* July 25 at 7:32am

These sorts of voice behavior offer an opportunity to the organization to recover and improve. The marketer can follow this lead and know where the customer is experiencing such issue to identify the cause of the problem. This will eventually assist them to maintain consistent level of quality and deliver superior consumer experience. However, a very small amount of voice is noticed within low involved/hedonic brands- indicating members’ disinclination to submit their complain within this context.
Voice is noticed in high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands. Within high involved products voice is more prevalent and includes variety of issues compared to the low involved products. Moreover members of both utilitarian and hedonic brands show intense negative emotions within their voice behavior. However such an intense negative emotion is noticed only when a product fails in a utilitarian dimension.

4.2.2 Helping behavior

Table 4.2 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for helping behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is laid out and then the data with necessary explanation for helping behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

Table 10

Table 4.2 Major findings for helping behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High involved/utilitarian brand</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic brand</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping behavior is more apparent in this context.</td>
<td>Helping behavior is more apparent in this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping behavior include providing information regarding how to use various features of the product (i.e. keyless entry, I-Phone, voice command, seating configuration, change the oil etc.), fixing the product (paint, water leak, SYNC, stereo etc.), teaching how to add a new feature (HID light, armrest etc.), issues related to pricing (price of the product, price of accessories), distribution related issues (how to order, locating a dealer, where and how to find accessories).</td>
<td>Helping behavior include providing product related information regarding how to use various features of the product (e.g. engine issues, transmission issues, HID light, headlight lens, brakes, tires, radio etc.) fixing the product (engine transplant, headlight, window, radio etc.), distribution related issues (how and where to find back tires, front bumpers and different accessories).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping behavior related to utilitarian features is more apparent.</td>
<td>Helping behavior related to utilitarian features is less apparent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study expected helping behavior to be more apparent within high involved products and predicted that helping behavior with regards to utilitarian features will be more apparent within utilitarian brands than hedonic brands. Consistent with the expectations the data within FBCs indicate that helping behavior is more apparent within high involved products and involves more issues. For example, within high involved products members provide information regarding various features of the product, how to use the product, how to fix the product, how to add new features, and regarding price and distribution related matters. However, within low involved products members helping behavior mostly revolves around providing distribution related information along with a few helping behavior regarding product and pricing issues. Moreover, within high involved context many members provide detailed and comprehensive information to the help seeker; however within low involved products the information provided is mostly brief and concise. Member’s comments within FBCs suggest that helping behavior with regards to utilitarian features are more apparent within utilitarian brands. For example: within utilitarian brands members ask help regarding price and the ingredients used within these brands which is less apparent within hedonic brands.

In this section the data examples are given in a different manner. Two sets of data are provided under low involved/utilitarian brands to clarify how these members use distribution and price issues as an important area of their helping behavior. One set of data is presented for all the others contexts.
Many of the comments within high involved products indicate that members provide detailed response to the information seeker. This sort of comprehensive answer should help the member know exactly what needs to be done to fix the problem as seen within the next excerpts (High involved/utilitarian brand):

TG (F) *Got my fantastic magenta SES Fiesta today. There is one problem...I don't speak Spanish. Since it's made in Mexico I guess the workers thought it would be funny to set my Sync to Spanish. No one at the dealership could figure how to set it back to English. Any ideas!!!* August 5, 2010 at 4:49 am.

MD (M) SYNC allows you to select from three languages: English, Canadian French and Spanish. Once selected, all radio display messages and prompts will be in the selected language.

To access the language menu:

1. Press the PHONE button to enter the ...PHONE MENU.
2. Press the ARROWS until SYSTEM SETTINGS appears in the radio display.
3. Press OK to confirm and enter the SYSTEM SETTINGS MENU.
4. Press the ARROWS until ADVANCED appears in the radio display.
5. Press OK to confirm and enter the ADVANCED MENU.
6. Press the ARROWS until LANGUAGE appears in the radio display.
7. Press OK to enter the LANGUAGE MENU.
8. Press the ARROWS to cycle through ENGLISH, FRENCH and SPANISH.
9. Press OK when the desired selection appears in the radio display.

If you have changed the language setting, the radio display will read UPDATING. Once the change is complete, SYNC will confirm the change audibly and in the radio display. SYNC will then take you back to the LANGUAGES MENU. August 5, 2010 at 6:00am.
MD (M)’s thorough response acts like a manual guiding the help seeker to know what needs to be done to fix the problem. Such a comprehensive response indicates that consumption rituals are evident within FBCs. This is further interesting to see that even the dealer could not unravel the problem which is solved by a member of FBC. This is one great advantage of these brand communities that members can get help regarding issues as minute yet complex like this and still receive help with specific detail. It is further interesting to note that this sort of detailed response to help another member is seen only in high involved products.

It is noticed within FBCs that members post messages to find help regarding how to use the product (high involved/hedonic brand):

RB (M) a friend of my she got a new Volvo and this is her 3 or 4th one but the new one just hates the snow.... she cant even get up her drive way...... why is that? February 10 at 10:40pm.

MV (M) Maybe a change in tires would help. Continental has a new winter tire that got great reviews. Maybe that would help. February 11 at 12:24pm.

WM (M) Did she turn of the spin contol on the Left hand driver stalk? There is a little wheel if you turn it to DTSC and then press the message button (If I remember correctly) it will say after a few moments SPIN CONTROL OFF...My C30 does great in snow as long as I turn off spin control. February 14 at 8:46am.

MV (M) and WM (M)’s comment shows how members of FBCs aide the stranded consumer stuck in a unique consumption experience. Both these members response to RB (M)’s call indicate that they want to help the neophyte so that she can better use the product. It is interesting to see that different members bring different point of view in dealing with such matter. MV (M)’s information addresses product reviews as he understands that changing the tire will solve the problem. The detailed remark of WM (M) indicates that he went through similar issues and his real life experience should solve the problem of the stranded member.
It is noticed within low involved context that members intend to receive information when they do not find the product. Hence a significant portion of the helping behavior in low involved/utilitarian context is around asking distribution related quarries:

MM (M) I have been looking everywhere for the G1 and G3 in the canon city area in Colorado..... i would like to try the series for baseball, football, and wrestling activities... can someone tell me where the nearest place i can get all 3?? so far i have only seen G2 June 10, 2010 at 10:30 am.

DF (M) head to GNC or Dick's and you will find it June 10, 2010 at 3:12pm

AR (M) My Kroger and meijers have them. Have you checked there? June 10, 2010 at 6:15pm.

One of the major concern for low involved products is the availability issue as consumers do not want to travel long to purchase these products. FBCs provide new opportunity for consumers to ask distribution related issues as they know someone (from these millions of members) should have the desired information. Following MM (M)’s queries two other members DF (M) and AR (M) provides information that will help him locate the product. It is further important to notify that many of the helping behaviors within low involved products are brief and concise addressing basic issues like this.

It is also noticed that within utilitarian brands members ask about price related issues which is not noticed within hedonic brands; for example (low involved utilitarian brand):

MR (M) I wish they were more available here... I love them, but they are HARD to find. (at a reasonable price...) May 15, 2010 at 9:56pm

IA (M) 2 for a $1 hear in Montana but around 88 cents to $1 usually  May 16, 2010 at 2:17am
MR (M) is concerned to find the right product at the right price and asks the fellow members with the hope of getting the information. This sort of behavior is more apparent within utilitarian brands where members pose queries with regards to such utilitarian features.

It is noticed within low involved context that sometimes members pose questions regarding various issues, however many of these help seekers do not get the information as seen within the next excerpt:

AT (F) *I am trying to find apple fanta!!! help!! I live in NJ July 9 at 4:33am*

AT (F) is ringing the bell by showing frustration over not finding the product, but none others choose to provide the information to help out the stranded customer. This shows other members disinterest in addressing issues like this in a low involved context.

Helping behavior is more apparent within high involved products than the low involved products. Moreover within high involved products helping behavior is detailed and thorough; however within low involved products most of the information is concise and brief. On top of it, within high involved context members provide information on critical issues whereas within low involved context this mostly involves mundane issues. Some differences between members of utilitarian and hedonic brands are also identified. For example: price and ingredient related issues are mostly raised within utilitarian brands which is less apparent within hedonic brands.

4.2.3 WOM

Table 4.3 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for WOM practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the finding is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for WOM is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for WOM is presented.
Table 11

Table 4.3 Major findings of WOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WOM consists of informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers (Westbrook 1987).</th>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WOM is more apparent within this context.</td>
<td>WOM is more apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members WOM behavior include various features like fuel economy; better MPG; seating configuration, SYNC, I-Pod, push button start, cargo space, safety rating, easy to park, price, roomier, handling in snow and ice etc.</td>
<td>Members WOM behavior include various features like safety ratings, MPG, power of the engine, total mileage, handling in snow and ice, number of years in service, air bags, LED lights, motorist choice award, JD Power rating etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members WOM behavior involve relaying vivid stories regarding the consumption experience.</td>
<td>Members WOM behavior involve relaying vivid stories regarding the consumption experience.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WOM is less apparent within this context.</td>
<td>WOM is less apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members WOM behavior include expressions like yummy, best sports drink, cool drink, greatest invention, awesome, refreshing etc.</td>
<td>Members WOM behavior include expressions like best drink, refreshing, lively spirit, sparkling drink, awesome, drink of choice, favorite drink etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivid stories regarding the consumption experience is less apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Vivid stories regarding the consumption experience is much less apparent within this context.</td>
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</table>
This study expected WOM to be more prevalent in high involved products and predicted it to be more apparent in hedonic brands. Members’ comments within FBCs indicate that WOM is the most often cited VCB practiced within FBCs. Consistent with the expectations the data further suggest that WOM is more apparent within high involved products and includes preaching more product related features. Moreover, WOM within high involved products includes relaying vivid stories which are less apparent within low involved products. WOM is noticed within both utilitarian and hedonic brands and the study could not confirm that WOM is more prevalent within hedonic brands.

Members of high involved/utilitarian brands relay real life product experience in such a manner that it creates lust and desire within others minds. Such evangelizing efforts are performed with the intention to form positive attitude towards the brand.

DM (M) *I was driving in traffic and a Honda Fit, with New York tags, came up next to me. The guy was completely checking out my car. I looked at him and our eyes locked at one point. I am sure that the expression on my face was, "Yes. I have the better car." Maybe there should be a bumper sticker that says, "Wouldn't you really rather drive a Fiesta?"* August 16, 2010 at 6:34pm.

This looks like a carefully created ‘message copy’ for an advertisement idea to invoke envy for the focal brand within consumers’ eyes. The theme of this message is extraordinary and the pulling power of such a story is unbound. Vibrant stories like these should stimulate the undecided members to form favorable image towards the brand. Such narratives are common within high involved products where members look for every opportunity to tell their stories in an envious manner to create desire for the brand.

Many a time members post stories regarding ongoing brand experience in such a manner that is intrusive and express positive attitude. These stories depicting the consumption experience nominate consumer’s detailed engagement as seen within the next excerpt (high involved/hedonic brand):
RK (M) *This is my 1990 Volvo 760 Turbo Wagon! Best car I've ever driven, just under 200K, and still starts up better than most newer cars! I feel safe, it's a tank. But in all seriousness, I will never be able to drive any other brand of car and feel as safe as I do in the Volvo's. Will be buying another one soon, but will keep "Clara" as we call her. Volvo for life!* (member posted a picture of the vehicle) December 20, 2010 at 2:34pm

RK (M)’s message depicting the qualities of the brand should encourage others to stick to Volvo and influence the undecided members in favor of the brand. RK (M) vibrantly speaks about his prolonged encounter to express how safe and reliable these cars are. The dependability of the vehicle is unparallel which is spoken through a missionary zeal—“I will never be able to drive any other brand of car and feel as safe as I do in the Volvo’s”. The performance of the brand through its reliability and safety has made RK (M) speak in favor of the brand, and what better place to express his feelings than the brand community where people from all around the world come to share their consumption experience.

Members of low involved/utilitarian brand communities also share real life stories to let others know about the performance of the brand.

IM (M) *im an athletic trainer at a college in arizona, and right now we are in pre-season two-a-days in the arizona heat. so far (knock on wood) we haven't had to send anyone to the hospital for heat related illnesses because i have been giving all my athletes gatorade!!!! August 19, 2010 at 9:48 am.*

Arizona is well known for its scorching heat during summer time. It is important to stay hydrated in these sorts of condition where extreme weather can cause various heat related diseases. IM (M)’s message is directed to consumers looking for a product to keep them hydrated in such climate. Being an athlete trainer IM (M)’s testimonial should receive the trust form others. This is another advantage of these brand communities that it allows others to receive product related information from an expert.
A different kind of WOM is noticed within low involved/hedonic brands. Although these members post messages in favor of the brand however the vivid stories to narrate members feelings is less apparent in this context. (Three sets of message excerpts are given here)

ID (F) *Sprite is quite a drink of choice for anybody who want to enjoy life.so go for ur sprite!* April 11 2010 at 7:47 am.

JS (F) *GO SPRITE I T`S THE BEST DIRNK. U SHOULD DRINK THIS* February 17 at 4:49 am.

PN (M) *it's great and REFRESHING ON A WARM DATY, TO COOL YOU DOWN WHEN IT'S iCE-COLD...*May 11 at 8:22pm (Fanta’s page)

These sorts of short and simple but effective messages to recommend and induce others to purchase the brand are common within low involved/hedonic brands. It is interesting to note that these members are using words like “drink of Choice”, “Best drink” and “Refreshing” to depict their feelings towards the brand. Here members are conveying the positive qualities of the brand by specifying that Sprite and Fanta is for the people who want to enjoy life.

Members’ comment within Facebook indicates that WOM is more apparent within high involved products and include more product related features. It is further noticed that members vividly express WOM within high involved products which is less apparent within low involved products. Although this study expected WOM to be more apparent within hedonic brands but the data indicates that WOM is equally evident in both utilitarian and hedonic brands.
4.2.4 Display behavior

Table 4.4 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for display behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is outlined and then the graphical data with necessary explanation for display behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

Table 12

Table 4.4 Major findings of display behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Display behavior is less apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Display behavior is less apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display behavior is noticed as members etch their body with tattoos, wear brand merchandise (caps), create brand items (custom made plate), carry replica in public place and create brand items with religious fervor.</td>
<td>Display behavior is noticed as members wear brand merchandise (caps, T-shirts), carry brand items (stickers) and create brand items with religious fervor.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Display behavior is more apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Display behavior is more apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display behavior is noticed as members etch their body with tattoo, wear brand merchandise (T-shirt, caps), collect brand items (cans), carry brand items (sticker, towels, water bottle and body boards etc.), create crafts with brand items (various toys with brand items).</td>
<td>Display behavior is noticed as members etch their body with tattoo, wear brand merchandise; collect brand items (cans), create crafts with brand items (pendants, bracelet, earrings, replica motorcycles etc.) and create brand items with religious fervor.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
This study expected display behavior to be equally evident in both high and low involved products; however extreme display behavior like tattooing is predicted to be more prevalent within hedonic brands. Members’ comments and pictures posted within FBCs indicate that display behavior is more apparent within low involved products. Findings of this study indicates that some of these behaviors like creating crafts with brand items (e.g. pendants, bracelet, earrings, toys etc.) are only evident within low involved products and other behaviors like collecting brand items (stickers, brand items etc.) are more apparent within low involved products. The data further indicates that extreme display behavior like tattooing is equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands.

In this section the data examples are given in a different manner. Two sets of images are provided under low involved/hedonic brands to clarify how these members etch their body with tattoo and also create crafts to show their devotion towards the brand. One set of data is presented for all the others contexts.

Devoted consumers wear branded merchandise (i.e. T-shirt, caps etc.); acquire brand replica and display them in public space. They seek opportunities to acquire and exhibit these items which are not necessarily in connection with consuming the product (high involved/utilitarian brand):
Honda Fit cap.

Honda Fit’s “Replica”.

Custom made Fit number plate.

By wearing apparel that displays brand name and logos, creating and carrying brand replicas; these consumers identify themselves as members of the social group of devotees. Such behaviors indicate that devoted consumers go great lengths to display the “brand” and collect brand-related merchandise and other memorabilia.
Religious fervor and sacredness is a part of consumer devotion and can be expressed in the form of display behavior. This sort of attachment is also noticed within high involved/hedonic brands where members commemorate religious festivity by openly displaying the brand’s logo and incorporating it within the religious ritual.

Custom made Halloween pumpkin With Volvo Logo.

Many consumers sustain the sacredness of the brand by shaping the brand logo with Halloween pumpkin. This shows that these members view the brand as a sacred element by considering them as part of their Halloween rituals. Moreover these behaviors reaffirm member’s intention to prove such relationship to others by displaying and posting them within public community sites in Facebook.
Various display behaviors are also noticed within low involved/utilitarian context.

Collecting Gatorade Merchandise. Car painted with gatorade logo.

Consumers collect brand merchandise and paint the whole car with the brand logo to show their devotion towards the brand. This further indicates that consumers of these brands consider them as part of their own lifestyle and do not hesitate to engage in behaviors to show such devotions.

A clan of passionate brand lovers follows these communities by permanently engraving the body with brand’s logo. Such behavior represents the radical movement to make the brand a part of consumer’s both psychological and physical existence (low involved/hedonic brand):
Brand tattoos remind customers of personal values. A single image, as represented by the tattoo, can encapsulate a series of complex memories and feelings. This sort of expression to etch someone’s body with brand logo is an ultimate way to demonstrate extreme brand loyalty. These brand devotees consider the brand to a deeper and meaningful level that they are ready to act in such a manner. This is a constant reminder to himself and to others that “I am in love with this brand and the love will remain until I die”

Some of these devotees invest significant amount of time by creating brand items to show their display behavior as noticed within the following examples (low involved/hedonic brand):
Items with Fanta logo.

Sprite Bracelet

Collecting and creating replica with brand items.
Halloween dress with Fanta logo.

Some members involve in display behavior by personally creating replicas with brand items. Such behavior is only apparent within low involved products where member show various “creative” efforts by crafting jewelries and colorful objects (earrings, bracelets, toys) with brand item. Members need to devote tremendous amount of time and such behaviors showing their passion in creating the merchandise is commendable.

Moreover, members of low involved products create various replicas by keeping cans and the empty bottles of the brand. This sort of emotion however should not be calculated with the amount of cans that they used rather this is an extension of the view that consumers honor these brands by investing time to create something unique. These members also wear costumes to celebrate religious festivals like Halloween parties which show their intention to use these brands as a religious icon.

Members’ comments and also the images within FBCs indicate that display behavior is more prevalent within low involved products. The data further indicates that extreme display behaviors like tattooing are equally evident within both utilitarian and also hedonic brands.
4.2.5 Forgiving behavior

Table 4.5 demonstrates the definition and the major findings of forgiving behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is laid out and then the data with necessary explanation of forgiving behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

Table 13

**Table 4.5 Major findings of forgiving behavior**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members forgiving behavior following brand transgression is identified.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Members forgiving behavior following brand transgression is identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only a few forgiving behavior is noticed within this context.</td>
<td>Only a few forgiving behavior is noticed within this context.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members forgiving behavior following a brand transgression is <em>not</em> identified.</td>
<td>Members forgiving behavior following a brand transgression is <em>not</em> identified.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study expected forgiving behavior to be equally evident in both high and low involved products; and predicted it to be more prevalent in hedonic brands. Members’ comments within FBCs indicate that forgiving behavior is not present within low involved products. This is surprising considering the fact that product failures (transgression) occur within this context and marketers subsequently try to win back members’ confidence with recovery programs. Although this study projected forgiving to be more apparent within hedonic brands;
but the data suggests that this behavior is equally evident within both these contexts and a considerable difference is not identified. The process of forgiving within high involved product starts with marketer’s transgression leading to an injury or violation with subsequent emotional pain. Following marketers attempt to recover the situation through improved service consumers forgive the marketer. Data within FBCs also indicates that members not only forgive the marketer but engage in positive WOM after a superior product recovery effort.

In this section the data is given in a different sequence. First of all the process of forgiveness within Facebook is presented citing three examples from high involved/ utilitarian brand. After that one example is presented for high involved/hedonic brand.

The process of forgiveness starts with marketers’ transgression that leads to subsequent emotional sting within the consumers as seen in the following excerpt:

*ML(F)* I ♥ my new Fiesta! What I don't <3is the fact that a week after I bought it I realized it was leaking oil. They had to order a special gasket and 2 weeks later I got my car back. Then a week later (yesterday) I noticed the leak was back and worse!!!! My car is back at the shop. I am so sad that I have only driven my car a total of 2 weeks in the month that I've owned it! :( (Member posted an image of the vehicle) October 15, 2010 at 2:40 am.

ML (F) I wanted a "Lime" not a "Lemon" lol October 15, 2010 at 4:30am.

ML (F)’s experience with the new product is far from smooth and she is displeased following the problem encountered within first week of a major purchase. This is not expected out of a reputed brand like Ford and such a problem is considered as a severe failure. The use of the words “I am so sad” - depicts ML (F)’s emotional state of mind. The sentiment is further intensified as she states “I wanted a “lime” not a “lemon”. Such a negative comment regarding the brand portrays the emotional throbbing that members go through once the product fails to deliver on its promise.
It is suggested that forgiveness involves a motivational change on the consumers’ part that develops empathy with the offending partner by giving-up blame or fault-finding. ML (F)’s next quote following the marketer’s attention depicts similar behavior.

ML (F) So I got my car back from the shop. Brand new engine put in it. So far no oil leaks!!! YAY. Now I can ♥ my car again!!! (Member posted an image of the vehicle). October 28 2010 at 2:50 am.

“YAY. Now I can ♥ my car again!!!” – describes ML (F)’s emotion towards the brand following marketer’s attention to her complain. She is now jubilant and ready to rejoice the experience she had been waiting since the purchase. This indicates that ML (F) has forgotten her ordeal with the car and ready to move on. ML (F)’s behavior further posits that marketer’s strong recovery effort helps the consumer to forgive them; in this instance ML (F)’s forgiving behavior is triggered after the marketer has put a new engine for the car.

Member’s comments within FBCs further indicate that they not only forgive the brand but also engage in positive WOM following marketer’s action:

ER (M) Infant's Car seat... it fits well? Any experience? October 23, 2010 at 12.16 pm.

ML (F) I have 4 kids my teen sits in the passenger seat and in the back 2 booster seats for my lil guys and my princess sits in the middle! It's all good till they get bigger...!!! October 28, 2010 at 3:40am.

ML (F) is now even getting involved in discussions to induce others to buy the product. This is a huge change in her role compared to the one that she had two months back following the transgression. Her attitude towards the product has altered and she is now so pleased with the brand that she recommends it to others. This behavior shows the psychological state and the change members go through following the transgression and marketer’s response to it.
Members’ comments within high involved/hedonic brands indicate that they praise the marketer for their support following the transgression; as indicated through the following excerpt:

KR (F) Thank you so much. I was very upset the other day at the way Long Volvo service was taking care of a problem so I got on this web site and vented about my problem. Much to my surprise you heard me and have helped me through it. February 25 at 5:34am

The most interesting part of this message is how KR (F) initiates the discussion. “Thank you so much” – is the expression of a happy consumer who is excited to show gratitude to the marketer. However it is also evident from this message that this was not the case before, “I was very upset the other day at the way Long Volvo service was taking care of a problem”- speaks about KR (F)’s negative feelings following marketer transgression. However once the marketer addressed the issue through recovery effort she is happy to pardon the offender.

Members’ forgiving behavior is noticed only within high involved products in FBCs. It is further noticed that apart from forgiving the marketers; satisfied consumers also engage in WOM activity; following the marketer’s recovery effort. Although forgiveness is expected to be more apparent within hedonic brands, but the data suggests that this behavior is equally apparent within both utilitarian and hedonic brands.

4.2.6 Feedback

Table 4.6 demonstrates the definition and major findings for members’ feedback within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is laid out and then the data with necessary explanation for feedback is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.
Table 14

Table 4.6 Major findings of feedback

Feedback is the consumer activity which they provide to the organization with ideas and suggestions to track quality; locate quality problems and provide suggestions for improvement (Sampson 1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members’ provide feedback related to product improvement (e.g. tent accessory, diesel, hybrid, armrest, AWD, daytime lights, engine capability, indicator lights, seat accessories, temperature gauge, stereo system, extra door, horse power etc.), promotion (advertising) and distribution related issues.</td>
<td>Members’ provide feedback related to product improvement (e.g. diesel, AWD, manual and automatic transmission, daytime lights, engine size and use of fuel), promotion (advertising) and distribution related issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members’ provide feedback related to new product for new market, product improvement (e.g. logo, flavor, ingredients, package size, package design, etc.), promotion (advertising) and distribution related issues.</td>
<td>Members’ provide feedback related to product (e.g. flavors, packaging size, and package design) new product development, promotion (advertising) and distribution related issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study expected feedback to be more prevalent within high involved products and predicted it to be equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands. The data however indicates that feedback is equally evident within all the brand communities and a considerable difference is not identified. It is noticed within FBCs that members’ provide feedback around product improvement, promotion and distribution related issues. This study further implies that Facebook offers a convenient atmosphere to these consumers for which this behavior is equally evident within all these brand communities.
Feedback to the manufacturer, serves as important pillar of the learning organization which can be used to improve existing products as noticed from the following excerpt (high involved/utilitarian brand):

RD (M) You should offer stereo upgrades for the Fit. I didn't need the NAV so I got the regular stereo but it only has one line of text and doesn't show the artist unless you press a button and look. It's kind of dangerous while driving. On the next Fit you should put a larger LCD screen with the ability to display Artist, Track, and time left. ... August 4, 2010 at 1:49am.

RD (M)’s statement indicates that consumers disseminate product/service related ideas through Facebook. Such a meaningful insight with intrigue detail on a range of features should help the manufacturer improve the quality of the product. Moreover, this sort of meticulous idea will help the brand compete with its competitors by introducing improved product in cluttered industry.

Sometimes members provide feedback regarding how the marketer should promote the brand as seen within the next excerpt (high involved/hedonic brand):

WM (F) I just saw the artical that says some more of the models will be going away...how about instead of losing models we see more advertising so folks who are in the market for a new car check out volvos. I drove over 1000 miles this past weekend...saw no bill boards in major cities and a decent number of S40, S60 XC70 & XC90's but only one other C30 & one C70. If the line is pared down more less folks will come to volvo...I don't really need an XC something...and I like two doors. February 1 at 3:26am.

WM (F)’s feedback is the outcome of detailed observation concerning firm’s promotion strategy indicating some issues regarding the placing of billboards. Such feedback with thorough surveillance and specific data should challenge marketer’s current communication strategy and help formulate better advertising plan. This sort of information shows that today’s consumers closely follow the marketing strategy of their favorite brand; critically evaluate them and eventually suggest their own ideas with proper remark.
Members not only provide feedback to improve the current product or to add new feature but also how the manufacturer can develop a new product for a new market. One such example is seen in low involved/utilitarian brand community’s page:

JG (M) Gatorade Chewing Gum! I think that this would be a very good product because, most ppl dont like carrying around a bottle, atleast I dont, and this would be simple, to just pop in and go. Especially for athletes that are always moving, such as Jogging, Bikeing, walking, even hunting... This would be a very very good product for you guys. August 23, 2010 at 10:06 am.

This is an expression of a loyal customer whose continuous use and interest with the brand brought forward such an innovative idea. JG (M)’s suggestion- “I think that this would be a very good product because, most ppl dont like carrying around a bottle, atleast I dont,”- indicates that there is a ready market for such a new product. Moreover, JG (M) critically indicates ‘especially for athletes that are always moving, such as Jogging, Bikeing, walking, even hunting’- this further show that members not only develop new product ideas but identify the target market for which the product should be positioned.

Members also provide feedback on promotion related issues as noticed within the following example (low involved/hedonic brand):

JN (M) Alright, i know it's not Christmas, but how good would this add be? It's a fanta can with a hand around it and a thumbs up and snow is in the background... on the bottom it says "Even Santa wants a Fanta" May 20 at 11:28am

This sort of feedback shows how today’s consumers are connected to these brands and takes every opportunity to provide brand related ideas. JN (M) comes with an advertising theme to share with the brand; and such theme can be used to reduce their promotional budget.
Feedback is noticed both in all these brands and a considerable difference is not identified. This shows that consumers establish a relationship with all these brands and provide feedback which will help the manufacturer improve its product and service quality.

### 4.2.7 Competitive information

Table 4.7 demonstrates the concept and also major findings for competitive information practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for competitive information is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

#### Table 15

**Table 4.7 Major findings of competitor information**

| Loyal customers are found to be a good source of providing competitor information when it is available to them (Lackman et al. 2000). |
|---|---|
| High involved/utilitarian | High involved/hedonic |
| Consumers provide information on competitor’s new innovation (product features, engine related innovation), product version, transmission, mileage (fuel economy) and price etc. | Consumers provide information on competitor’s new innovation, product features and product versions (Wagon, diesel) etc. |
| These discussions are mostly detailed and include various aspects of the competitors’ strategies. | These discussions are mostly detailed and include various aspects of the competitors’ strategies. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumers provide information on competitor’s new product innovations, price, sales promotion and distribution related strategies.</td>
<td>Consumers provide information on competitor’s product quality (taste) and their distribution strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These discussions are brief and did not include a variety of aspects of the competitor’s strategies.</td>
<td>These discussions are brief and did not include a variety of aspects of the competitor’s strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study expected competitive information to be more detailed and informative within high involved products and projected that competitive information within utilitarian brands should include more utilitarian features than hedonic brands. Members’ comments within FBCs suggest that within high involved products, apart from informing about the competitors’ tactics these members analyze various aspects of competitors’ strategies; whereas within low involved products the members simply provide the information without much analysis of the situation. This indicates that members of high involved products have detailed and rigorous level of understanding of the brand, the product category and the industry. Moreover, within utilitarian brands it is more apparent that these discussions are based on utilitarian features than the hedonic brands. For example: members quote about competitor’s price and sales promotion tools which is not identified within hedonic brands.

Information regarding rival’s moves relayed through loyal members gives marketers the opportunity to know about competitors’ strategies as seen within the following excerpt (high involved/utilitarian brand):

NW (M) Ford’s excuses for not offering the Econetic deisel option are lack of demand and production costs. Gee Volkswagen's logistics for production of the Jetta are similar to the Fiesta. They're both European models now being produced in Mexico for the US market with some major sub-assemblies still sourced from Europe. VW has successfully sold deisel versions of the Golf and Jetta in the US for 30+ years and even high-milage examples command a substantial price premium over their gasoline counterparts due to their superior fuel economy and reliability. Fords reasoning doesn't really hold water for me. I really like the Fiesta but I guess I'll have to wait for VW's Polo to come here. June 4, 2010 at 6.06 am.

NW (M)’s comment indicates that loyal members can critically analyze the strategies of their opponent and relay it to the organization in order to influence marketer’s strategies. NW (M)’s comment further indicates that he has a superior knowledge about the important aspects of the industry. Moreover, he brings strong evidence to support his claim as he indicates – “VW has successfully sold deisel versions of the Golf and Jetta in the US for 30+ years and
even high-milage examples command a substantial price premium over their gasoline counterparts due to their superior fuel economy and reliability”. This statement indicates that loyal members continuously follow important brand and competitive information and dispense it to the marketer to validate their argument.

Members of high involved/hedonic brands provide competitor information to the brand through FBCs. The following message is provided by (GUV) who promotes the idea that Volvo should not abandon its wagon section.

GUV I couldn't agree more with what a lot of you are saying. It's so disappointing that we’re not getting this amazing car, not to mention all other Volvo wagons any more. Audi wagon sales are up, and manufactures such as Acura and Cadillac are just entering the market. I understand sales are down, but might be other explanations other than simply it is dying segment? Perhaps the cars haven’t been marketed properly, for instance, the lack of AWD? It seems as though th V70 & V50 were almost set p to fail when AWD pulled from the option list. The V60 is amazing car, I strongly believed if given an opportunity and positioned properly it could b a real success here. The XC 60 & S60 have laid a great groundwork and adding a wagon variant cold be very well received. Please bring it back here. February 22 at 3:12am.

The passion that these consumers have for their iconic Volvo wagon segment is remarkable. GUV provides competitors sales figures to make Volvo realize that the wagon division is worth investing. “Audi wagon sales are up, and manufactures such as Acura and Cadillac are just entering the market”- indicates that loyal members reads the trade magazines, follows their competitors sales figures and engrave it to the brands’ community page to make them aware about such information. Moreover, by indicating “I understand sales are down, but might be other explanations other than simply it is dying segment? Perhaps the cars haven’t been marketed properly, for instance, the lack of AWD?”- GUV is bringing new perspective to the table so that the marketer can rethink about their strategies. By notifying such information these consumers also remind Volvo about the cost of getting rid of wagon segment as such a mistake will give the competitors an easy access to the market. (One of the major defensive strategies is to put flank brands by not keeping any major posts open for its competitors).
It is noticed that some members bring price comparison to inform marketers about its importance of behind their purchase decision (low involved/utilitarian brand):

MR (M) I love Gatorade, but I think that cost wise, Powerade is better. For a 32 oz. Gatorade at my local store, it's a whopping $3.00. For a 32 oz. Powerade, it's 99 cents. They don't differ too much in flavor, I usually go for the Powerade. December 22, 2010 at 12:33 am. (On Gatorade’s page)

MR (M) explicitly indicates the price of its competitors with specific package size to establish his point. MR (M)’s comment further indicate that he loves the brand but other features which guides his decision (price) is deterring him from purchasing the brand. These consumers want the brand to succeed and inform what the brand needs to do to increase its market share.

SNSs provide an opportunity for real time market intelligence through these brand communities as seen through the following excerpt:

HL (F) I went to the Hard Rock Cafe in Atlanta the other day. Great food, 5 minuets from the Coke factory. I ask for a Sprite they asked if 7-Up was okay. I ended up with water. But I was like: "NO SPRITE?!?!?! WHAT?"And it's 5 minuets from the Coke Factory. December 14, 2010 at 3:56 am,

HL (F)’s observation and comment shows that there’s a room for improvement as far as Sprite’s distribution strategy is concerned. His remarks - "NO SPRITE?!?!?! WHAT?"And it's 5 minuets from the Coke Factory” – indicates that he is disappointed with the distribution incompetence of such an iconic brand. HL (F) strongly feels that the company can do better and such message should help the brand to identify the limitation in its distribution effectiveness. HL (F) provides specific store details for the brand managers to take necessary steps. Moreover these members are relaying competitor’s information in real time; giving the manufacturer a chance to rectify the situation in no time.

Competitive information is noticed in entire brand communities of Facebook. Within high involved products consumer’s information about competitors indicates that they have a
rigorous level of understanding of the brand and the industry; which is less apparent within low involved products. Moreover within utilitarian brands consumers indicate more functional features like price and sales promotion of its competitors which is less apparent within hedonic brands.

**4.2.8 Welcoming**

Table 4.8 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for welcoming behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for welcoming behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

**Table 4.8 Major findings of welcoming**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming</td>
<td>Welcoming is more apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Welcoming is less apparent within this context.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members welcoming behavior</td>
<td>Members welcoming behavior is not practiced within this context.</td>
<td>Members welcoming behavior is not practiced within this context.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This study expected welcoming behavior to be more prevalent within high involved products and expected it to be equally prevalent within both utilitarian and hedonic brands. Members’ comments within FBCs indicate that welcoming is only practiced within high involved products. It is interesting to notice that members do not welcome each other within the low
involved context. The data suggest that when a member buys the brand (usually first time) and shares it within FBCs others welcome them within the brand community. Members usually do not consider posting about their first purchase of a low involved product within Facebook; hence welcoming is not noticed in this context. Although not expected; the data further suggest that welcoming is more apparent within utilitarian brands than hedonic brands.

Data’s concerning welcoming behavior is presented in the following manner. First of all two examples under high involved/ utilitarian brands are cited; after this, one example for the high involved/hedonic brand is presented.

Members’ comments within FBCs indicate that current members welcome the neophytes to make them feel comfortable and specify the benefits of joining such community as seen in these excerpts (high involved/utilitarian brand):

ALC (F) I'm a new fit owner! Blue Sensation Pearl... Her name is Blueberry :) Excited to join this very passionate clan of Fit Fans, lol! October 27, 2010 at 6:13am

SF (M) Congrat's on the new car, I trust you'll love it. This Fit Fans page is great. I love the fact that people from all over the world post here. Makes the earth feel a little more cozy. October 30, 2010 at 9:39am.

Each and every group is unique with own set of shared practices and values and it takes time to know about the culture within a new group. SF (M)’s post should help the new member ALC (F) know how the current members are experiencing the community journey. This sort of greeting with passionate comment should make the newcomer ALC (F) feel a lot comfortable and relaxed. SF (M)’s remark- “this fit fan page is great. I love the fact that people from all over the world post here.”- indicates that they welcome people from any background and culture which is encouraging.

Greetings are primarily interactional lubricants which help to create the necessary social cohesion; as seen within the following set of excerpts:
BAC (F)  Here's my new Fiesta.. Love it.. could use some storage in then though:(
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QxlrvwxOMQ August 30 , 2010 at 11:27 am.

MGV (M) Very nice Beth. I have been a Ford customer since my first brand new car, a 2002 Ford Focus Zx5. Like you I love the 5 door hatch and now that Ford has it again with the Fiesta, I just had to have it. Can not wait to post pics, and very jealous you got your SES in already. August 31, 2010 at 10:51am.

Comments like this indicate that greetings help create bond between strangers. MGV (M)’s comment “Like you I love the 5 door hatch”- shows how acquaintance between two individuals is created who are probably living thousands of miles apart and never met each other before. This sort of connection is created with a string of similar passion shared through the brand. MGV (M)’s further remarks “very jealous you got your SES in already”- should make BAC (F) feel better about her decision towards the brand and help reduce the cognitive dissonance – if any.

Members in FBCs greet others to make them feel that they have made the right choice by purchasing the brand; as seen within the next excerpt (High involved/hedonic brand):
RP (M) (member posted a picture of a new vehicle). February 9 at 12.38 am.
BL (M) Nice!!! Love the color and the car of course. February 10 at 2.09 pm.

Welcoming is a community building exercise and by engaging in this greeting practice BL (M) is taking part in such an important endeavor. Moreover, this kind of welcoming makes the newcomers feel that they are valued within the community. It is however important to notify that a very few examples of welcoming behavior is noticed within this context.

Welcoming is noticed only within high involved product communities of Facebook; moreover welcoming behavior is more apparent within utilitarian brand communities of Facebook.
4.2.9 Empathizing

Table 4.9 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for empathizing practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for empathizing is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>High involved/utilitarian</strong></th>
<th><strong>High involved/hedonic</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathizing is more apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Empathizing is less apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathizing is noticed following vehicle accident, product failure (engine issues), late delivery (product delay) poor customer service and after getting stolen.</td>
<td>Empathizing is noticed following vehicle accident.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Low involved/utilitarian</strong></th>
<th><strong>Low involved/hedonic</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathizing is not noticed within this context.</td>
<td>Empathizing is not noticed within this context.</td>
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</table>

This study expected empathizing to be equally evident in all the FBCs specified by the involvement by product positioning matrix; and a considerable difference is not predicted. Interestingly, empathizing is only present in high involved product category. Within high involved/utilitarian brands members show empathy following vehicle accident, product failure, after getting stolen, late delivery and customer service. However, within high involved/hedonic brands empathizing is noticed following vehicle accident. This indicates
that members of utilitarian brands consider showing more empathy compared to the hedonic brands.

Delay is associated to negative feelings towards the brand and makes the consumers dissatisfied. Such compassionate message helps grieving party to reduce emotional pain as seen within the following excerpts (high involved/utilitarian brand):

JS (F) So Ford is having some trouble shipping the Fiestas because of the bad weather. They even said it would be about a 10 day delay. Well its been 3 weeks now and no one at the dealership is giving me a straight answer. Really getting tired of the wait X/ August 8, 2010 at 4:03 am.

AM (F) I feel your pain! I was supposed to have mine not this past thursday, but the thursday before. Every time I call to ask what is going on I either get an "it'll be here tomorrow for sure" answer, which it obviously isn't since i am still fiesta-less or no one returns my call. Frustrating! Hopefully all the frustration will melt when I finally lay eyes on my fiesta..today? ;) August 9, 2010 at 5:26pm

The message posted by AM (F) should make JS (F) feel that she is not alone in such a situation. Here AM (F) tries to empathize JS (F) by sharing her own version of the waiting behavior. By uttering the words “I feel your pain” – AM (F) is lending her shoulder to comfort of JS (F). AM (F)’s last words should comfort JS (F) when she says “Hopefully all the frustration will melt when I finally lay eyes on my fiesta..today?” This sort of empathy should generate harmony between the members and help create a memorable experience.

Within high involved/hedonic brands members show empathy to others following vehicle accident; as seen within the next excerpt:

AK (F) I'm ok, but I have broken heart. We were together 2 years without any drama like broken parts of car ( I only had to change an oil and filters)... So sad, what's more it wasn't
my fault (other driver of OPEL ASTRA caused this accident - I hate OPEL since that day).
(Member posted a picture of the damaged vehicle) October 29, 2010 at 5:19am

GH (M) At least your okay.. poor thing. There is another one waiting for you out there. October 29, 2010 at 2:56pm

AC (M). Like Gregory said as long as your OK, you can pick up another. Maybe an SRT. :-) October 29, 2010 at 10:42pm

Both GH (M) and AC (M)’s compassionate message should make AK (F) feel that there is someone to care in such a situation. ACS (M) is not only psychologically supporting and consoling AK (F) but also motivating her to purchase another version of the same brand. This shows that while comforting others through the emotional assistance loyal members do not forget to support the brand.

Empathizing is noticed only within high involved communities of Facebook. Moreover, empathizing is more apparent within utilitarian brands than in hedonic brands. This indicates that members of utilitarian brands show more empathy to others following a product related issues.

**4.2.10 Governing**

Table 4.10 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for governing behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for governing behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for governing behavior is presented.
Table 18

Table 4.10 Major findings of governing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governing behavior</td>
<td>Governing behavior is less apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Governing behavior is not noticed within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low involved/utilitarian</td>
<td>Low involved/hedonic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing behavior</td>
<td>Governing behavior is more apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Governing behavior is more apparent within this context.</td>
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</table>

This study expected that governing will be equally evident in all the brand communities specified by the involvement by product positioning matrix; and a considerable difference is not predicted. However findings of this study indicate that governing is more apparent within low involved products than the high involved products. Moreover, governing is not practiced by the members of high involved/hedonic brands. The consumers of high involved/hedonic brands are happened to be more matured, educated and achievers in life. As these consumers are extra mindful of their behavioral parameter within SNSs; it is not necessary to remind them about their behavioral responsibilities – for which governing is not noticed within this context.

As this behavior is not practiced within high involved/hedonic brands, the following sequence is maintained to present that data- high involved/utilitarian; low involved/utilitarian and low involved/hedonic brands.
Members’ comments within FBCs indicate that they remind others about the behavioral consequences within SNSs which is an important resource for self-governance. The following post shows how members remind others about the consequences of providing personal information on the internet (high involved/utilitarian brand):

TS (M) D (F), thank you for your concern, but I have been in contact via email with Ford customer Service and so far, they have been less than helpful. I have given them all that information already February 8 at 6:49am

CC (M) I wouldn't be giving anyone on FaceBook those details about your Car TS (M) it is the internet even I could work for Ford! Please do not share those details with anyone but an official Ford Dealership and representative. February 8 at 2:16pm. (On Ford fiesta’s page)

Internet related identity fraud is a common phenomenon in today’s time and CC (M) wants to safeguard TS (M) from such a situation. This behavior indicates that members remind each other about the behavioral parameter by expressing what should or should not be done within FBCs. Such behavior should keep these online communities safer and help experience a better environment.

Some of the messages within low involved products indicate that cyber bullying is pretty common in these contexts. It is important that someone takes these messages seriously and respond in a manner so that behavioral norm can be established (low involved/utilitarian brand):

LC (F) Well I'll start out by saying X(M) your stupid! And second off u don't even know C (M) so why would u comment in the first place??!! November 14, 2010 at 1:00am

HRK (F) X(M), you honestly have no brains do you? You need a really good beat down. That is one of my dear friends kids, and for you to come and post not only on his page some stupid racist stuff and other kids, you are one IGNORANT MF! You are the type of person that needs some education in your life. Does it make you feel tough to pick on a kid over half your age?
Really? You must not keep up with everything going on in today’s world. I would like to keep going, but I don’t want to be a "bully" online. Although sometimes it is much needed, like in your case! November 14, 2010 at 4:24am (Gatorade’s page)

LC (F) and HRK (F)’s remark is directed towards X (M) who posted negative comment towards a young member C (M). LC (F) is articulating the behavioral expectations of the brand community by saying “u don't even know C (M) so why would u comment in the first place??!!” These quotes further indicate that some people post messages in such an insane manner that it jeopardizes the online experiences of others. HRK (F)’s comment indicates that sometimes harsh response is required to deter people from posting such messages. By keeping a vigilant eye on such behavior and posting in this manner, members are trying to ensure a better online experience for everyone.

It is noticed that some members post message directing the whole community and not to a specific person. However, the intention here is the same – to remind others about the behavioral limit within the brand community (low involved/hedonic brand).

\[ JF(F) \] I just wish that the people on this page or on facebook could just stop using dirty & filthy language on the international chat line!
For goodness sakes people.. Everybody but everybody can see this how you behave on this worldwide service!
You poeple shall BEHAVE & that is a very strict ORDER!!...

You shall not carry to speak like this!
This is a 1st written WARNING to everybody out there who swears on the international line!
December 21, 2010 at 8:06 pm. (On Sprite’s page)

Member’s use of inappropriate languages is more apparent within low involved communities within Facebook. Hence this sort of messages posted by JF (F) should remind everyone about their behavioral responsibility within FBCs. It is however surprising to see that sometimes these filthy messages do not get deleted by the site administrator. However, such message
with dirty languages may give a negative signal towards a new member who is browsing these sites. Hence such governing behavior is important for the overall wellbeing of the brand community.

Data reported herein indicate that governing behavior is more prevalent within low involved products; moreover governing is not practiced within high involved/hedonic brands.

### 4.2.11 Justifying

Table 4.11 demonstrates the definition and the findings for justifying behavior within FBCs. Following this a discussion is provided concerning why member’s justifying behavior is not noticed within Facebook.

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<tr>
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<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justifying</td>
<td>Justifying is not noticed within this context.</td>
<td>Justifying is not noticed within this context.</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justifying</td>
<td>Justifying is not noticed within this context.</td>
<td>Justifying is not noticed within this context.</td>
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</table>

This study expected justifying behavior to be more evident within high involved products; and predicted it to be more apparent within utilitarian brands. It is however surprising to notice that justifying is not practiced within FBCs. Justifying is obsessive -compulsive brand related behavior that deploys rationales generally for devoting time and effort to the brand and collectively to outsiders and marginal members in the boundary. This conceptualization
describes that justifying has three facets: one is extreme level of devotion to the brand, second is devoting time and effort behind the brand and lastly deploying rationales behind such devotion. A mixture of all these three elements together in one instance is not noticed in any of these FBCs. In many instance members attachment towards the brand is noticed, in some occasion members’ prolonged use is identified. However, spending enormous amount of time and effort behind such dedication and then rationalizing such devotion in one single instance is not seen within any of these FBCs. As a result members’ justification behavior is not noticed within FBCs.

4.2.12 Staking

Table 4.12 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for staking behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is laid out and then the data with necessary explanation for staking behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

Table 20

**Table 4.12 Major findings of staking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staking refers to as recognizing variance within the brand community membership and marking intragroup distinction and similarity (Schau et al. 2009).</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High involved/utilitarian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staking is more apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members stake their domain based on age, vehicle’s body type (sedan or hatch), transmission (automatic or manual, hybrid etc.), and country of origin and body color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low involved/utilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staking is less apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members stake their domain based on product variety (flavor).</td>
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</table>

This study expected staking to be equally evident in all of communities specified by the involvement and product positioning matrix and a considerable difference is not predicted. Data within FBCs indicate that staking is more apparent and includes more issues within high involved products. For example within high involved products members stake their domain based on their age, vehicle’s body type (sedan or hatch); transmission (automatic/ manual, diesel/patrol, hybrid etc.); country of origin and body color etc. However, within low involved products members stake their domain based on product variety (flavor), packaging type and country of origin. Moreover, members’ staking behavior within high involved products is more engaging and intense which is less apparent within low involved products. This subgroup of members not only delineates their own space but also use such demarcation to create bonds with other likeminded individuals. As expected no considerable difference concerning staking behavior is noticed between utilitarian and hedonic brands.

Sometimes members’ stake their domain based on their age allowing members to delineate their domain and find a common ground to socialize among themselves. The following set of excerpts (from high involved/utilitarian brands) indicates how members openly discuss about enjoying the car although they belong to a different age bracket.

ERT (F) *Got my little Bright Magenta yesterday! (with moon roof I might add!) Not your typical Fiesta owner according to the demographics, I'm over 50 but I love it!!!* August 11, 2010 at 5.45 am.

JA (F) *Good for you! I'll be 50 at the end of Sept. and I'm enjoying every moment that I drive my Lime Squeeze Fiesta!* August 11, 2010 at 6:19am
KM (F) It makes you young! I hope you enjoy yours as much as I'm enjoying mine (same color/feature, hatch, manual)! August 11, 2010 at 9:29am

KS (M) I think it has a broad appeal because it's such a great car, and the gas mileage is amazing! Who doesn't love 40mpg? I'm 25, but i can definitely see why anyone at any age would buy this car. August 11, 2010 at 10:16pm

All these message posts identify the similarity and the distinctions within the larger group of Fiesta owners; however this variation did not stop them from sharing the passion for the brand. KS (M)’s remarks address the contrast and speak how the brand can satisfy the expectations of each subset of individuals within the broader community. KS (M)’s remarks further indicate that he has a lot of respect for the other group cohort. Such conversation addressing the dissimilarity helps create social ties between the streams that flow within the same community.

It is noticed within FBCs that sometimes members stake their domain based on specific brand preference. The following exchange of messages specifies such behavior within broader groups based on their inclination for a specific vehicle type – in this instance “wagons”.

RBC (F) DON'T STOP MAKING THE WAGON!!!!!! February 25 at 10.24 pm.

WS (M) They still make + sell them outside of the US. Americans prefer their gas guzzler SUV rather than the wagon :( March 7 at 1:06am

RBC (F) I'm on my 4th or 5th Volvo, 3rd wagon and have no desire to go back to the sedan or the SUV. I love these cars but I want a wagon. Guess I'll have to try out some other brands when I'm ready for a new car. :( March 7 at 2:29am

Both WS (M) and RBC (F) carefully delineate the specific domain of engagement based on their preference on Volvo wagon. This sort of staking encourages and protects group
heterogeneity and such demarcation allows its members a breath of space within the larger community.

It is further noticed within FBCs that sometimes members stake their domain based on dissimilarities on their preferences of specific brand versions as seen within the next excerpt (low involved/utilitarian brand):

LKB (F) *I love Powerade Zero. Well most of them I like. I hate the blue and the green one but the others rock* April 19, 2010 at 10:01pm

TJF (M) Lisa, I'm the exact opposite of you!! Too funny... still sharing the love for Powerade Zero; woot woot! April 19, 2010 at 10:19pm.

Here LKB (F) and TJF (M) shows how members sharing dissimilarities within their choice of the brand, can still carry same level of enthusiasm and respect as they belong to a broader community. Interesting here to note that this conversation actually brings two strangers together and friendship can grow from their dissimilarity like this.

It is noticed within low involved products that members specify preference to delineate their own space as seen within the next excerpt (low involved/hedonic brand):

HLP (F) *I love Fanta, but it's not the same in the US as it is in Germany. Germany Fanta is the BEST! Stateside tastes too much like Sunkist. It's weird. Wish I could get it mailed from Germany.* May 24 at 12:26pm.

HLP (F) stakes her domain based on where Fanta is manufactured. Such staking based on members’ taste preference is apparent within low involved products. This sort of behavior should help the marketer identify consumers’ taste preference and know the demand for such variations.

Findings of this study show that staking is more apparent and engaging within high involved products. Consistent with the expectation findings indicate that staking is present within both utilitarian and hedonic brands and a considerable difference is not identified.
4.2.13 Milestoning

Table 4.13 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for milestoning behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview on the findings is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for milestoning is provided. In the end a summary of the findings is presented.

Table 21

Table 4.13 Major findings of milestoning

Milestones are standout brand experiences that refer to the practice of noting seminal events in brand ownership and consumption (Schau et al. 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milestoning is more apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Milestoning is more apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members celebrate purchase date, length of ownership, number of brand ownerships, amount of consumption (odometer reading), how many members within the same family own the brand and that they are the first owner of a particular place.</td>
<td>Members celebrate the purchase date, length of ownership; number of brand ownerships, how many members within the same family owns the brand and amount of consumption (odometer reading).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milestoning depicts consumer’s vivid memory of the brand ownership.</td>
<td>Milestoning depicts consumer’s vivid memory of the brand ownership.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milestone is less apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Milestone is less apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members celebrate only the length of use.</td>
<td>Members celebrate only the length of use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivid stories in milestoning are absent.</td>
<td>Vivid stories in milestoning are absent.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

This study predicted milestoning to be more apparent within high involved products; and expected it to be equally evident within utilitarian and hedonic brands. Consistent with the
expectation members’ comments indicate that milestoning is more apparent within high involved products and involves more issues. For example: within high involved products milestoning includes celebrating the purchase date, identifying the length of ownership, identifying the number of same brands that the member owned, amount of consumption (odometer reading), how many members within the family use the same brand and that they are the first owner in a particular place. In contrast, within low involved products milestoning is noticed only around how long they have used the brand. Moreover, vibrant stories associated to milestoning are noticed only within high involved products. Consistent with the expectation no difference within milestoning behavior between utilitarian and hedonic brands are identified.

Vivid stories in relation to brand ownership following the first purchase are ample within high involved products. Members rejoice with unbound happiness after purchasing the brand as seen with the following excerpt (high involved/utilitarian brand):

SH (F) It happened yesterday. Around 7:30pm. I drove off the dealer lot with a 2011 Ford Fiesta SES with the Lightning Blue Metallic paint. I'm parked on the street here at work with the studio window overlooking my beautiful Fiesta. I couldn't be happier. All I need to do now is name her. December 14, 2010 at 4:30am.

This kind of moving account of owning the brand and vividly waiting to experience it for the first time tells the emotion behind it. Being able to narrate the story with uninhibited bliss helps the member to release his feelings received through owning the car. Such milestone behavior depicting feelings of warmth should make the indecisive consumers who visit these brand communities to make decisions in favor of the brand.

Member’s expression of brand attachment for a long time articulated through the flamboyant narratives speaks about their ongoing relationship with the brand. The following message indicates how members celebrate their brand ownership (in terms of years and also consumption) which depicts their prolonged engagement (high involved/hedonic brand):
ST (F) I bought my first car...a 2004 ruby red S60 Volvo... seven years ago today! On Friday, the odometer rolled over to 149,000 miles, so it's just now getting broken in! My family has driven Volvos for about 20 years now, and I was fortunate to have been "loaned" my parents' first two Volvos before buying my own. I'm confident that my S60 will be good for another 150,000 miles, and then I hope to get another Volvo! February 15 at 12:52am

It is interesting to see that ST (F) is celebrating her purchase of the brand and did not forget to ‘have a toast’ on the day with other likeminded friends. “On Friday, the odometer rolled over to 149,000 miles” – this shows that associates not only remember the purchase date of the brand but closely follow every major milestone being achieved. ST (F)’s comment further shows that members take a sense of pride and feel special to be able to maintain relationship for such a prolonged time. Moreover, ST (F) did not forget to relay another milestone associated to this purchase- that this is her third Volvo over the years and she is elated to be attached with the brand for such a long time.

Members cherish their continuing relationship with the brand within low involved context and notify these relationships through Facebook. Because of the similarity of the findings within this context, both the message excerpts from low involved/utilitarian and also low involved/hedonic brands (Example 1 and Example 2) are provided here.

**Example 1**
KM (M) @ S (F) I probably buy more Gatorade than anybody lol I drink gatorade everday i have never drunk any thing else ever since i was like.......6.....at least. October 14, 2010 at 4:07am.

**Example 2**
AC (M) i am drinkin it rite now!my favorite drink since i was 8, now i currently 19. June 16,2010at 3.07 am. (On sprite’s page).

Both the messages indicate that members treasure such a long stand with the brand. Both KM (M) and AC (M) are announcing their continued relationship with the brand which goes for
more than a decade. This shows that even within low involved context such lengthy relationship can be developed.

Data reported herein indicate that within high involved products milestone is practiced through variety of facets, whereas within low involved products such behavior concentrates only on one aspect. Moreover, the vivid stories to depict members’ brand relationship journey noticed within high involved products are absent in low involved products. As expected milestone behavior is noticed within both utilitarian and hedonic brands and a considerable difference is not identified.

4.2.14 Grooming

Table 4.14 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for grooming behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for this behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings is presented.

Table 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.14 Major findings of grooming</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grooming for the brand is denoted as caring for the brand through washing, cleaning and waxing the product (Schau et al. 2009).</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members’ grooming behavior is noticed within this context.</td>
<td>Members’ grooming behavior is noticed within this context.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members’ grooming behavior is not noticed within this context.</td>
<td>Members’ grooming behavior is not noticed within this context.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Members’ grooming behavior is expected to be evident only within high involved product communities; and predicted it to be more prevalent within hedonic brands than utilitarian brands. Consistent with the expectations, grooming is only noticed within high involved products. However grooming behavior is practiced in both the utilitarian and hedonic brands and a considerable difference is not identified. This indicates that the members of utilitarian brands also take pride in cleaning and washing their possession and wants to show off through FBCs.

The sense of joy and bliss that members feel for his effort to make the product unblemished and shiny is remarkable. This effort need a bit of appreciation and the pride associated with such a meticulous event is unbound. Such an expression of happiness after grooming can be noticed within the following excerpt (high involved/utilitarian brand):

GT (M) Got my Fiesta on Thur, drove it home, and put it in the garage. Waxed it with EagleOne gel nanowax. First time I used it but the reviews are good so I tried. Used to use Liquid Glass on my Harleys and 61 Corvette, but you had to be careful since it stained the nonmetal areas. The nanowax did a great job, but if you use it be sure to use a very thin coat. I had to buff the car four times to get the shine where I knew it should be. Twice as brilliant as it was when I drove it home.

It's been raining since Friday and after waxing and detailing it, it looks too good to drive it. Guess I'll get over it and start taking it out in the rain. August 8; 2010 at 4:18 am.

The ritualistic grooming and care taken to clean the car in a faultless form serves to reinforce the value that GT (M) place on the product. GT (M) is featuring every move of his grooming process in a sensible detail to let others know how the process should be carried out. The pride and joy associated with such endeavor is also well observed as GT (M) announce “Twice as brilliant as it was when I drove it home”. Moreover he is motivated to show off the pristine appearance of his possession even though it’s been raining and he knows that rain and mud may ruin such an immaculate appearance.
Members of the high involved/hedonic brands also spend their time in taking care of the product. The following post indicates that members feel elated after their prolonged effort to give their possession a shiny look.

DB (M) *Finally washed and waxed! AND repainted the wheels. Good as new *=]( member posted a picture of the vehicle after the wash) January 8 at 8:20am (Chrysler’s page)

DB (M)’s expression shows that grooming provides a sense of pride within these members as they enjoy spending time to make their possession spotless. One important observation here is that a considerable amount of messages posted on grooming experience are followed by a picture of the vehicle. This indicates that members who groom the product want to show off their possession as it is associated to emotional pleasure.

Members grooming behavior is apparent only in high involved products; and such grooming practice shows that they are happy to spend hours to tidy their possessions. However, no considerable differences are identified between utilitarian and hedonic brands as members of utilitarian brands also engage in such behavior.

### 4.2.15 Customizing

Table 4.15 demonstrates the definition and the major findings for customizing behavior within FBCs. Following this table an overview of the findings is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for this item is provided. In the end a summary of the findings is presented.
Table 23

Table 4.15 Major findings of customizing

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Customizing behavior is noticed within this context.</td>
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<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customizing behavior is noticed within this context.</td>
<td>Customizing behavior is noticed within this context.</td>
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This study expected customizing to be equally evident in all communities specified by the involvement and product positioning matrix and a considerable difference is not predicted. Member’s comments within FBCs indicate that customizing is equally evident within the entire brand communities. Within high involved products members spend extensive amount of time and money in changing factory specs to give a unique identity for the brand. On the other hand within low involved products members mix various brands with others for a better taste. However, a different set of motives behind customizing is noticed between high and low involved products. Within high involved products members’ motive behind customizing is to provide a unique identity, whereas in low involved products the motive is to get a better taste through the mixing behavior. As expected both the members of utilitarian and hedonic brands also customize their brands and a considerable difference is not identified.

Customizing provides an immense sensual pleasure for the individual who takes extra effort to convert the product as seen within the following discussions (high involved/utilitarian brand):
CC (M) I think when they "Modify" the Fiesta ANYONE In General really kind of ruins it... Most people buy a car because they like the look of it the way it is I.E If you like the Base CL Fiesta you buy that with the steel rims which are ugly IMO* But if you like the LX WT Fiesta you get it with the Alloy Rims.. Putting "After market" body kits and rims just ruins the whole car but that's my opinion. February 2 at 2:43am

TG (M) havin something that is 1 of a kind is how the world works now, true enough i could go out and buy the car i want the way i want it, but i would rather build it myself....its what pushes car guys to there goals, in a car persons life there is always 2 women... your FB, GF, or wife then your mistress...your car. never fails. and people change stuff on the fiesta bc finally, its a good platform for some good ole fun February 2 at 3:04am

MD (M) @CC(M)- most true car lovers don't buy a car just to keep it stock, since cars have been mass produced people have been changing them by looks and performance. If not we'd all have the same gay car. Even average people now a days do lil changes like rims. People like to customize for their own style. Exactly taylor the fiesta has been a proven platform to have some fun with and fords marketing I pretty good. Good things to come February 2 at 3:36am.

TG (M) and MD (M)’s messages are in response to CC (M)’s post who suggests that people should not customize a product. Interestingly enough, TG (M) starts by saying “havin something that is 1 of a kind is how the world works now”- speaks his inspiration behind customizing the effort. Fun and excitement related to creating something completely new is the other reason for such an act as he indicates-“people change stuff on the fiesta bc finally, its a good platform for some good ole fun”. MD (M)’s message took a different trail as he characterizes a true car lover; who strives to construct something novel that will exclaim the bystanders. “Life will be dull if we do not change it”- is his motive behind customizing. He further points out that not only the passionate brand lovers customize, rather the average customers take the stress to create something new. MD (M) brings an interesting issue when he says “People like to customize for their own style”- this indicates that one of the key inspiration behind any customizing effort is that it is an extension of their self-image.
Evidence of the data indicates that some members purchase an old automobile to restore the product. This sort of projects involve significant amount of time, however the joy behind such a venture is unbound as seen within the next excerpt (high involved/hedonic brand):

JM (M) @RK check this one out. I picked it up real cheap, and just finished the engine/trans rebuild adding a new turbo unit. Then, even after the in dash nav, and a 9 speaker audio upgrade I'm only $500 over of book value. Next up, new tires and suspension- one of the best economic moves I've made in a long time! (member posted a picture of the vehicle) December 21, 2010 at 12:55am

JM (M) is giving a snapshot of his restoration project which indicates the devotion required to finish the project. This sort of endeavor is seen whereby dedicated consumers purchase old automobile and engages extensively to give it a unique look. Although JM (M) mentions about the cheap procurement; however indicates that the outcome of such a project is more emotional than economic. One interesting finding is that many of these messages follow with a photo shoot of the car. This indicates that consumers like to show off their tailored product to gain a superior status within the brand community.

Members’ behavior within low involved products indicates that they customize these brands by mixing various products to give it a unique taste. Both the following examples (example 1 and 2) are taken from low involved/utilitarian and low involved/ hedonic context to show how members engage in such behavior.

**Example 1**

HL (F) anyone try to make a gatorade snow cone message me if you want to know how to make them are really good (: December 23, 2010 at 12:06 am.

KN (M) start a disscussion on how to make one :( December 23, 2010 at 4:33am ·
HL (F) *Well first get a cup of crushed ice then on top of that the gatorade of your pick then a little water and enjoy. I was I high school trainer for my his football team and when it would get hot we would make these* December 23, 2010 at 5:23am

**Example 2**

RM (M) *the best mix sprite 2l + bear 1l (not strong) + ice + fresh mint = great drink just try when its to hot ;]* August 7, 2010 at 5:53 am.

Within the first example KN (M) and HL (F) show that members not only share their unique way of mixing various brands but also socialize with others regarding their customizing effort. KN (M)’s suggestion to start a conversation about the process indicates that many consumers are tired with the same taste and wants to know how they can change the mass produced item. Similar behavior is noticed within the second example where RM (M) is articulating how he changes the taste by mixing it with other product.

Customizing is noticed within both high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands. Within high involved products members customizing effort is carried out to provide a unique identity of the brand, whereas within low involved products the motive is to have unique taste. Both the members of utilitarian and hedonic brands engage in such behavior and a considerable difference is not identified.

**4.3: Findings for research question 2**

This section will address the findings for research question 2. Through the inductive analysis six new VCBs are explored which is not noticed within the context of SNSs. These new VCBs are: defending the brand, reassurance, volunteering time, amplification of company events, missing behavior and daydreaming. This section is organized this way: under each VCB a table is presented first which shows the major findings for that item. After that the conceptual underpinning for the item is constructed to establish its relationship as a VCB. Following this the data is presented under each involvement and product positioning matrix. The sequence maintained to present that data is- high involved/utilitarian; high
involved/hedonic; low involved/utilitarian and low involved/hedonic. Unless specified each of this involvement and positioning matrix includes one example followed by the explanation of the data. In some cases if the data is not found for a particular matrix; it is mentioned within the table and also notified during the introductory phase under the VCB. In some instances two or more examples of the data for the same involvement and positioning matrix is given which is duly instructed before the data is presented. At the end a summary note that entails the synopsis of the findings is also provided.

4.3.1 Defending the brand

Table 4.16 demonstrates the major findings for *defending the brand* practiced within FBCs. Following this table a discussion on the conceptual foundation is laid out, after that the major findings and also the data with necessary explanation for this behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is outlined.

Table 24

**Table 4.16 Major findings of defending the brand**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defending the brand is more apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Defending the brand is more apparent than the low involved products but less apparent than the utilitarian brand.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Members defend the brand by clarifying manufacturer’s role, justifying brand’s decision (by providing facts, providing their own opinion and consumers own experience with the brand), by comparing competitor’s actions or industry norms (comparing with competitors’ features, customer service, product specification etc.), blaming the uncontrollable features, blaming the complainer’s own action and blaming the third party.

Members defend the brand by clarifying manufacturer’s role, justifying brand’s decision (by providing their own opinion and consumers own experience with the brand), by comparing competitor’s actions or industry norms (customer service etc.) and blaming the complainer’s own action.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defending the brand is less apparent than high involved</td>
<td>Defending the brand is less apparent than high involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>products but more apparent than the hedonic brands.</td>
<td>products and less apparent than utilitarian brands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members defend the brand by clarifying manufacturers’ roles,</td>
<td>Members defend the brand by providing their own opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by providing facts, providing their own opinion and</td>
<td>and blaming the third party.</td>
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<tr>
<td>experience etc.</td>
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The benefits of a positive brand reputation are an intangible asset contributing most to overall corporate success (Hall 2006). To achieve goals, remain competitive and prosper the received wisdom is that good reputation of a brand paves the organizational path to acceptance and approval by stakeholders. However, consumer attitude towards a brand can be heavily altered by others negative view and opinion towards it (Herr, Kardes and Kim 1991). Effective handling of such a situation could not only keep the customers who have the bad experience, but also enforce the image identification of the company and switch them from angry to loyal customer (Wu 1999). Marketers need to undertake various strategies (i.e. public relations, informative advertising etc.) to defend its brand under such misinformation by their customers. In this regards, Noble and Watson (2007) suggest that an effective and efficient response to the complaints and negative publicity from customer is an essential index of the company’s performance. However, today’s consumers act on behalf of the marketer and defend brands against negative comments and complaints as they encounter it. Such defensive behavior deters others from posting further negative comments regarding the brand and helps the brand regain its image.

Member’s comments within FBCs indicate that this behavior is more apparent within high involved products. For example within high involved category consumers defend their brands by clarifying manufacturer’s role, justifying the brand’s decision (by providing facts, providing their own opinion and consumers own experience with the brand), by comparing competitor’s actions or industry norms (comparing with competitors’ features, customer
service, product specification etc.), blaming the uncontrollable features, blaming the complainer’s own action and blaming the third party. However within low involved products the behavior is limited to providing facts, clarifying manufacturer’s role, providing their own opinion and blaming the third party. It is further noticed that this behavior is more prevalent within utilitarian brands than the hedonic brands. This indicates that members of utilitarian brands are motivated to defend more than the hedonic brands.

The data concerning defending the brand is presented in the following manner; first of all three different set of data examples along with related discussion is provided under high involved/utilitarian brands. Later one example for each of the remaining involvement and positioning matrix is provided.

It is noticed within FBCs that some consumers blame the manufacturer even though it is beyond their (manufacturer) expected role. In such situation some members remind the complainer about the firm’s responsibility to deter them from future criticism (high involved/utilitarian brand):

MM (F) Woke up by call from police yesterday at 5 a.m. telling me my 2009 Fit's tires had been removed right outside my apartment during the night. It was placed on milk crates, resulting in at least $1,000 worth of body damage. Fits in my area have been targeted for at least the past month. Could Tweet until I'm blue in the face, and Honda won't respond, apologize, etc. Love my car to pieces, but starting to greatly dislike Honda...April 7, 2010 at 11:59pm

ACD (F) What do you want Honda to do? Don't get me wrong, your situation sucks and I'm sorry you have to deal with it, but Honda can't help people stealing your tires. April 8, 2010 at 4:24am

MM (F) Well, true, but a warning to Fit owners -- if not letters, than at least a well-distributed press release -- advising the use of wheel locks and/or not leaving cars in areas prone to this type of theft? I just feel like the company is trying to avoid any controversy and
negative press to reap the greatest possible benefits from Toyota's unfortunate situation. April 8, 2010 at 5:54am

SP (F) ???? You left a priceless piece of art in the middle of the street and someone just took it? noway! Buy a Pinto and see if someone steals it? Have a nice day Best wishes. April 8, 2010 at 4:42pm.

ACD (F)’s remark “Honda cant help people stealing your tyres” – clarifies that that it is not the brand’s responsibility when it comes to stealing the property once the ownership of the brand is transferred. Look how the complaining member MM (F) has backed down from her initial claim against the manufacturer. Her next statement – “Well, true, but a warning to Fit owners”- makes others sense that she has already stepped away from her earlier claim that it is Honda’s fault. SP (F)’s witty comment should take the last bit of pride that MM (F) could get out of this situation when she says “You left a priceless piece of art in the middle of the street and someone just took it? noway! Buy a Pinto and see if someone steals it?” These sorts of messages give others a strong signal that devoted members are ready to defend these brands against any misinformation.

Sometimes members put the blame on uncontrollable natural hazards to defend it against other’s complain (high involved/utilitarian brand):

SW (M) I ordered my Fiesta at the end of May and the latest word is that it still has not left Mexico as of late last week. My wife and were really excited about this car, but I'm not sure how much longer we can hold out. We live in NJ and I have not seen one Fiesta on the road. The dealer has even given us a loaner car. I'm beginning to doubt whether I can wait till the end of the month. Such a shame. I was interested in Ford because they were the most competent of the big three and now my car is held up because of a transportation issue in ANOTHER COUNTRY. My Hyundai dealer is very close. August 5, 2010 at 6:50 am.

SM (F) There was a hurricane that washed out all the railroads...it's not Ford's fault, I'm in the same boat. But good news:
SM (F)’s comment in response to SW (M)’s complaining is interesting as he tries to tackle the situation by putting the blame on uncontrollable features. “There was a hurricane that washed out all the railroads...it's not Ford's fault”- says it all. It is fascinating to note the members clearly point out that such natural hazard can ruin any well-organized planning. To support his claim SM (F) also provides the web address so that the complainer can receive information pertaining to his negative remarks. SM (F) is hoping that such information will deter other grieving members from posting further negative message within Facebook.

In some instances members put the blame the complainer’s action rather the brand’s performance behind such a cause. The following example taken from high involved/utilitarian brand should clarify the idea:

GT (M) My Fiesta has developed an air leak and resulting wind sound along the top of the driver's side window when going 51 mph or more. Anyone else experiencing this? August 27, 2010 at 4:19 am.

BR (M) is the window up all the way? Sometimes when a car is new, the weather-strip is firm and doesn't let the window go up all the way. I have had this happen before. Give the window up switch an extra touch and the window should seat into the weather strip. After a few times, the seal will be broken in enough and it won't happen again. August 27, 2010 at 7:23pm.

This is amazing how loyal members’ try to find faults in the complainer’s wrong use of the brand to put the blame on their shoulder. BR (M) is confident about his claim that the fault is not caused by Ford as he indicates “I have had this happen before”. Moreover BR (M) is trying to cast enough doubt on the complainer’s [GT (M)] action by saying “is the window up all the way?” or did you follow the right procedure to use the brand before complaining? It...
can be added here that this kind of behavior gives confidence to the members who are thinking of buying this vehicle. Upon reading GT (M)’s message the undecided members may logically think that Ford’s quality has issues. However, BR (M)’s statement will clarify the situation and make them feel confident about the car’s performance.

Sometimes members provide examples of other competitor’s actions to tackle the situation. The following message shows how a loyal member offsets a young woman’s negative remark who is clearly irritated at the failing of her Volvo’s (high involved/hedonic) product quality and service.

VR (F) You should be ashamed of yourselves. Why don't you just come over and slap me in the face personally. And don't give me your mileage crap. A transmission should hold up well beyond 100,000 miles. I am one of MANY unlucky, duped customers that believed in your name and reputation and your stupid "Moose Test". I paid $50,000 for a car because I expected GOOD SOLID PARTS, not GM parts under a Volvo name. I would of bought a crappy GM car if I wanted a GM transmission and saved half the money. So perhaps you've made good cars in the past, but got it wrong on this one. Man up and do the right thing for your customers. It's not a secret, it's all over the internet. You screwed up on the XC90, so make it right. Perhaps you had a Moose screwing on parts at the end of the assembly line. You have no idea of the bitch you have just unleashed. October 30, 2010 at 5:20am.

AC (M) No, Volvo you really DON'T have ANY idea of the BITCH you just unleashed. Jeze lady. ANY and EVERY auto maker does that!! Happened quite a few times to people I know who have bought Audis and VWs. And you don’t even want to know about the Mercedes E-class that my uncle bought. And at the time Volvo was owned by Ford and you should well know about the problems that Ford has tried to cover up. Obviously if you got the car fixed from another place other than a dealer they're NOT going to fix it, even if it is a Volvo specialist.
No company is going to do that. OBVIOUSLY that's on ANY auto maker. I get that it makes you upset but you car has passed the warranty, October 31, 2010 at 9:54am.

AC (M)’s expression to defend the negative remark makes the reader envisage that he is an employee of Volvo. VR (F)’s claim and her negative remarks are in serious crisis after AC (M)’s post. AC (M) tackles the issue by providing example of big name competitors and their service standard in similar situation. Such information generating industry norms in handling similar situation should make the complainer realize that her grumble has limited ground. It is further suggested that the types of words used by AC (M) can never be uttered by the company representative if they had to defend its brand. “No, Volvo you really DON'T have ANY idea of the BITCH you just unleashed. Jeze lady. ANY and EVERY auto maker does that!!” – these sorts of words may never be used by the company representative, although such strong words should deter VR (F) from making further complaint. These sorts of actions from loyal members indicate that some associates are ready to act as a soldier who wants to defend its territory and do not want to give any edge to its false accuser.

Members of low involved/utilitarian brands also bring facts and scientific evidence to combat against any misinformation as seen within the following excerpts:

IM (F) This guy T (M) kept arguing how bad the salt in Gatorade is for you, and I tried to explain to him that when you are dehydrated you need salt. But, I guess his business degree and the 4 hours he told me he spent researching this topic trumps my 4 years of schooling to become an athletic trainer :) Anyways, I guess his way of winning the argument was to delete his profile and all of his posts stating his opinion :)So, i guess I win.........Gatorade IS good for you when you are dehydrated! :) August 24, 2010 at 11.26 am.

AA (F) Some people lose potassium and sodium through physical activity and others have medical problems where they can't hold onto electrolytes. Those ppl are fine consuming Gatorade. Couch potatoes and recliner jockeys might find the sodium an issue since they aren't sweating it out. When I sweat I literally have white patches of salt left behind on my face and arms. There's some interesting articles on how the decline in sodium consumption as
it has gotten a bad name has increased the incidence of infectious diseases. But that's a whole other discussion... August 24, 2010 at 9:32pm

IM (F)’s comments to oppose the negative information of T (M) should help the brand to combat in such a situation. Moreover her experience should create trust among the readers mind as an expert; and such a strong refutation should make others rely on the argument. AA (F) brings the facts into the discussion board to prove her point. “Some people lose potassium and sodium through physical activity and others have medical problems where they can't hold onto electrolytes”- this sort of information to contest complainer’s claim with scientific evidence is strong verification of the statement. Only a loyal member with strong conviction can bring such argument to defend its brand.

Members of low involved/hedonic brands also blame the third party behind such an issue to take the blame away from the manufacturer. For example:

RG (F) I dont know if anyone from the Coca-Cola company is monitoring this page but I really wish they would do something about the recent quality of their sprite product, I buy numerous amounts of sprite every year and recently have been getting home and finding that several of the bottles are flat or have broken seals, also causing them to go flat, and Im thinking of switching....Just So you know.... October 8, 2010 at 3:17 am.

CME (F) The Sprite I've gotten has been fine. Maybe it's the store you're getting it from? And if the seals are broken.. I wouldn't drink it.October 8, 2010 at 10:49am

The role of the retailer is to stock the product, keep it fresh and handle it in such a manner that the product is in good condition. By putting remarks such as -The Sprite I've gotten has been fine. Maybe it's the store you're getting it from- CME (F) is trying to cast the blame on the retailer’s shoulder by insisting that ‘we are all getting the right product however, your retailer must not be doing things right and hence you are experiencing such a problem’. This is another way of saying that ‘the manufacturer should not be blamed for this situation- so you better check with the retailer’.
Loyal members within Facebook defend its brands following complaining from other members. However defensive behavior is more apparent within high involved products and more myriad types of defending behavior is noticed within this context. Moreover; more of this behavior is apparent within utilitarian brands than in hedonic brands.

### 4.3.2. Reassurance

Table 4.17 demonstrates the major findings for reassurance behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table a discussion on the conceptual foundation is laid out, after that the major findings and also the data with necessary explanation for reassurance behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer’s reassurance role is noticed within this context.</td>
<td>Consumer’s reassurance role is <em>not</em> noticed within this context.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer’s reassurance role is <em>not</em> noticed within this context.</td>
<td>Consumer’s reassurance role is <em>not</em> noticed within this context.</td>
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The effect of customer’s waiting time and its relationship with customer satisfaction has been extensively examined in service context (Hui and Tse 1996; Pruyn and Smidts 1998; Law, Hui and Zhao 2004). Several studies show that delays have negative effects on the overall product evaluation (Taylor 1995; Hui and Tse 1996) and more precisely, on satisfaction with the product/service (Pruyn and Smidts 1998). Marketers undertake various strategies to tackle with waiting customers to reduce negative effect associated to it (Zeithaml and Bitner 2002; Lovelock and Gummesson 2004). However members of FBCs communicate real-life stories
to cheer the waiting crowd and reassure them about the brand’s capabilities to reduce the
eegative experiences associated to it. This behavior is seen only within Ford Fiesta’s brand
community. Ford Fiesta was first introduced in North American market in 2010, which is
when the data collection for this research took place. During this time many consumers
ordered for the brand which constituted to a huge number of productions for the plant in
Mexico. Due to the high volume of initial order, [approximately 2000 down payments
(Korzeniewski 2011)]; many consumers had to wait for up to six months before getting the
product, subsequently making them frustrated and dissatisfied. Meanwhile, many consumers
who received the product reassured the waiting crowd through vivid stories of post purchase
experience with the brand and urged them to stick to the brand. This should release the stress
associated to waiting and make them feel that it is worth waiting for such a brand.

It is suggested that waiting is associated with negative evaluation of the product’s
performance. The following post indicates how members form negative emotions after a
product delay.

TW (M) Very frustrating, this is laughable. I placed my order in March and am still waiting.
If Ford cant even get this right, what about something complex?? I am now getting seriously
concerned about the long term reliablility of the car. August 26, 2010 at 6:29pm.

TW (M)’s comment shows his level of frustration as he had to wait long period to get the
product. Moreover TW (M)’s waiting for the product has made him question about the overall
reliability of the car. This is not a welcoming situation for a brand which has launched its new
product with a great hype.

The data further shows that some customers intend to leave the brand if they have to wait long
time to obtain the product. The following excerpt shows how members consider purchasing a
competitors’ brand when the waiting period goes beyond their expectations:
MGV (M) Ford Fiesta Why is there a Quality Check in Baltimore when my car had been sitting in a lot in Mexico outside the plant for over 2 months? I would have thought the checks would have been completed then and there before loading it on the boat. Now I am an unhappy customer again and am not having the Fiesta Experience I was expecting.

This nightmare continues and this $50 gift card has yet to arrive which does no justice for my wait. I hope you will have answers soon because I am so close to buying a Kia. August 25, 2010 at 10:37 am.

MGV (M)’s comment shows that delay significantly influences the feelings of anger; moreover waiting has an adverse psychological effect where consumers face uncertainty about the wait length and experience significant stress. MGV (M)’s comment further indicate that the experience is actually turning him to buy a competitor’s products- and all these have happened because he had to wait more than what he expected. This suggests that if the waiting time is too long the organization may lose potential consumers.

Marketers undertake various strategies to tackle with the waiting behavior by trying to reduce the level of stress associated to waiting. However, members of these brand communities vividly narrate stories to reassure the waiting customers and motivate them to hold on for a little long.

SD (M) Figured this place would dig this...so my girlfriend and I are running errands Friday night (in the Fiesta of course). We’re leaving one of our destinations and in the parking lot sits the VW GTI stalking the Blue Fame beauty sitting in the back side of the parking lot. The best part is they didn't see us walking up to the car and when we went to unlock the doors and the lights flew up, the startling encounter revealed their lustful desire for a cheaper, more fuel efficient, and better-looking car. They then zoomed off the lot in an attempt to cloak the reality they were just caught "checking out" the Fiesta.

I'm not much for gloating (though I'd completely understand if you didn't believe that after this post), but Ford should be proud of the product out there. People are taking notice and I
couldn't be happier with the little car, even if it did take 6 months to get the keys. October 11, 2010 at 1:55 am.

“Waiting is not fun, however the end result of wait is always sweet in Ford Fiesta’s case” - this is the theme of SD (M)’s statement. The whole story tries to create a vivid image of the brand experience by creating a lust in the eyes of the waiting consumers of what they can expect once this waiting period is over. “the startling encounter revealed their lustful desire for a cheaper, more fuel efficient, and better-looking car to create ”- seems like a carefully manipulated advertisement copy to create envy in the minds of the waiting customers by saying that ‘ we know waiting is not fun and it brings negative experience and we also know that there are other options out there. However if you hold on you will be rewarded with a unique car. So you better hold on and if you don’t you may grieve for the rest of your life by saying that- why didn’t I wait for a little long?’

Waiting is always painful, especially when it is for a brand that has built up so much hype around it. Hence the customers who pre-ordered these cars need a bit of cherished memories and these kinds of posts will surely make them feel a lot better and help them hold on for a little longer.

KC (F) Got my Fiesta. It was worth the wait....All I can say is that it is a great little car. Plenty of room, plenty of pep, way cute. The interior is fabulous and it's the little things about the car that are really impressive. Well thought out. Way to go Ford. So be patient peoples. You will get yours soon enough and will be very pleased :) (Member posted an image)August 4, 2010.

“Got my Fiesta. It was worth the wait”- is directed to the frustrated crowd who had been waiting for a long time and wants to give up. KC (F)’s expression is followed by his own experience with the brand - the interior is fabulous and it's the little things about the car that are really impressive. Well thought out. Way to go Ford- should make the waiting members feel that it is sensible to wait for a product like this. KC (F)’s final pitch comes with a tremendous thrust: You will get yours soon enough and will be very pleased. This flamboyant
story is directed to the waiting members who need a bit of lift to cheer them up and reduce the level of stress associated to such wait.

Members’ reassurance behavior is noticed only within Ford Fiesta’s brand community site. The data collection of this study is conducted when members encountered product delivery related issues as many of them did not receive the brand when they expected it. Future studies should consider collecting data during such issues to see whether reassurance is practiced within other brand communities within Facebook.

4.3.3 Volunteering time

Table 4.18 demonstrates the major findings for volunteering time practiced within FBCs. Following this table a discussion on the conceptual foundation is laid out, after that a brief overview of the findings is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for volunteering time is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

Table 26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.18 Major findings of volunteering time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High involved/utilitarian</td>
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<td>Consumers indicate positive intention to volunteer time for the cause of the brand.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumers indicate positive intention to volunteer time for the cause of the brand.</td>
<td>Volunteering time is not noticed within this context.</td>
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</table>

Donating time and money for the non-profit and charitable organizations has received considerable academic interest (Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi 1996; Bekkers and Wiepking 2011). It is often noticed that members spend both their time and money within the
charitable and nonprofits sector for the cause of the organization (Gilbert 2006; Williams and Lee 2007; Liu and Aaker 2008). Data of this study however indicate that today’s consumers are ready to spend their time with commercial brands. Such behavior is different from spending time in other kind of VCBs like positive WOM, helping behavior and empathizing within on line communities which are mostly done in the comfort of their own space (these are done when members are sitting in their home with their computer). However through volunteering time, the members are showing their intention to physically spend time for the brand. This behavior further establishes that consumers are ready to engage in new VCBs through Facebook (Marandi et al. 2010).

This behavior is equally evident within both high and low involved products and a considerable difference is not identified. It is however interesting to notice that this behavior is practiced only within utilitarian brands. This is surprising to see that members of hedonic brands do not consider to volunteer time for their favorite brands.

Both the following message excerpts (example 1 and example 2) are taken from the utilitarian brands of high involved product category. The way these two members express their desire to get involved for the promotion of these brands indicate their attachment.

**Example 1**

**JP (F)** Dear Honda, I am available to receive a new blackberry pearl 2010 Honda Fit Pro with a The Fit is Go logo painted on it to drive and show everyone how cool this car really is-AND i am ready NOW. I live in the city of st. louis, missouri and pass thousands of people every day! I will be happy to pay for the gas and sales tax/personal property tax. All you have to do is give me the car and I will market it at no cost to you:-D private message me and lets DO THIS!!! December 10, 2010 at 5:21am

**Example 2**

**TS (M)** 2011 this vehicle will come to the usa.i would like to run this car on a cross country tour.to promote the new fiesta.to help remove old memories of the 70s April 27, 2010 at 6:15m
JP (F) and TS (M) are showing positive intention to physically spend their time for the cause of the brand. It is overwhelming to know that consumers with such devotion towards the brand exist. This behavior further indicates that today’s consumers are ready to take the brand relationship journey to a new level. One major promotion strategy when a new product is launched is creating awareness within the target audience’s mind. This is the first hurdle to be achieved in AIDA concept (awareness ➔ interest ➔ desire ➔ action); and brands need to spend a significant amount of money as they launch various campaigns to create the initial awareness for the brand. Both these consumer’s intention to spend time for the cause of the brand would certainly help the brand towards such objective and help reduce the advertising cost.

It is noticed that some consumers express their interest to be used as a test market for these brands. This is astounding to know that members of low involved products are ready to spend time for the cause of the brand as seen within the next excerpt (low involved/functional brand):

**TM (M)** I would do anything to be lucky enough to be tested by Gatorade scientists. I love everything about it April 17, 2010 at 1:52am

**SP (M)** If you are an athlete (you have to be able to pass extensive medical tests, and live in the Chicago area you could be tested at the Gatorade Sports Science Institute) we are always looking for participants or Gatorade/hydration studies! April 17, 2010 at 2:13am

**AH (F)** That would rock. I live in the Chicago area. I’m a long distance runner. April 17, 2010 at 2:19am

In this case both TM (M) and AH (F) are showing positive interest in volunteering to test market the product. Getting volunteers for test market is important as these brands consistently want to improve these products. This is a great advantage for these marketers that some of their loyal members are willingly available for such a cause. It is the responsibility of
the site administrator to send this information to the relevant R&D department so that these consumers can be tackled down as they need them. These consumers intention will go in vein if the site administrator does not send this message to the relevant department for further action.

Volunteering time is noticed only within utilitarian brands of both high and low involved products of Facebook. This is interesting to know that consumers of hedonic brands do not consider spending time for these brands.

4.3.4 Amplification of company events

Table 4.19 demonstrates the major findings for amplification of company events practiced within FBCs. Following this table a discussion on the conceptual foundation is laid out, after that a brief overview of the findings is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for this behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 27</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Table 4.19 Major findings of amplification of company events</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amplification of company events involve participation in brand fests and brand sponsored events.</td>
<td>Amplification of company events involve participation in brand fests and brand sponsored events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This behavior is less apparent than hedonic brands.</td>
<td>This behavior is more apparent than utilitarian brands.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
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<td>This behavior is less apparent than hedonic brands.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Committed customers believe in the values and cause of the organization; and thus support their beliefs through active participation in the organization’s activities and happenings (Ennew and Binks 1999). Brand loyal consumers promote the brand through various brand building behavior; i.e. WOM (Henning-Thurau et al. 2004); recommending the brand to others (Verhoef 2003) and display brand related items in public space (Pimentel and Reynolds 2004) etc. Previous studies (McAlexandar et al. 2002) further confirm that participating in brand sponsored events (e.g. brand fests) is a showmanship of consumer’s attachment and loyalty towards the brand. The data of this study indicates that loyal members’ not only participate in brand sponsored events but also amplify such events by promoting them and posting the picture of the occasion and relaying the stories of blissful moments as they experienced during such an episode. The intention is to remind others about their blissful experience to evoke a sense of guilt within the missing members and encourage participation in the next event. However, members’ amplification of company events within high involved products includes more activities than low involved products. Within high involved products members amplify brand fests and also brand sponsored events whereas in low involved products members amplify only brand sponsored events. Findings of this study further indicate that this behavior is more apparent within hedonic brands than in utilitarian brands.

Within high involved/utilitarian brands members amplify brand events by spreading the word and asking others to join such an episode. The following excerpt shows how these loyal members use FBCs to uphold such an event, as they understand that amplification of events through Facebook has the potential to reach millions of members.

TRW (M) How many Ford Focuses and Fiestas will be at this year's Focus On The Beach? Saturday, August 28 at Ventura Harbor Village in Ventura, CA. Plan on being there! http://www.focusonthebeach.com/ August 20, 2010 at 12:03am

TRW (M) here is showing his intention to join such event; moreover he is promoting the event which is organized by the brand. In this short but effective message TRW (M) is informing others about the date and place of the event and urging them to be there. Customer-
to-customer interaction is an important part of such an occasion and participation of more members will eventually increase the value of such a congregation. Moreover, such informal meeting strengthens the ties with the fellow members and eventually rejuvenates relationship with the brand. As a result TRW (M) is promoting the event with the intention to receive more benefits out of the experience.

It is noticed within high involved/hedonic products that many members attend brand fests. Apart from discussing about these events many of them take pictures and post them in FBCs to evoke a sense of regret within the nonparticipants.

Chrysler Crossfire Meet named: Tail of the Dragon 2009
By sharing such pictures within these brand communities, these loyal groups of consumers are trying to invoke a form of remorse to the nonparticipant. Participation in brand fests is considered as an extension of a member’s loyalty towards the brand, and all these pictures posted in FBCs show that members rejoice their decision to take part in such an occasion. Many of these members travel thousands of miles and take out time from their busy schedule to participate in such events. This sort of behavior by travelling a huge distance to meet fellow owners further reiterates the value of networking with strong emotional links. This sort of pictures depicting a happy environment is directed towards the non-participants to make them feel that “you have missed it this time”.

Within low involved context members amplify brand sponsored events through these FBCs. Sometimes members post pictures after participating in such proceedings. The happiness and joyous emotions through participation is clearly visible within the expressions of these participants that can be noticed through the following picture (low involved/utilitarian brand):
The pictures posted by members show that they enjoy every bit of the moment of the brand sponsored events. This sort of pictures shared in the public domain of Facebook shows members’ involvement with the brand. By posting such a picture within the brand community these members are trying to persuade the nonparticipants to join the next event. This sort of amplification for brand events by fellow consumers should induce the non-participants to be part of this sort of ‘happy moments’.

Member’s intention to take part in brand sponsored events further establishes their attachment towards the brand. The following massage post is taken from low involved/hedonic brand community where FAT (M) is notifying others regarding how to receive information of such event.

FAT (M) *Dear folks, i am pleased to share with you that you can get more day by day info on the ongoing Sprite Triple Slam in Nigeria by doing facebook.com/tripleslam on your internet address tab. I just notice this today. April 26, 2010 at 5:23 am.*

FAT (M)’s remarks show his interest to take part in the “Triple slam” contest which is a huge success in Nigeria. The event is targeted towards youth on campuses around Nigeria to
stimulate creativity; and helps the brand to connect with its consumers. Here FAT (M) is sharing the message regarding how others can receive information regarding such event through these FBCs.

By doing so FAT (M) is helping the brand to promote its events. FAT (M)’s information will help these members to know more about how to participate, where the events are taking place and the benefits of attending such an event- eventually encouraging more participation.

Members of FBCs amplify the events sponsored by their favorite brand. However within high involved products members amplify brand fests and also brand sponsored events. Whereas within low involved products members amplify only brand sponsored events. Data further indicates that this behavior is more apparent within hedonic brands than in utilitarian brands.

4.3.5 Missing behavior

Table 4.20 demonstrates the major findings for missing behavior practiced within FBCs. Following this table a discussion on the conceptual foundation is laid out, after that a brief overview of the findings is outlined; following this the data with necessary explanation for missing behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

Table 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.20 Major findings of missing behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High involved/utilitarian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing behavior is noticed within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivid memories and emotional touch with relates to missing heavier is more apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Passion in the context of love, intimacy and kinship has received noticeable degree of interest (Fromm 1956; Djikic and Oatley 2004) and passion is considered as the main component of love (Sternberg 1997). In the marketing context Fournier’s (1998) concept of consumer-brand-relationships contains passion as one relevant factor for determining the brand relationship quality. Accordingly, if a consumer is passionate about a brand, he/she will engage in a much more emotional relationship with the brand and even miss the brand or feel loss when the brand is unavailable (Matzler, Pichler and Hemetsberger 2007). Similar behavior is noticed within all these FBCs where members are missing the brand and felt in loss following a brand detachment; although none of the previous research within the context VCBs reported missing behavior. Members’ comments within FBCs suggest that they not only miss the brand but also engage in positive WOM and purchase the brand following their missing behavior. This provides the justification behind including missing behavior as a VCB.

Members’ missing behavior within high involved products includes vivid stories following parting from the product which is less apparent within low involved products. Moreover, within high involved context missing behavior seem to cause emotional pain to the member following the loss of the brand; however, such emotional throb is less apparent within low involved products. Members’ missing behavior is also noticed within utilitarian and also hedonic brands and a considerable difference is not identified.

Sometimes members vividly mention stories regarding how they miss a brand after unwanted incidents. Such a missing behavior for a specific brand reiterates member’s passion towards the brand. Moreover, such a passionate behavior can lead to repurchase, as illustrated in the following message (high involved/utilitarian brand):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missing behavior is noticed within this context.</td>
<td>Missing behavior is noticed within this context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivid memories and emotional touch with relates to missing heavier is less apparent within this context.</td>
<td>Vivid memories and emotional touch with relates to missing heavier is less apparent within this context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ST (F) This was Fred. I bought him brand new in 2007. He made it to the top of the Gotthard Pass in Switzerland last September (which is where he is here), but sadly got stolen on 5 December :( (member posted a picture of the vehicle) February 27 at 9:04 pm

ST (F) After Fred got stolen, I replaced him with the lovely Axl on 20 December. Here he is the day after I drove him home in the snow from the showroom. He did very well in the bad weather. Love him to bits, but do still miss little Fred. (member posted a picture of the vehicle) February 27 at 9:07 pm

ST (F)’s both the messages indicate her feelings after losing the possession that she was overly excited with. ST (F)’s impression of “sadly got stolen” “Love him to bits, but do still miss little Fred” – indicate her psychological state of mind towards the brand after she lost it. The naming of the brand further shows that members consider these brands as part of the family by providing a specific identity to the brand, and does not consider it as a nameless product. This behavior further shows that there is a positive relationship between passion and loyalty. In the first statement ST (F) indicates her state of mind following the loss of Fred. As she purchases another of the same brand with same color (both the picture posted shows that both the brands are of same color) validates the brand loyalty of ST (F). Moreover, through such post “He did very well in the bad weather” – indicates that members not only show loyalty but also relays positive WOM following the missing behavior. This sort of message will pull the hearts of the undecided consumers who browse these brand communities during the decision making process.

Such a passionate behavior where consumers miss the brand is noticed within high involved/hedonic brands, as one member observed:

PO (M) I miss my baby........sure looks like time for a new one. (Member posted a picture of an old Volvo model in a garage) October 10, 2010 at 12:27 am

These kinds of missing behavior make the brand community attachment and its journey special. What is unique here is how PO (M) is showing the picture to depict his feeling towards the brand. PO (M)’s message makes the reader feel that he had used this car for a long time and feels sad to let it go.
It is interesting to find that even the consumers of low involved products show passion by missing the brand. This shows that consumers grow strong bond with low involved products as part of their prolonged attachment. Both these examples taken from low involved/utilitarian (Example 1) and low involved/hedonic (Example 2) brands indicate such behavior:

**Example 1**
GG (M) *I haven't had Gatorade in a long time I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT GATORADE!!!...A WORLD WITHOUT GATORADE IS CHAOS!!! SOMEONE PLEASE HELP ME!!!* August 9, 2010 at 5.30 am.

**Example 2**
SJ (F) *I miss the Sprite Remixes. I wish they would come out with some more! :)* December 18, 2010 at 7.27 pm.

The expression of feeling sad for not being able to consume the product is noticed with both GG (M) and SJ (F)’s message. GG (M)’s expression “*I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT GATORADE!!!...A WORLD WITHOUT GATORADE IS CHAOS!!!*”- show the element of desire that is associated with the brand. Such imagination coated with the cravings for such a brand signifies consumer’s passion for the brand. GG (M)’s expression characterizes a powerful and persistent urge that is created as the consumer did not consume the brand for a long time.

Members of both high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands a miss the brand within Facebook. Within high involved products such behavior indicates certain degree of emotional sting which is less apparent within low involved products. Missing behavior is noticed within both utilitarian and hedonic brands and a considerable difference was not identified.
4. 3.6 Daydreaming

Table 4.21 demonstrates the definition and major findings for daydreaming behavior within FBCs. Following this table a discussion on the conceptual foundation is laid out, after that a brief overview of the findings is outlined and then the data with necessary explanation for this behavior is provided. In the end a summary of the findings for this item is presented.

Table 29

**Table 4.21 Major findings of daydreaming**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members daydreaming behavior involves planning the fantasizing effort; create a wish list and day dreaming about the brand.</td>
<td>Members daydreaming behavior involves planning the fantasizing effort; create a wish list and day dreaming about the brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member’s day dreaming behavior involves conveying vivid stories around the brand.</td>
<td>Member’s day dreaming behavior involves conveying vivid stories around the brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This behavior is less apparent than the hedonic brands.</td>
<td>This behavior is more apparent than the utilitarian brands.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members are noticed to daydream about the brand.</td>
<td>Members are noticed to daydream about the brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member’s day dreaming behavior did not involve vivid stories around the brand.</td>
<td>Member’s day dreaming behavior did not involve vivid stories around the brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This behavior is less apparent than the hedonic brands.</td>
<td>This behavior is more apparent than the utilitarian brands.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consumers in material culture are inundated with pre-purchase dreaming (Fournier and Guidry 1993). The preoccupation with consumption that characterizes these societies encourages cultivation of purchase goals, on-going entertainment of consumption dreams, and eternal search for suitable consumption prospects (Leiss, Kline, and Jhally 1990) and activities that occur largely in the imagination (Fournier and Guiry 1993). The members of FBCs also daydream and fantasize about the brand; although this behavior is not reported within the context of VCBs before. Although daydreaming is noticed within FBCs; however within high involved products more varied types of daydreaming behaviors are noticed as compared to the low involved products. In high involved products members create a wish list for their favorite brand, plan their daydreaming effort and also fantasize about the brand. However within low involved products members only engage fantasizing about the brand. Moreover within high involved products daydreaming involves narrating vivid stories which is less apparent within low involved products. It is further noticed that daydreaming behavior is more apparent within hedonic brands than the utilitarian brands.

Consumption is a key resource for imagination and therefore daydreams may lead to desire and a subsequent motivation to act in ways to realize that desire. The following excerpts show similar behavior within the high involved/utilitarian brands where daydreaming leads to actual purchase of the brand.

SCB (F) I want a fiesta so bad! I can't wait till I save enough money for one. It's all I ever think and talk about. They are everything to me. I desperately need any car right now because mine is not very good but I just want this one so bad I'm willing to suffer with this one just so I can have my fiesta. I will have one one day. They are my most favorite car in the entire world!!! December 16, 2010 at 2.30 am.

MP (F) I was the same way. For 6 months that all i talked about, i had constant dreams about it. It feels so amazing when you actually get to go to the dealer and drive one. I dont think i could love anything more ♥ Just be patient- the day will come. December 16, 2010.

SCB (F)’s post reflects her desire for a brand which is brought forward along with his dreaming behavior. ‘I want a fiesta so bad! I can't wait till I save enough money for one. It's
all I ever think and talk about’ – such an imagined sequence of events quoted with the desire to have the brand shows consumers consciously engage in daydreaming behavior. These individually crafted fantasies highlight the importance of such behavior as they provide intrinsic enjoyment of the experiences. Moreover SCB (F) is not only dreaming about the brand but she is also engaged to materialize such a dream.

It is imminent from MP (F)’s post that daydreaming leads to actual purchase of the product. Here MP (F) tells her story of how she was dreaming of the brand continuously and had similar state of mind as SCB (F). Her story emphasizes the importance of having these kinds of dream and asserts SCB (F) that even she would be able to convert the situation from a dreamer to a purchaser and subsequently a user.

Sometimes members plan daydreaming effort in a manner so that they can materialize their dreams. The following message post speaks in a similar tone (from high involved/hedonic brand):

GLV(M) when i am done with school i will buy my 1st new car and it will be a volvo suv yayay my 1st car was a 83 volvo 240 u guys rock December 31, 2010 at 3:45am.

GLV (M)’s motive is clear here. He has a goal and he is working on it. He already owned a Volvo which made him dream about possessing a bigger and latest model. GLV (M)’s statement indicates that consumers engage in pre-consumption dreaming and fantasize about the material things that they like and want to acquire. GLV (M)’s remarks further indicate that consumers create a wish list for their favorite possessions that they want to own. Look how he carefully plans the new purchase “when i am done with school i will buy my 1st new car and it will be a volvo suv”- this shows a proper planning by which he is going to materialize his dream.

Members fantasizing behavior is also seen within low involved/utilitarian situation.

AE (F) I need myself some gatorade right about now, cool blue, please come cure my hangover! June 25, 2010 at 9:57 pm.
It is interesting to notice how consumers of low involved products also fantasize about a brand when the craving for it is intense. AE (F)’s message indicates that she believes Gatorade can relinquish her hangover and fantasizing how she can get rid of the situation by consuming the product.

Similar behavior whereby consumers wish to consume a brand is also seen within low involved/hedonic brands.

LMH (F) *Sprite is my absolute favorite!* *I wish I had some RIGHT now!* June 14, 2010 at 10:45 am.

LMH (F) is fantasizing about the brand by wishing to come and quench her thirst. Such a behavior may actually lead to actual purchase and shows the cravings that loyal consumers have for their brand. Moreover, such a post may actually invoke others to pine for the brand. It is however interesting to notice that the vivid stories are missing within low involved product category.

Within high involved products members daydreaming behaviors involve planning the fantasizing effort; creating a wish list and fantasizing about the brand. However within low involved products only member’s day dreaming behavior is noticed. Moreover within high involved products members create vivid stories along with their day dreaming behavior which is not visible in low involved products. Daydreaming behavior is also more apparent within hedonic brands than the utilitarian brands.
Table 4.22 Overall results of the VCBs performed in FBCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>High involved/utilitarian</th>
<th>High involved/hedonic</th>
<th>Low involved/Utilitarian</th>
<th>Low involved/hedonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Voice will be more prevalent in high involved products than low involved products. This study further expects that voice should include intense negative emotions within utilitarian contexts than in hedonic context.</td>
<td>Voice is more apparent.</td>
<td>Voice involves showing intense negative emotions.</td>
<td>Voice is less apparent.</td>
<td>Voice is much less apparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping behavior</td>
<td>Helping behavior should be more apparent within high involved products. Moreover, helping behavior within utilitarian brands should concentrate on more utilitarian features than hedonic brands.</td>
<td>Helping behavior is more apparent.</td>
<td>Helping behavior related to utilitarian features is more apparent.</td>
<td>Helping behavior is less apparent.</td>
<td>Helping behavior is less apparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>WOM should be more prevalent in high involved products. It is further expected that WOM should be more evident within hedonic brands.</td>
<td>WOM is more apparent.</td>
<td>WOM involves relaying vivid stories regarding consumption experience.</td>
<td>WOM is less apparent.</td>
<td>WOM is less apparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display behavior</td>
<td>Display behavior will be equally evident within both high and low involved products; however extreme display behavior, i.e., tattooing is expected to be more prevalent within hedonic brands.</td>
<td>Display behavior is less apparent.</td>
<td>Display behavior is less apparent.</td>
<td>Display behavior is more apparent.</td>
<td>Display behavior is more apparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiving behavior</td>
<td>Forgiving behavior will be equally evident in both high and low involved products; however this behavior should be more prevalent</td>
<td>A few number of forgiving behavior is noticed.</td>
<td>A few number of forgiving behavior is noticed.</td>
<td>Forgiving behavior is not practiced.</td>
<td>Forgiving behavior is not practiced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback will be more prevalent within high involved products; however it should be equally evident in both utilitarian and hedonic brands.

Feedback is equally evident within all these FBCs.

Feedback is equally evident within all these FBCs.

Feedback is equally evident within all these FBCs.

Feedback is equally evident within all these FBCs.

Competitive information is expected to be more detailed and informative within high involved products; moreover such behavior within utilitarian brands should include more utilitarian features.

Competitive information is expected to be more detailed and informative within high involved products; moreover such behavior within utilitarian brands should include more utilitarian features.

Competitive information is expected to be more detailed and informative within high involved products; moreover such behavior within utilitarian brands should include more utilitarian features.

Competitive information is expected to be more detailed and informative within high involved products; moreover such behavior within utilitarian brands should include more utilitarian features.

Welcoming is expected to be more prevalent within high involved products; moreover it is predicted to be equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands.

Welcoming is more apparent.

Welcoming is less apparent.

Welcoming is not practiced.

Welcoming is not practiced.

Empathizing will be equally evident in all FBCs.

Empathizing is more apparent.

Empathizing is less apparent.

Empathizing is not noticed.

Empathizing is not noticed.

Governing will be equally evident in all communities specified by the involvement by product positioning matrix.

Governing is less apparent.

Governing is not noticed.

Governing is more apparent.

Governing is more apparent.

Justifying will be more evident in high involved communities; moreover it should be more prevalent in utilitarian brands.

Justifying is not noticed.

Justifying is not noticed.

Justifying is not noticed.

Justifying is not noticed.

Staking will be equally evident in all FBCs specified by the involvement by product positioning matrix.

Staking is more apparent.

Staking is more apparent.

Staking is more apparent.

Staking is more apparent.
| Milestoning | Milestoning will be more prevalent within high involved products; however this behavior should be equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands. | Milestoning is more apparent. | Milestoning includes vivid story of brand ownership. | Milestone is less apparent. | Milestone is less apparent. |
| Grooming | Grooming will be evident only in high involved categories; however this behavior should be more prevalent within hedonic brands. | Grooming is noticed. | Grooming is noticed. | Grooming is not noticed. | Grooming is not noticed. |
| Customizing | Customizing will be equally evident in all FBCs specified by the involvement and product positioning matrix. | Customizing is equally evident within all FBCs. | Customizing is equally evident within all FBCs. | Customizing is equally evident within all FBCs. | Customizing is equally evident within all FBCs. |
| Defending the brand | New value creating behavior. | Defending the brand is more apparent. | Defending the brand is more apparent than the low involved products but less apparent than the utilitarian brand. | Defending the brand is less apparent than high involved products but more apparent than the hedonic brands. | Defending the brand is less apparent than high involved products and less apparent than utilitarian brands. |
| Reassurance | New value creating behavior. | Consumer’s reassurance role is noticed within this context. | Consumer’s reassurance role is not noticed within this context. | Consumer’s reassurance role is not noticed within this context. | Consumer’s reassurance role is not noticed within this context. |
| Volunteering time | New value creating behavior. | Volunteering time for the brand is noticed. | Volunteering time is not noticed. | Volunteering time for the brand is noticed. | Volunteering time is not noticed. |
| Amplification of co. events | New value creating behavior. | Amplification of company events involve participation in brand fests and brand sponsored events. Less apparent than hedonic brands. | Amplification of company events involve participation in brand fests and brand sponsored events. More apparent than utilitarian brands. | Amplification of company events involve participation in brand sponsored events. Less apparent than hedonic brands. | Amplification of company events involve participation in brand sponsored events. More apparent than utilitarian brands. |
4.4 Conclusion

The findings of this study have been grouped based on the research question that was developed before. As expected some considerable differences between high and low involved product categories and also utilitarian and hedonic categories are identified. Moreover, some new VCBs are explored which has never been noticed within the context of consumer behavior and also SNSs.

The next chapter introduces the discussions and the conclusions pertaining to the research questions and also identifies the academic and managerial contribution of this study. It also discusses the research limitations and proposes the future research ideas.
Chapter 5
Conclusion & Implications
5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn on the basis of the evidence emerging from Chapter 4 and links these findings with existing theory discussed in Chapter 2. One major contribution of this study is the identification of twenty one distinct customer VCBs that are practiced within FBCs. It has been demonstrated that within many of these VCBs a considerable differences exist between high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands. Moreover, this study identified some new VCBs practiced by today’s consumers that are never reported within the context of consumer behavior and virtual communities before. This chapter contributes to existing knowledge by presenting conclusions specific to the research questions.

This chapter is organized this way. First of all the summary of the previous chapters are given. Then the discussion pertaining to the research question 1 is provided; this includes the discussion related to each of the fifteen items identified during literature review (table 2.4). The following section represents the discussion related to research question 2 which addresses six new VCBs identified through inductive analysis. After that the contribution of the research is presented; in this section both the academic and the managerial contributions are provided. Later, the limitations of the research and future research ideas are generated. Finally the conclusion to this chapter is presented.

5.2 Summary of the previous chapters

The purpose of the current study is to examine VCBs in FBCs across different involvement levels and product positioning criteria. It provided justification to carry out this study on the grounds that the available literature is relatively silent regarding the VCBs performed within FBCs. The studies available provide a typology of VCBs however these studies did not consider extensive literature review concerning VCBs within both online and offline contexts.
The literature review revealed significant gaps in the understanding of how value is created within FBCs. It is understood that both product involvement and product positioning play a considerable role in pre and post consumption practices involving the brand. However, no study has ever endeavored to identify the differences within VCBs between high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands within FBCs. Based on the research gaps revealed during literature review and in the existing body of knowledge the following research questions are developed which are restated below:

RQ 1: Do value creating behaviors differ according to product involvement and purchase motivation within the brand communities of Facebook?

RQ 2: Does the extant literature accommodate all forms of value creating behaviors within the brand communities of Facebook?

An exploratory research technique is utilized for the study on the grounds that the research problem being investigated is ambiguous. A netnographic approach (Kozinets 2001, 2002, 2009) guided the data collection. This is a naturalistic inquiry, which captures individuals and groups in their natural settings, conducting their everyday life practices (Kozinets 2009). Facebook were chosen as the online forum to gather the data’s because of its vast popularity and multicultural aspect.

Data of this study shows that within many of these VCBs considerable differences between high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands are present. Moreover, some new VCBs are also explored which is not reported in virtual communities and consumer behavior context.

5.3 Discussions about each Research questions

This section presents the discussions and conclusions drawn from the analysis of the evidence relating to each of the two specific research questions. The evidence emerged from the literature review and the naturalistic observation conducted during the data collection process.
5.3.1 Discussions for Research questions 1

The finding for the first research question is identified under each of the fifteen VCBs that are developed during the literature review. The following section is dedicated on the discussion for this research question.

Voice

This study expected voice to be more prevalent within high involved products; and predicted that within utilitarian brands voice will show more intense negative emotions than hedonic brands. For this study, voice is defined as customers directing complaints to the marketer when problems occur, in order to give them the opportunity to correct the problems, retain their reputation and/or maintain relationships (Singh 1988).

Members’ comments within FBCs indicate that voice is more prevalent within high involved products. It is noticed within high involved context that members tend to ask for more upon realizing that their complaining is accommodated by the marketer. This is consistent with much of the work within voice (Day and Landon 1976; Richins 1987; Singh 1990) which suggests that consumers have a propensity to complain more upon realizing that voicing leads to a successful outcome. This behavior can be further explained by the concept of perceived value of complaint (Singh 1989); which is noted as the personal evaluation of the gap between the benefit and the cost of complaint. This indicates that when consumers believe that the voice is worth his/her effort; they make extra exertion to make it noticeable to the management. The potential benefits of voice include refund, exchange, or apology, whereas the costs include time and effort (Kim et al. 2003). In high involved products members expect higher amount of benefits if their voice is heard by the management; whereas in low involved products the expectations are much less (the consumer has to pay meager amount to purchase a low involved product) (Bloch 1982)- for which voice is more apparent within high involved products.
It is further noticed that the site administrators of the low involved products ignore voice raised by its members; hence members are less inclined to voice against the firm in this context (Singh 1989, 1990). Another reason for fewer voices is perhaps many unhappy consumers tend to exit rather than complain (Andreasen and Best 1977; Tschol 1994). However for many customers within high involved product exit is often not an option as they spent hefty amount to acquire these brands (Nijssen and Lieshout 1995).

Although this study expected intense negative emotions within voice to be more apparent in utilitarian brands, but the data indicates that such behavior is equally evident in both utilitarian and hedonic brands. However members’ messages involving intense negative emotions (both in utilitarian and hedonic brands); is associated to a utilitarian feature of the product (e.g. failure with regards to quality, price, transmission etc.) and such intense emotion were absent when a failure is associated to hedonic feature (i.e. aesthetic beauty, style etc.). This is consistent with Chitturi et al.’s (2008) suggestion that not meeting utilitarian expectations of functionality generates a much more intense negative feeling, such as anger, than a less intense feeling, such as disappointment or dissatisfaction that results from not meeting hedonic expectations.

**Helping behavior**

This study expected helping behavior to be more apparent within high involved products and predicted that helping behavior with regards to utilitarian features will be more apparent within utilitarian brands than hedonic brands. In this study helping behavior refers to an act performed voluntarily to help someone else when there is no expectation of receiving a reward of any form (Taylor-Greene et al. 1997).

Findings of this study indicate that helping behavior is more apparent within high involved products and involve more issues. For example: within high involved products members provide information regarding how to use various features, how to fix the product, teaching how to add a new feature and issues related to pricing and distribution. However, within low involved products helping behavior mostly revolves around providing product, distribution
and price related information. This is perhaps helping behavior is carried out once someone experiences issues concerning the brand and post the matter within FBCs. Within high involved products (automobiles), members come across variety of issues like how to use a product, fix a product, or even how to add a new feature on top of the customary price and distribution related topics. However within low involved products of soft drinks issues like how to fix the product, how to consume the product or even how to add a new feature should not arise; hence members helping behavior is less apparent within low involved products.

Moreover, it is noticed within high involved products that members provide detailed help regarding complex issues whereas within low involved products such behavior is mostly concerned with mundane issue and basic information help. For example: members wanting to change the light bulb of a vehicle were given detailed instructions regarding how to do so. This is perhaps high involved context provides more challenging issues and members appear to participate to help others because the complexity is enjoyable and brings satisfaction (Wasko and Faraz 2000). On the other hand, perhaps members do not consider issues associated to a low involved purchase as a major concern (Bloch 1982) and therefore could not justify spending time in helping others-for which this behavior is less detailed within this context.

Consistent with the expectations member’s comments within FBCs suggest that helping behavior with regards to utilitarian features like pricing and product ingredients are more apparent within utilitarian brands. This is perhaps consumers are generally more price sensitive when buying utilitarian products compared to buying products of primarily hedonic in nature (Wakefield and Inman 2003). This is further consistent with Babin et al.’s (1994) suggestion that consumers who purchase utilitarian brands behave carefully and their decision making is mostly influenced by the utilitarian features.

WOM

This study expected WOM to be more prevalent in high involved products and predicted it to be more apparent in hedonic brands. WOM is defined as the informal communications
directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers (Westbrook 1987).

Members’ comments indicate that WOM is the most often cited VCBs practiced within FBCs. A fundamental implication of such behavior is that information transmitted between acquaintances and strangers within FBCs should ultimately reach more people and lead to higher awareness (Trusov et al. 2009). Such a finding lends support to (Williams and Cothrel 2000; Kozinets 1999)’s remark that consumption-related online communities represent WOM networks, where individuals with an interest in a product category interact for information such as purchase advice. Findings of this study further lends support to Fisher, Bristor and Gainer’s (1996) statement that within FBCs members receive WOM advice from day-to-day user, a person in similar situation, an expert with technical knowhow or even a company employee who has inside knowledge on the brand. As many of these FBCs have millions of members (Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels 2009) such positive information by a fellow member can help the individual to include the brand into their consideration set (Nedungadi 1990). More importantly, as these citations are free of commercial self-interest; they are perceived to be more honest than company initiated information (Lepper 1983; Leizerov 2000). In addition, information provided within FBCs is more likely to match the specific needs that emerge only during the use of a product that may not be met by the marketers claim (von Hippel 2002).

Consistent with the expectations it is noticed that WOM is more apparent within high involved products and include more features. Moreover, the passion and vivid stories to characterize these brands are more apparent within high involved products. This indicates that members of high involved products are more motivated to convey their positive feelings with stronger emotions. Such findings lend support Ouwersloot and Schroder’s (2008) remark that consumers of high involved products are generally more motivated to share their consumption experiences with others within online communities.
Although WOM was expected to be more apparent within hedonic brands but the data indicates that it is equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands. This indicates that members of utilitarian brands are equally motivated to endorse positive brand experience to fellow members. This is perhaps utilitarian brands address important and objective issues and fulfills important and necessary functions in life (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Fournier 1991); hence these consumers reciprocate through WOM behavior (Blau 1964).

**Display behavior**

This study expected display behavior to be equally evident in high and low involved products; and predicted extreme display behavior like tattooing to be more apparent within hedonic brands. Display behavior occurs when customers communicate others of their relationship with an organization, through tangible displays on their person or in regards to their personal items (Gruen 1995).

Although this study expected display behavior to be equally evident within both high and low involved products; but the data suggest that this behavior is more apparent within low involved products. For example: it is noticed that creating crafts with brand items (e.g. pendants, bracelet, earrings, toys etc.) are only evident in low involved products. This is perhaps most of the members within low involved products are young and these consumers seem to have more time and interest to spend on creating crafts (pendants, bracelets, earrings, toys etc.); however matured, responsible, busy individuals with higher income (customer profile of high involved automobile brands) may not have the spare time to spend on activities as such; hence this sort of behavior is not noticed within high involved products. Moreover, it is easier for the brand devotees of low involved products to collect these brand items (used cans, bottles and corks etc.) which may not be as easy for high involved products (automobile). For example: after purchasing and subsequently consuming a can of coke we may keep or dispose it; however collecting an automobile spare may not be as easy as collecting a can of coke. Hence; this study suggests that the convenience of getting brand items triggered such behavior within low involved context.
Findings of this study further indicate that consumers use brand logo to decorate the Halloween pumpkin and make Halloween costumes. This sort of behavior specify that groups of consumers can and do consciously utilize the notions of sacred consumption and of consumption as religion, in order to legitimize their own consumer behaviors (Belk et al. 1989; Kozinets 2001). Such behavior is further consistent with a growing set of literature (e.g. Firat and Venkatesh 1993; Belk, Ger and Askegaard 2003; Muniz and Schau 2005) which indicate that some consumers give sense to their lives by sacralizing products in order to fulfill their deeply rooted desire for spiritualism.

It is further noticed within FBCs that consumers etch their body by wearing Tattoo of their favorite brand. As tattoos are permanent and irreversible such behavior can be considered as attempts to anchor self-identity (Sweetman 2000) and confirms the role of human body in constructing the social self (Turner 1982). Although this study predicted tattooing to be more apparent within hedonic brands; however the data indicates that such behavior is equally evident within both hedonic and utilitarian brands. This is perhaps in today’s era of unprecedented corporate influence and consumerism; certain companies represent and offer attractive, meaningful social identities to certain consumers (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). By having the brand name Tattooed in their body, these members identify themselves as part of the ‘organizations community’ that helps them satisfy important self-definitional role (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). All the eight brands (both utilitarian and hedonic) considered for this study are well known consumer brands with a strong consumer awareness and positive image; hence they offer attractive, meaningful social identities for these members. As a result, complex display behaviors like tattooing are equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands.

**Forgiving behavior**

This study expected forgiving behavior to be equally evident in both high and low involved products; and predicted it to be more prevalent within hedonic brands. Forgiveness is defined as the release of negative feelings associated with a transgression and overcoming such resentments for restoring the relationship to its original state (Sells and Hargrave 1998).
Member’s comments within FBCs indicate that forgiveness is triggered with an injury or violation by the marketer in the form of product/service failure that causes subsequent emotional or physical pain (Boshoff 1997; Levesque and McDougall 2000). Due to marketers recovery actions (Zemke and Bell 1990) consumers tend to forgive the seller (Chung and Beverland 2006; Mogilner 2008). Findings of this study further lend support to the current proposition within consumer behavior context that forgiveness includes giving up blame or fault-finding (Stone 2002) and positive WOM (Scobie and Scobie 1998).

It is however surprising to notice that forgiving behavior is not practiced within low involved products. One plausible explanation is that the process of forgiving behavior (Sells and Hargrave 1998) involves marketer’s transgression subsequently causing emotional pain to the consumer. Although product failure is common within low involved scenario; however such failure may not cause strong negative emotions as compared to the high involved products (Singh 1989). Secondly, the process of forgiveness entails that consumers need to complain the marketer and based on marketer’s response; members may forgive the brand (Sells and Hargrave 1998). However; data of this study indicates that members complaining behavior is less apparent within low involved products. Moreover within FBCs it is noticed that site administrators tend to ignore members complain within low involved context; hence all the steps related to forgiveness is either nonexistent or less apparent within low involved products; for which forgiving behavior is not noticed within low involved products. For example: a consumer may purchase Sprite and find that the product is flat; however he may not be interested to complain for a scanty product like this (Kim et al. 2003) and decide to move on. Moreover, many consumers purchase these products regularly and have confidence with the quality of these brands. So if the brand fails once or twice (for example: when someone drinks a sprite and finds that it is flat as the carbonation within the drink is gone) they know that it is a unique event and without any hesitation pick up the next one.

Although it was projected that forgiving will be more prevalent within hedonic brands but findings suggest that this behavior is equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands. This is perhaps marketers of utilitarian brands also considers FBCs an important
aspect of their brand success (Dunay and Kroeger 2011) and takes various recovery efforts when a product failure takes place and studies (Mogilner 2008; Beverland et al. 2009) suggest that marketers’ superior recovery effort induces members to forgive the brand.

**Feedback**

This study expected feedback to be more prevalent within high involved products and predicted it to be equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands. Feedback is the consumer activity which they provide to the organization with ideas and suggestions to track quality; locate quality problems and provide suggestions for improvement (Sampson 1998).

Contrary to the expectations findings of this study suggest that feedback is equally evident within both high and low involved products. This indicates that members of low involved products are equally motivated to share product related ideas within FBCs. This is further inconsistent with Sicilia and Palazon’s (2008) suggestion that consumer-to-brand interaction is not apparent within brand communities of low involved products. This is perhaps sharing feedback through Facebook is easier (Pan and Leidner 2003); moreover being mostly young individuals members of low involved products spend more time within FBCs (Sharif and Sargent 2006) - for which feedback is equally evident within this context. Moreover, Facebook associates consider sharing product related ideas the ‘right thing to do’; hence these well-wishers provide product or service related suggestions to improve its quality (Stockdale and Borovicka 2006) regardless of their involvement with the product.

Findings of this study further indicate that feedback is quite prevalent within all these FBCs. This contradicts with the current idea that the response rate through typical passive feedback process is generally low (e.g. Sampson and Weiss 1993, Sampson 1996). In this connection, this study implies that among other passive solicitation of feedback approaches, (e.g. toll free numbers, comment cards and HTML applications) SNSs provide the easiest and shortest possible time. As a result considerable amount of feedback data are noticed within these SNSs. These differences and the related explanation behind such a proposition are further explained here:
**Toll free number:** a consumer needs to ring the toll free number and articulately present his/her idea which may take several minutes. In this case the member needs to find the toll free number, have a telephone to call the number, dial the number, talk to the operator (may need to wait on hold because of less number of operators), and be prepared to answer the questions of the operator (Sampson 1998) - indicating a series of steps to be completed before submitting his/her feedback.

*Comment cards* involve a more complex process, including locating a pen or pencil, writing the feedback information, and locating an employee or mailbox (Sampson 1998). In case of a customer card the member has to send the card back to an employee or to an address, for which he/she needs to visit a post office or make necessary arrangements to post the card so that it reaches the company.

In an *HTML application* the member needs to call up the HTML form and enter feedback information on the computer screen. When the customer selects the form's "submit" button (which may be labeled as "send comments" in other websites), the completed field information is returned to the company's host computer (Sampson 1998). This process involves having a computer access with internet connection, have the address of the corporate website, visiting the corporate website, find the HTML form for the feedback data, write his comments within the specified space and send it to the company - all these steps may take several minutes as locating the feedback icon within the website itself may take some time. However; within Facebook; all the member needs to do is to log into the Facebook account, go to the brands page, write his/her comment, press the ‘enter’ button and the feedback data will be appeared in the company’s wall. As many members spend significant portion of their time within Facebook (Sharif and Sargent 2006) it is easiest to send the feedback data through FBCs.

**Competitive information**

This study expected competitive information to be more detailed and informative within high involved products and projected that competitive information within utilitarian brands should
include more utilitarian features than hedonic brands. Competitive information is defined as customers who provide information about competitors to help their focal brand to formulate better strategies for the marketers (Lackman et al. 2000).

Findings of this study lends support to Kozinets (2002) suggestion that people in virtual communities engaging in consumption-related activities can be an important source of marketing information. Data of this study further validate Sicilia and Palazon’s (2008) findings that customers are a good source for providing information related to the competitors as it becomes available to them.

Consistent with the expectation the data suggest that members of high involved products have detailed and rigorous understanding of the brand and the industry. Such information provides a new perspective to the management who can utilize them to investigate their competitors’ actions (Muniz and Schau 2002). On the other hand members of low involved products simply provide the information without much analysis of the situation. This is perhaps consumers of high involved products are more likely to browse information regarding the product category and engage in higher levels of information search which is less apparent within low involved products (Bloch, Ridgway and Sherrell 1989; Schmidt and Spreng 1996); for which more knowledgeable and detailed competitor information is seen within high involved products.

Data reported herein further indicate that members of utilitarian brands quote competitors’ price and sales promotions more often - indicating a utilitarian preference even when relaying competitor’s information. This is consistent with (Batra and Ahtola 1991; Chitturi et al. 2008)’s indication that utilitarian purchasing behavior is more logical, rational, related to transactions and associated with more information gathering on utilitarian features.

This study further lends support to Vuori and Vaisanen’s (2009) suggestion that signifies the importance of using SNSs as a place for getting competitive information. In this context, this study suggests that there are four important issues considering this process. First of all the
management should provide specific guideline to the site administrator regarding how to identify the important messages (with regards to competitive information). This will help the administrator know which of these messages are important for the marketing intelligence team. Secondly, the site administrator should pass the information to the concerned department as it becomes available. This is consistent with Vuori and Vaisanen’s (2009) suggestion that harnessing social media applications to share the captured information throughout the company is as imperative as capturing the information in the first place. Thirdly, management should consider taking competitive information from their SNSs by introducing issues that will render necessary information about them. Fourthly, management should consider motivating the members who provide competitive information to their brands by giving rewards, which will encourage others to get involved in such actions.

**Welcoming**

This study expected welcoming to be more apparent within high involved products and predicted it to be equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands. This behavior occurs when members welcome new members, beckon them to the fold and assist in their brand learning and community socialization (Schau et al. 2009).

Findings of this study indicate that welcoming is only practiced within high involved products. It is noticed within high involved products that many members rejoice their purchase and share it within FBCs and after noticing the message others subsequently welcome the new owner. However, being frequently purchased product (Quester and Lim 2003) consumers usually do not boast about their first purchase within FBCs; subsequently welcoming is not practiced within this context. For example: a member may not notify that he/she has consumed a can of Sprite for the first time within Facebook. Moreover, the minimum age for a Facebook member is 13 years, and we usually consume a soft drink much earlier age than turning into 13. So there’s a very scanty chance of someone consuming a soft drink for the first time and sharing the information within Facebook- hence welcoming is not noticed within this context.
It is however important to specify that previous studies indicated welcoming evident within low involved context (e.g. Schau et al. 2009; Stommel and Koole 2010). One plausible reason of the absence of such behavior within the current study’s similar context is perhaps; the brand communities of the previous studies who noticed welcoming within low involved products (e.g. Schau et al. 2009; Stommel and Koole 2010) had fewer members. As a result when a new member joins these closely knit groups they knew that a neophyte has joined and subsequently greets the member. Moreover, the site administrators of these communities usually notify when a new member joins; consequently the existing members welcome the beginner to the fold of the community. However, within Facebook anyone can be a member of a particular site just by clicking the “like” option and no message is given to advise others that someone has joined the community. Moreover, most of these low involved product communities within Facebook have millions of members and hundreds of members join these sites every day; hence, keeping track of every new member is difficult; for which welcoming is not practiced within the low involved products.

It is however interesting to find out that welcoming is more apparent within utilitarian brands. This study suggests that such an outcome is instigated by the higher level of initial purchase with Ford Fiesta and member’s intention to use Facebook for sharing such information. Ford launched the new Fiesta in December 2010 and this is when the data collection for this study took place. The initial hype of the brand made many of these members purchase the brand (almost 2000 initial payment [Korzeniewski 2011]); as many members shared this information within Facebook others subsequently greeted them. This sort of initial hype to purchase the brand is not evident within the high involved/hedonic brands. Moreover, all these high involved/hedonic brands are high priced, luxury automobiles and the total unit sales of these brands are usually low. On top of it, Chrysler Crossfire (high involved/hedonic brand) was discontinued after 2007 (Waterman 2006); hence there’s a very scanty chance that someone has bought this car for the first time in 2010-2011 when the data collection of this study has taken place. As a result welcoming is less apparent within hedonic brand communities of Facebook.
Empathizing

This study expected empathizing to be equally evident in both high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands and a considerable difference is not predicted. By empathy this study means other-oriented emotional response congruent with another’s perceived welfare; if the other is oppressed or in need, empathetic feelings include sympathy, compassion, tenderness, and the like (Batson 1991).

Findings of this study indicate that empathizing is not practiced within brand communities of low involved product. Within high involved products it is noticed that a product related failure induce members to articulate their negative feelings. Upon realizing the degree of emotional and financial trauma; others approach with sympathetic note to show compassion. Such findings lend support to Coke, Batson and McDavis’s (1978) suggestion that empathetic feelings often result when one takes the perspective of a person in need, imagining how that person is affected by his or her plight. On the other hand, although product failure occurs within low involved category yet members do not consider such a letdown as a huge concern (Singh 1988). Hence; members reading someone’s negative experience within low involved context may not respond through empathetic message as an emotional reaction are not deemed essential.

It is further revealed that empathizing is more apparent within utilitarian brands within FBCs. Comments from the members indicate that within utilitarian brand’s members empathize others following vehicle accident, product failure, after getting stolen, late delivery of the product and customer service. However, within hedonic brands empathizing is seen following vehicle accident. It should be noted here that many of these behaviors are more apparent within Ford Fiesta (utilitarian brands) as the brand went through initial production related issues (McNamara 2010). As a result when a member posted these issues within Facebook; others experiencing similar setback empathized the grieving member. This is consistent with Hornstein’s (1978) suggestion that when members identify other’s situation as their own, then they empathize with others. In this regards Lerner (1980) indicates “it seems that we respond sympathetically, with compassion and a sense of concern, when we feel a sense of identity with the victim. In effect, we are reacting to the thought of ourselves in that situation.” (pp.
77). For example: members are noticed to empathize others following the late delivery of the vehicle. This happened within Ford Fiesta who could not deliver the product at a specified time and many customers had to wait for up to six months to receive the product (Korzeniewski 2010). Upon reading these members’ plight other associates who went through similar issues came up with compassionate note to show empathy. This sort of issues (late delivery) are not noticed within high involved/hedonic brands (Chrysler and Volvo); hence empathizing behavior concerning such issue is absent within this context.

**Governing**

This study expected governing to be equally evident in all the FBCs specified by the involvement by product positioning matrix; and a considerable difference is not predicted. Governing is defined as articulating behavioral expectations to ensure norms within the brand community (Schau et al. 2009).

This is surprising to notice that governing is more apparent within low involved products than the high involved products within Facebook. Teen abuse and cyber bullying are more apparent within online atmosphere (Thierer 2007; Fegenbush and Olivier 2009) and the low involved product communities have a large amount of young followers; hence using rough language is common in such an environment. However, today’s young generation has a unique expression of voice and many of them are interested to use such expression for potential engagements with the society as citizens (Rheingold 2007). Moreover, studies find that 37% of 18 – 29 year olds use SNSs for civic engagement (Smith, Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2009). As these teens remind others about their behavioral norms within online communities - governing is more apparent within low involved products.

Data of this study further suggest that governing is not practiced within Facebook’s high involved/hedonic brand. This is astounding considering the fact that cyber bullying and using coarse language is pretty common within online context (Strom and Strom 2005; Willard 2005, 2007, Patchin and Hinduja 2006). However, both the high involved/ hedonic brands under this study are high priced, luxury automobiles. These consumers are matured
individuals with higher income who are achievers in life. Moreover, close family members, friends, and colleagues constitute our Facebook friends (Boyd and Ellison 2010) and can usually see the comments that we make in FBCs. If any of these members makes any foul comment, there is every chance that these remarks will be noticed by friends, family members or co-workers within FBCs. Hence, these members (of high involved/hedonic brands) usually refrain from making such a comment who is concerned about guarding their personal integrity and uprightness. Hence there was no reason for others to remind them about the behavioral expectations within this context; hence governing is not noticed within high involved/hedonic category.

Justifying

This study expected justifying to be more evident within high involved products and predicted it to be more prevalent within utilitarian brands than in hedonic brands. Justifying is conceptualized as an obsessive-compulsive brand related behavior that deploys rationales for devoting time and effort to the brand and collectively to outsiders and marginal members in the boundary (Schau et al. 2009).

Surprisingly, this behavior is not practiced within FBCs; although previous research (e.g. Kozinets 2001; Giesler and Pohlmann 2003; Schau et al. 2009) has reported justifying within the context of brand communities. One plausible explanation is that the previous studies who confirmed justifying behavior are closely knit communities with fewer members. For example: Kozinets (2001) study concerned with a small number of loyal Star trek fans; Muñiz and Schau’s (2005) study concentrated on a very small amount of dedicated Newton users and Giesler and Pohlmann (2003) found justifying behavior within a small number of Napster fans. Many of the members of these closely knit communities grow strong attachments to the brand (McAlexandar et al. 2002; Kozinets 2001) and these small groups of loyal consumers are referred to as brand fanatics (Belk 2004; Pimentel and Reynolds 2004) who are ready to go extra mile for these brands. In this connection (Giesler and Pohlmann 2003) indicates that members justifying behavior demands such a superior level of devotion towards the brand. Although band loyal members frequent the Facebook sites (Valenzuela et al. 2009); however
such strong level of attachment and brand devotion which will induce justifying behavior is not yet confirmed within SNSs (Dunay and Kroeger 2011); hence member’s justifying behavior was not identified within Facebook.

Moreover, it is noticed within the previous studies (e.g. Kozinets 2001; Muniz and Schau 2005; Giesler and Pohlmann 2003) that these members compete amongst each other to show their devotion towards the brand. Such competition is encouraged by these communities and emotional prizes in the form of badges are provided elating community member’s position (Schau et al. 2009). Such competition encourages justifying which is associated to both intrinsic and extrinsic gains within the brand community sphere. However this sort of competition is not noticed within Facebook and hence justifying behavior is not seen within FBCs.

**Staking**

This study expected staking to be equally evident in all of communities specified by the involvement and by product positioning matrix and a considerable difference is not predicted. For this study, staking is conceptualized as recognizing variance within the brand community membership that includes marking intragroup distinction and similarity (Schau et al. 2009).

Member’s comments within FBCs indicate that they stake their domain based on age, product version, product type, country of origin, packaging type etc. This is consistent with social identification theory (Tajfel 1978; 1982; Turner 1999) which suggests that people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories, such as psychological traits, abilities, religious affiliation, gender, and age cohort. Findings of this study provide support for Martin et al.’s (2006) view that staking is enacted towards specific group of members with the intention to create, build and enhance relationships with individuals sharing similar interest. This sort of engagement is not directed to the organization or to the brand but to fellow members with the intention to create stronger social ties between them.

Although no difference was expected between high and low involved products; however data indicate that staking is more apparent within high involved products. For example within high
involved products members stake their domain based on their age, body type (sedan or hatch); transmission (automatic/ manual, diesel/patrol; hybrid etc.); country of origin and body color etc. which is not seen within low involved products. This is logical to suggest that many of these staking behavior is borne out as the high involved products have more features than low involved products (Bloch 1982). For example: members staking behavior based on body type (sedan or hatch) and transmission (automatic/ manual; diesel/patrol; hybrid etc.) are not performed within low involved products because of the characteristics of the products. Moreover, members’ staking behavior within high involved products is more engaging and intense which is less apparent within low involved products. Perhaps consumer’s engagement with the high involved products is more intense (Thorne and Bruner 2006) for which this sort of superior engagements is more apparent within high involved products.

**Milestoning**

This study expected milestoning to be more apparent within high involved products; and predicted it to be equally evident within utilitarian and hedonic brands. Milestones are the standout brand experience which identifies the practice of noting seminal events in brand ownership and consumption (Schau et al. 2009).

Members’ comments within FBCs indicate that milestoning is more apparent within high involved products. Moreover, some of the milestoning behaviors i.e. “amount of consumption”, “they are the first owner to a particular place” and “celebrate the purchase date” is only noticed within high involved products. This study suggests that due to some feature’s exclusive existence within automobile brand (high involved products); some of these milestoning events are noticed only within this context. For example: every car is installed with the odometer which shows the consumption of the car. For this reason, whenever a car has run for example 100,000 miles or 200,000 miles the owner can notice it and subsequently celebrate this milestone. However within soft drinks, the user may not remember how many liters of soft drinks he/she has consumed within a specified time. It will require severe patience and relentless engagement to keep track of every single consumption event which is highly improbable. Hence this sort of behavior is not noticed within low involved product category.
Moreover, cherishing that they are the first owner to a particular place (i.e. I am the first owner of Ford Fiesta in Tampa Bay California region) may not be practiced by the members of low involved products as such behavior will not render the appreciation behind such a message. For example: consumers will not cherish by saying that they are the first consumer of Sprite or PowerAde Zero in a particular area - hence this behavior is not practiced within low involved products.

Furthermore, in high involved contexts members provide specific date when celebrating the purchase event. However in low involved situation members merely mention the length of time (years) of their brand use. This is perhaps low involved products are frequently purchased items (Quester and Lim 2003) and consumer may not remember the date of the first purchase of such an item.

**Grooming**

This study expected grooming to be evident only in the high involved product communities; and predicted it to be more prevalent within hedonic brands. This study conceptualizes grooming as caring for the brand (washing and cleaning the product) (Schau et al. 2009).

Consistent with the expectations; findings of this study indicate that grooming is only practiced within high involved products. Members’ comments within FBCs suggest that they take lengthy steps to clean their possessions to give it a shiny look. Such extensive procedures undertaken to clean the products demonstrate that ritualistic behavior (Mol 1976; McCracken 1988) is evident in FBCs. Findings of this study further lends support to Belk’s (2004) indication that consumers who take extreme measures to groom their possession has tendency to show off such a devotion with others; (e.g. the Corvette owner who waxes his car and parks the car in such a manner so that it is noticed by everyone).

This study further asserts that some members view these products (automobiles) as a part of their family; hence engage in lengthy behavior to clean these products. This is consistent with Belk’s (2004) statement that automobiles are regarded as if they were alive and not mere
machines and many consumers often see cars as lovers or children. As human being has natural tendency to take care of their family; such devotion to clean someone’s possession is an extension of our inclination to care about our own family (Aggarwal 2004).

Although this study predicted grooming to be more prevalent within hedonic brands but the data could not support the notion. This indicates that members of utilitarian brands are equally motivated to groom their products and show it off through FBCs. This is perhaps members of utilitarian brands also want to beautify their possessions as getting surrounded around beautiful product is identified as the key to success (Irons. 2001; Peiss. 1993). Moreover Rook (1985) suggest that grooming is about communicating specific message about individual's social status, maturity, aspirations, conformity, even morality; and members of utilitarian brands may also be motivated by similar objective; hence grooming behavior is equally evident within both utilitarian and hedonic brands.

**Customizing**

This study expected customizing to be equally evident in all communities specified by the involvement and product positioning matrix and a considerable difference is not predicted. Customizing is defined as modifying the brand to suit group-level or individual needs; which includes all efforts to change the factory specs of the product to enhance performance (Schau et al. 2009).

It is noticed within FBCs that within high involved products members spend extensive amount of time and money in changing factory specs to give their possession a unique identity. As consumption plays a central role in supplying meanings for creating consumer’s personal and social world (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998); changing factory settings is a deliberate attempt to construct distinctive identity in this volatile environment. For example: a young customer may purchase a Honda Fit for functional reasons (better mileage, less price) however customize the product for a sporty look to create and attain desired self-image (Schouten 1991; Firat 1992; Thompson and Mirschnran 1995).
Although not expected; a different set of motives behind customizing the product is identified between high and low involved products. Members’ comments suggest that within high involved products (automobiles); the motivation is to inject individuality so that it stands out in the crowd (Belk 2004) and to affirm a direct expression to their personality (McCracken 1988 and de Pyssler 1992). However, in low involved products the objective is to achieve a better taste through mixing behavior. Such a difference indicates that a higher level of motive (self-expression; individualization) is associated to high involved product’s customizing effort compared to a mundane motive (better taste) is associated to low involved product. This is perhaps members of high involved products consistently show higher level of attachment (Bloch 1982; Nijssen and Lieshout 1995) and such a devotion is seen through customizing.

5.3.2: Discussions for Research question 2

Through the inductive analysis this study identified some new VCBs practiced in these FBCs. Six new VCBs are explored which was not noticed within the context of VCBs and brand communities before. These new VCBs are: defending the brand, reassurance, volunteering time, amplification of company events, missing behavior and daydreaming. The following section provides discussions related to these new behaviors followed by the conclusion for this study.

Defending the brand

This study defines defending the brand as “member’s behavior of informing, clarifying, explaining brand’s position by sharing information and real life experiences with the intention to protect brand’s image and integrity against negative remarks which may adversely affect the brand”.

Findings of this study indicate that today’s consumers engage in behaviors to defend and offset the negative remarks and bad publicity by others within FBCs. This is an extension to the current notion that to dampen the negative effects of any harmful remarks by consumers; marketers administer public relations efforts (Levesque and McDougall 2000; Zemke, Bacon, Pugh and Bell 2000) that helps restore positive image for the brand (Wu 1999). Such a
passionate behavior is consistent with Baumeister, Dale and Sommer’s (1998) concept of individual’s ‘defense mechanism’ which include the protection of self-esteem. Loyal consumers consider these brands as an extension to their self-image (McAlexandar et al. 2002; Belk 2004); and do not hesitate to defend the brand to safeguard their own integrity.

Findings of this study indicate that member’s defensive behavior deters complaining associates from posting further negative comments and sometimes they apologize for earlier remarks. This is consistent with Blodgett, Wakefield and Barnes’s (1995) suggestion that effective handling of complaining behavior limits the spread of potentially damaging negative remarks. This behavior further implies that the complaint handling by others are more effective than marketer’s strategies; because in many product categories consumers tend to rely more on other customers (Hagel and Armstrong 1997; Fong and Burton 2006).

Data reported herein indicate that more diverse types of defensive behaviors are practiced in high involved products. This is perhaps members of high involved products have more knowledge and specifics (Traylor 1981; and Engel et al. 1993); helping them defend from a variety of direction. For example member’s defensive behavior concerning industry norms by comparing competitors’ features and customer service is only noticed within high involved products. A higher level of knowledge on the product and its industry is required to disseminate such information and members of high involved products possess higher level of knowledge (Bloch 1982; Nijssen and Lieshout 1995) – hence such behavior is noticed only in high involved context.

It is further noticed that this behavior is more prevalent within utilitarian brand communities of Facebook. This is perhaps utilitarian brands are considered necessities and hedonic brands as luxuries (Chitturi et al. 2008) and consumers give greater importance to the necessities (Kivetz and Simonson 2002). Moreover consumers view the utilitarian purchase as more rational which satisfies necessities of life (Khan and Dhar 1990); hence these consumers are motivated to reciprocate by engaging in more defending behavior (Blau 1964). In addition, it is difficult to justify the purchase of a hedonic good (Okada 2005) and relative degree of guilt
is associated with consumption of hedonic goods (Lascu 1991; Strahilevitz and Myers 1998); hence defending behavior is less apparent within hedonic brands.

**Reassurance**

This study defines reassurance as “members’ act that is directed to the waiting consumers with the hope of reducing anxiety and stress during the waiting time and creates lust for the brand so that they wait for the brand until it is delivered”.

Member’s comments within FBCs indicate that during the waiting time, customers have some negative emotional responses, such as, irritation, boredom, frustration and stress (Pruyn and Smidts 1998; Hui and Tse 1996). Findings of this study further lend support to Lovelock and Gummesson’s (2004) indication that members tend to leave the brand if the waiting time is longer than expected. To tackle with issues concerning waiting previous studies suggested numerous strategies; for example: adding new resources (Zeithaml and Bitner 2001; Hui and Tse 1996), attractiveness of waiting environment (Pruyn and Smidts 1998) 2002), designing the queue system (Davis and Heineke 1994), providing information to waiting consumers (and asking them to reserve early (Lovelock and Lapert 1999). All these strategies are carried out by marketers to reduce the stress associated to waiting customers. However findings of this study suggest that members relay vivid stories of consumption experience to cheer the waiting consumers. Such stories depicting member’s superior product experience following the long wait should reduce the anxiety and stress of the associates who are waiting for the product; and studies (e.g. Jones and Peppiat 1996) suggest that reducing anxiety and stress during such period makes waiting seem shorter and comforting.

It is further noticed that within Facebook; members vividly express superior post-purchase experience to create a lust within the waiting members’ eyes to endorse that the product is worth hanging around. By doing so these members try to increase the value of the product; and studies (e.g. Maister 1985) suggest that customers tend to wait more for a valuable product. This behavior is named “reassurance” as these members tried to assure, support and encourage the waiting crowd to stick to the brand and wait until the product is delivered.
This behavior is seen only within high involved/ utilitarian brand community of Ford Fiesta. The data collection for this study matched with the issues with long wait for the brand for a lot of members. During this time many members who received the brand; reassured the waiting customers by asking them to stick to the brand. Future research should consider data collection during the time of product launch to other categories (i.e. high involved /hedonic brands and also low involved utilitarian and hedonic brands) and see whether such behavior is practiced.

**Volunteering time**

*Volunteering time is defined as ‘when consumers of a commercial brand deliberately intend to spend their time for the cause of the brand’.*

Comments from members of FBCs indicate that consumers have positive interest to get involved with these commercial brands by offering their time for the cause of the brand. This is an extension to the current belief that individuals have the tendency to spend their time and money for charitable and nonprofit organizations (Bhattacharya 1998; Liu and Aaker 2008). Various studies (e.g. Leclerc, Schmitt and Dube 1995; DeVoe and Pfeffer 2007) suggest that spending time for the cause of the organization is as important as spending money as consumers consider both resources are related and to a certain extent exchangeable.

Previous studies (e.g. Kasser and Kanner 2004; and Lyubomirsky 2008) suggest that consumers consume with the goal of becoming happy or getting happier but they rarely attain that goal through purchase behavior; and giving has been tied to states of true happiness (Thoits and Hewitt 2001; Harbaugh, Mayr and Burghart 2007). In this regards, Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) further suggest that spending time for doing an activity is more directly associated with feeling happy than material acquisitions. This study complements this stream of research by suggesting that members who offer their time for the cause of a commercial brand is doing it as such an act makes them feel happy.
Extant work shows that, relative to unhappy people, happy people invest more hours in volunteer service (Thoits and Hewitt 2001). Findings of previous studies also highlight that people experience a rush of happiness when they help others (Gilbert 2006; Williams and Lee 2007) and volunteer time for an organization (McGowan 2006). In line with these chain of propositions; this study suggest that members intending to give time for their preferred brand are happy or in other word delighted with these brands for which such a voluntary act is carried out.

Interestingly this behavior is practiced only within utilitarian brands. This is perhaps members of utilitarian brands have more trust on these product’s purpose and consider them in solving more objective reasons and fulfilling necessary functions in life (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Fournier 1991). Moreover, Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi (2012) indicate that consumers tend to go beyond their prescribed roles for brands that provide a sense of self-identity and give life a ‘meaning’. As a result the consumers of utilitarian brands want to take part in the cause of the brand by offering their time. This is further consistent with Reed, Aquino, and Levy’s (2007) findings who contend that people prefer to donate to organizations when their self is highly invested in a cause.

**Amplification of company events**

Amplification of company events takes place when members promote brand sponsored events by posting messages about future events and uploading pictures of the previous meet with the intention to induce the non-participants so that they participate in the upcoming event.

Brands consider sponsoring events to engage with its customers who show attachment to the brand by participating in such occasion (Schurr, Wittig, Ruble and Ellen 1987; Meenaghan 2001). However, the data of this study suggest that the loyal members not only participate in brand sponsored events but amplify such occasion by promoting and posting pictures of the proceedings. It is noticed within FBCs that members relay stories of blissful moments experienced during such episode to encourage others so that they do not miss the future event. Such a finding is consistent with Keh and Teo’s (2001) proposition that today’s consumers are spontaneously motivated to go beyond prescribed roles and perform above and beyond the
call of duty. This sort of extra-role behaviors often involve sacrifice on the consumers’ part in terms of time and effort (Staub 1978) and such desirable behavior should help the company more than they help benefit the customer (Bove et al. 2009).

Findings of this study suggest that within high involved products, members amplify brand fests and also brand sponsored events, whereas within low involved products members only amplify brand sponsored events. Brand fest is an important event as participating members share consumption experiences, narrate stories and recount brand relationship journeys with others (McAlexandar et al. 2002). These narratives play a significant role in acts of consumption, allowing consumers to understand, structure, and share their consumption experiences (Arnould and Price 1993; Muniz and Schau 2005). By amplifying such events through FBCs; consumers can positively affect the performance of the organization and help to create a desirable setting for the participants (Keh and Teo 2001; Bove et al. 2009).

Members’ comments within low involved products indicate that they amplify brand sponsored events by promoting these proceedings through posting messages and sharing pictures. Brand sponsored event helps create a stronger image for the brand (Cornwell, Roy, Edward and Steinard 2001; Dean 2002) and an important tool for consumer involvement (Wann and Branscombe 1993; Fisher and Wakefield 1998; Madrigal 2001). By amplifying these events consumers are providing more opportunity for the marketer to efficiently utilize such brand building activity (von Hippel 2005; Kotler et al. 2009). This not only gives the exposures that these brands need but also an opportunity to interact with their customers face to face and a chance to create more personalized impression (Martensen, Gronholdt, Bendtsen and Jensen 2007).

It is interesting to notice that amplification of brand events is more apparent within hedonic brands. This is perhaps products meeting or exceeding hedonic expectations evoke high arousal feelings of excitement and cheerfulness, leading to delight—an emotion that is also high in arousal (Roseman 1991); and products that meet or exceed utilitarian expectations evokes low-arousal feelings of mere satisfaction (Hunt 1977; Oliver 1997). In this connection
this study contends that the high arousal emotions associated to consumers of hedonic brands encourage members to engage more on amplifying brand sponsored events.

**Missing behavior**

Research on interpersonal love relationships has identified passion as a main component of love (Sternberg 1997). In the context of consumption, passion has recently been noticed where passionate feelings are not directed towards another person as in the case of interpersonal love relationships, but towards a product or a brand (Belk et al. 2003). The data reported herein add to the growing body of evidence that within FBCs customers feel loss and even miss the brand if they are passionate about the brand (Matzler et al. 2007). It is however surprising to notice that such behavior is never reported within the context of VCBs in both offline and online contexts.

Consistent with Belk et al. (2003) this research further reiterates how passion in the form of missing the brand inspires and motivates the contemporary consumption of the members in these brand communities. It is noticed within FBCs that members purchased the same vehicle with same look following missing behavior as the car got stolen earlier. Such a finding lends support to Carroll and Ahuvia’s (2006) claim that that consumers missing behavior has positive relationship with brand loyalty. Moreover many of these members are noticed to engage in positive WOM following their missing behavior lending support to Whang et al.’s (2004) suggestion that there is a positive relationship between missing behavior and positive WOM. Moreover as these consumers post messages wrapped with passion; it should encourage the non-owners to grow a positive attitude towards the brand before their purchase (Kozinets et al. 2010). This study further posits that for these reasons missing behavior should be included as a VCB.

Comments from members suggest that missing behavior is more apparent within high involved products. The emotional loss following the missing behavior and the vivid memories observed within high involved products are less apparent within low involved products. This is perhaps consumers of high involved products usually grow more attachments to the brand
(Zaichkowsky 1985) and these consumers express such involvement through their virtual community participation (Ouwersloot and Schroder 2008).

Members’ missing behavior is apparent within both utilitarian and hedonic brands and a considerable difference is not identified. This is perhaps members miss a brand if they are passionate towards the brand (Shimp and Madden 1988; Belk et al. 2003) and consumers of both utilitarian and hedonic brands can be passionate towards their brand (Pimentel and Reynolds 2004).

**Daydreaming**

It is noticed within FBCs that members engage in pre-purchase dreaming and fantasize about possessing the brand. Interestingly, previous studies concerning VCB both in online and offline context did not report daydreaming behavior (e.g. Bove et al. 2009; Schau et al. 2009, Johnson and Rapp 2010). This is surprising considering the fact that human beings spontaneously imagine the pursuit and the attainment of personal goals in their daydreaming activity (Oettingen 1997) and entertaining ideas about consumption, as expressed through a variety of pre-purchase dreaming activities, is a very real form of consumer behavior (Fournier and Guiry 1993).

Data reported herein suggest that day dreaming lead to actual purchase of the product. Such a finding lends support to McCracken’s (1988) thought that consumers daydream with the intention to create and ideal world for themselves; and later purchases the product to confirm the existence of such a day dream. This is further consistent with Urry’s (1995) indication who highlighted, for example, that for tourists the experience of a place is always a re-experience because they have first consumed that location in their imaginations. For such reason this study suggest that daydreaming should be included as a VCB as it leads to purchase.

Findings of this study further lend support to MacInnis and Price’s (1990) suggestion that planned fantasies exists as a form of daydreaming which includes the anticipation of future actions. This is further consistent with Singer and McCraven’s (1961) suggestion that
consumers engage in anticipation of probable future actions as well as the entertainment of alternative possibilities for likely future actions. Moreover data reported herein support the idea that wish list activity is encouraged among cultural members (Fournier and Guiry 1993); and people fantasize and include their favorite brands as part of their wish list (Mick and DeMoss 1990).

It is further noticed that daydreaming is more apparent within high involved products than low involved products. In high involved products members engage in pre-purchase dreaming (fantasizing), planning their fantasizing effort and create a wish list for their favorite brand. However, within low involved products such behavior is concentrated around day dreaming (fantasizing) about the brand. Moreover within high involved products members vividly express stories as part of day dreaming activity, which is less apparent within low involved products. This is perhaps consumers of high-involvement product are generally more attached with high-involvement products (Bhatnagar et al. 2000) and then feel a need to share the consumption experience in retrospect (Ouwersloot and Schroder 2008) and online communities are extremely well suited to this aspect (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2002).

Members’ comments within FBCs indicate that daydreaming is more apparent within hedonic brands. This is perhaps hedonic consumption is motivated by the desire for fantasy, fun and sensual pleasure (O’Curry and Strahiviletz 2001) and it is more fun to daydream about a hedonic experience that involves pleasure than a more utilitarian product that does not (Loewenstein 1987).

5.4 Contribution of the research

This section provides both the academic and also the managerial contribution of this study.

5.4.1 Academic contributions

Though still a relatively new phenomenon, online SNSs have begun to attract the attention of marketing scholars. For example, Ansari, Koenigsberg and Stahl’s (2011) study investigate the multiple relationships among users of SNSs; Pagani et al. (2011) examined the
psychological attributes and social interactions of participants within SNSs, Dholakia et al. (2009) explored how managers can identify influential users; Valenzuela, Park and Kee’s (2009) study identified the relationship between SNSs and the social life of young individuals. This research contributes to this emerging area of study by identifying twenty one distinct types of customer VCBs practiced within SNSs. This list expands upon the types of VCBs previously studied in both online and offline context (Bove et al. 2009; Schau et al. 2009; Johnson and Rapp 2010). Moreover this study identified that considerable differences are apparent within VCBs between both high and low involved products and also utilitarian and hedonic brands.

A key contribution of this study is the discovery of six new VCBs that is not reported within the context of SNSs before. These new behaviors are defending the brand, reassurance, volunteering time, amplification of the company events, missing behavior and day dreaming. This exploration supports the idea that new VCBs are practiced within the brand communities of SNSs (Marandi et al. 2010; Pagani et al. 2011).

It is important to indicate that one of these new behaviors i.e. defending the brand is never reported within the context of consumer behavior before. Previous studies demonstrate that consumers are involved in various brand building activities; for example: they evangelize about the brand (Schau et al. 2009); urge members to stick to the brand (Kozinets 2009, Batra et al. 2012) and notify marketer when a competitor badmouthing them (Ahearne et al. 2005); however defending the brand to offset the negative remarks and bad publicity has not been accounted within the context of consumer behavior before. This study has enriched the body of knowledge by showing evidence of such behavior practiced within online SNSs.

Moreover, two of these new behaviors i.e. amplification of company events and reassurance carried out by members of FBCs were solely practiced by the marketers before. For example, previous studies (e.g. McAleandar et al. 2002; Roy and Cornwell 2004) suggest that marketers amplify and promote brand sponsored events and within services context marketers undertake various strategies to reduce the stress of waiting consumers (Lovelock and Lapert
1999; Zeithaml and Bitner 2002); however findings of this study indicate that today’s consumers execute both these activities. Data reported herein confirm that consumers amplify brand sponsored events and also narrate stories to reduce the stress and anxiety of the waiting consumers. Such a breakthrough is consistent with (von Hippel 2005 and Keller 2007)’s suggestion that consumers renewed interest and superior attachment with these brands make them engage in new behaviors that was solely practiced by the marketers.

Moreover, although volunteering time is reported within the context of non-profit organizations (Sargeant and Lee 2004); but the data reported herein suggest that consumers are ready to do the same for a commercial brand. Hence this research expands to the current belief that spending time is done within charitable and non-profitable organization (Liu and Aaker 2008).

Moreover, although the concept of missing behavior and daydreaming is noticed within marketing and consumer behavior literature but they are not detected within the context of VCBs before (e.g. Bove et al. 2009; Schau et al. 2009; Johnson and Rapp 2010). This study has further enriched the body of knowledge by introducing these two concepts within the context of VCB and SNSs.

Another major contribution of this study is the identification that members of low involved products also engage in customer-to-brand relationship within online communities. This contradicts on the previous belief that members of low involved products do not engage in customer-to-brand relationship within brand community sphere (Sicilia and Palazon 2008). This behavior is confirmed as members of low involved products provide feedback and competitor information back to the brand. This study has enriched the body of knowledge by indicating that members of low involved products are also keen to establish customer-to-brand relationships within the context of brand communities within online SNSs.

This study which focused on consumer’s collective value creation in FBCs is distinguished from the current accumulated knowledge of brand-based collectives in three important ways:
(i) previous researchers did not consider using both high and low involved products within the same study to identify the differences between these products, (ii) within the context of SNSs none has ever considered using both utilitarian and hedonic brands in the same study to identify differences in consumers’ VCBs between these product categories; (iii) this study conducted a systematic literature review within both online and offline contexts to identify the collective VCBs present in the extant literature. This study identified considerable evidence that the practices that are recognized here occur in the data sets of other published articles in marketing and consumer research (Gruen 2005; Bove et al. 2009, Schau et al. 2009; Johnson and Rapp 2010).

5.4.2: Managerial contributions

It has been suggested that the main role of marketing is to develop and deliver better value propositions for customers (Woodruff 1997; Payne and Holt 2001; Keefe 2004). According to this perspective, value is rooted directly in the value creation experience, and does not stem from products, services or from the expertise of marketers and service providers (Ramaswamy 2004). The meaning of this rationale has significantly changed since SNSs have embedded in the fabric of everyday life for millions of consumers (Ellison 2007). In this regards, this study offers marketers reasons to emphasize on FBCs to build better relationship with its members and encourage VCBs. This study further provides guidance to managers regarding why brands should have an early presence within SNSs; what should be the role of the site administrator, skills that they should possess, how to monitor these sites, authority of the administrator, how to encourage VCBs; which VCBs should be delegated and how etc. The following section emphasizes on these suggestions:

**Brands should move early**

Findings of this study indicate that early adopters will have an edge over the followers who decide to come late within these SNSs. For example: brands will be able to receive information to identify product quality issues and also receive product ideas and competitive information. Moreover their members will display brand related items, defend negative
remarks and amplify brand related events. In addition these early movers will enjoy reduced time in customer service as members will provide help on various consumption issues. Furthermore, brands can identify members who intend to spend time through these online communities. All these VCBs indicate that the opportunities for early movers within these SNSs are endless; hence, marketers who are yet to have a brand community site within these SNSs should decide early and make a move.

**Roles and responsibilities of the site administrator**

This study suggests that it is important for all these brands to have a dedicated *site administrator* to oversee its activities. With the current changes in marketing and consumer behavior (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Lusch and Vargo 2006); this study suggest that the role of the *site administrator* within these SNSs is important. This study recommends that the site administrator should possess critical understanding on the industry and its consumer behavior and possess strong public relations (PR) skills. Moreover, the same person should be responsible for all the other SNSs (e.g. Twitter, Myspace etc.) to ensure consistency within their approach. Additionally, he/she should be able to identify the important messages for the brand. For example: it is noticed that many members provide innovative ideas which is worthy of being part of new product development (NPD) process; hence the site administrator should pass these feedbacks to the product development team. Similarly site administrators should know whom to send the message with regards to competitor’s information. Above all, the site administrator should also be given authority to speak for the consumers and have direct link with all the other departments so that he/she can solve consumer problems raised by the members of FBCs.

**Monitoring these FBCs**

Findings of this study suggest that the brand managers (apart from the site administrator) should regularly monitor these FBCs to understand changing consumer behavior. By reading these posts managers can better formulate strategies consistent with changing consumer taste, habits and above all; help identify future consumers. For example, through daydreaming
activities; marketers can identify future customers as it leads to actual purchase (Walter, Sparks and Herington 2007). Specific promotional strategies can then be developed to convert these dreamers to consumers of the brand. Moreover, as people from all around the world posts in these FBCs; managers would be able to know product quality issues taking place all around the world.

Specific recipe for specific brand types

This study recognizes consumer practices and motivations that differ from users of high and low involved products. It is important that managers of both the brand types know the kinds of VCBs absent within the specific category so as to encourage participation. For example: forgiving behavior, welcoming, empathizing, grooming and reassurance behavior is not noticed within low involved products. Even though all these behaviors may not be encouraged within this context (for example: grooming may not a viable option for low involved products); however many of these behaviors are important for the overall wellbeing for these brands. For example: low involved brands may carry out more recovery actions to encourage forgiving behavior. Moreover the site administrator may welcome new members within this context to encourage others engage in such activities (Blau 1964). Similar strategies can be employed to introduce empathizing within low involved context.

Likewise, some of the VCBs are practiced within utilitarian context are not noticed within hedonic brands. For example: reassurance and volunteering time is only practiced within utilitarian context. Moreover, some of these VCBs are more apparent within one context and less apparent within another context. For example: welcoming and empathizing is more apparent within utilitarian brands; whereas amplification of company events and daydreaming is more apparent within hedonic brands. It is important that the site administrators are vigilant to identify any inconsistencies within the VCBs and enact strategies to encourage such behavior. Since consumers may not always participate for free, it is important for managers to enforce strategies that appropriately motivate and rewards active participation from other members. For example: site administrators can contact some of the loyal users and encourage participating in welcoming and empathizing within hedonic brands by providing gift cards.
and free tickets to company events etc. Similar strategies can be taken to encourage more of and amplification of company events within utilitarian brands.

**Encouraging participation through rewards**

This study further suggests that managers should encourage VCBs by using both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Offering such inducement should encourage participation from users who have not manifested such behavior. For example: site administrators can allocate “Feedback of the month”, or a “fifty dollar gift voucher” etc. depending on the credence of the feedback. Similar motivational tools can be enacted for behaviors like voice (which will make the brand to identify product or service related issues), competitive information (that will provide information about competitors detailed strategies), governing (that will help create better environment within the online communities) and defending the brand (which will deter frustrated members from posting any future negative remarks).

**Delegating some responsibilities**

It is noticed that some of the VCBs are better performed by its members than the marketers; prompting a suggestion that such roles should be delegated to them. The present study suggests that firms should identify the roles better managed by members within FBCs. Marketers should be open to such engagement and empower consumers to fulfill these roles. However management should keep a close eye on the dialogues within FBCs to ensure consistency and efficiency. For example data reported herein suggest that *defending the brand* is more effectively handled by loyal members; hence this job can be delegated to these consumers.

In the end this study suggests that important transition is taking place within marketing as far as roles of the different actors are concerned. This places enormous challenges and burdens on both the parties. Marketing managers should carefully monitor the situation and take advantage of it by providing support to the customers and use these online social networks to better reach and understand their customers.
5.5 Limitations of the research

There are several limitations of this study. First, only one type of SNS is assessed here. It may be that other sites are used in different ways, particularly since Facebook originated as a college site and has attracted many college-age students. Care must be taken when extrapolating the findings to other types of online social networks that target different groups of users (e.g. professionals in LinkedIn).

As with any qualitative study, there are limitations as to the generalizability and reliability of these findings. This study emphasized the collection of rich, elaborate and meaningful data through FBCs. Only automobile and soft drink brands are considered to represent as high and low involved product categories (respectively). Other industries could not be identified to understand the VCBs within FBCs.

The validity of ethnography is criticized within social science as there is a lack of objectivity and the fact that data are represented interpretively. Netnography being an extended ethnography (Schau et al. 2009) has similar issues attached to it. Moreover, Kozinets (2002) indicates that those post and participate in online discussions within these virtual communities are most likely an extreme group of online brand devotees and insiders and are not representative of an average brand members. This is another issue concerning this study.

The data analysis of this study did not consider cross referencing between coders which is an important tool to reinforce the findings; hence this is considered as a limitation of this study.

This study acknowledges the importance of pretest in order to justify the selection of a brand; however chooses to use theoretical justification to categorise these brands. Hence the lack of use of pretest is considered as a limitation of this study.

Moreover the data is collected over a period of one year and in half of the cases only six months of data are analyzed. This is done to keep the data sets within a manageable amount.
Though unfortunate, this is common to this type of brand-specific data set within online studies (Kozinets 2002; Langer and Beckman 2005; Sandlin 2007). Thus, data limitations prevent us from analyzing the effects of these VCB of competing sites.

5.6 Future research

This study hopes to inspire researchers to validate whether the findings of this study are practiced within other contexts (i.e. service industries, non-profit sector, SME etc.). Such research might lead to a greater understanding of the crucial and fundamental conditions for brand community strength and expand the theoretical understanding of how value is created. Future research should also include other product categories to test this framework and generalize the findings. The data sources used to describe high and low involved products were automobile and soft drink brands respectively. Future studies should aim to expand the investigation to online communities formed around other types of industries.

All the brands considered for this study are well known consumer brands with big marketing budgets and huge consumer base. Future studies should consider brands that operate in niche markets with less number of members to identify the kind of VCBs practiced within these brands.

This study provides observations from qualitative data as examples, but has not done rigorous testing of the model. The model provides a starting point for testing and for examining possible extensions and generalizations. This model should be tested with quantitative data. For example: future studies should stratify Facebook users based on interest groups (e.g., university student groups, sport groups, professional groups, and etc.) and take a random sample in each subgroup. Using this sampling method, a more representative sample of Facebook users can be obtained and the results will be more generalizable.

Considering that this study has raised many interesting questions, it is believed that the present research triggers additional theorizing and empirical investigation aimed at a better understanding of intentional social actions in the SNSs. While understanding consumer
behavior in general is still an ongoing problem, the behavioral impact of the new media is even less understood. More academic research regarding VCBs within the context of SNSs needed to identify consumers’ motivation behind their behavior and their variation of attitudes towards brands. Such research might lead to a better knowledge of the necessary conditions for the success of the FBCs and expand the theoretical understanding of how value is created. More diversified themes should also be included; for example: how Facebook’s VCBs are different from the other virtual communities on the net? Why consumers engage in such behaviors or what motivates member’s to participate in each of these value dimensions (it is understood that a different set of motives should act behind each set of practices) etc.

It is identified that many consumers are ready to accept the roles that were previously within the domain of the marketers. Future studies should concentrate what changes (if any) the marketers should take in their approach to accommodate the expanding role of consumers? How they can engage consumers in more VCB to have a more win-win relationship? What sort of regulation practices can be utilized as these members are not direct employees of the firm. Refining understandings of VCBs in existing FBCs should prove useful in creating novel strategies that further leverage the collaborative tendencies of marketplace actors. This will generate a much more complete picture to understanding overall consumer behavior within SNSs.

5.7 Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to identify the VCBs within the brand communities of Facebook. Particularly, this study has endeavored to identify the differences between the VCBs of high and low involved product and also utilitarian and hedonic positioned brand’s communities. The results suggest that consumer practices and motivations differ from users of high and low involved products within FBCs. Moreover differences within VCBs between members of utilitarian and hedonic brands are also noticed.

This study has enriched the body of knowledge by identifying six new behaviors that was not reported within the context of consumer behavior, SNSs and also VCBs. Moreover, some of
these new VCBs were solely practiced by the marketers which are seen to be practiced by today’s consumers. These results offer exciting avenues for the researchers to dig deeper and see whether these new VCBs are practiced within other contexts. Moreover this study provides suggestion to identify how brands can engage its consumers to enact some new roles. This study has provided specific recipe for success to the managers pertaining to these varied product categories. Moreover this study has identified some important managerial issues with relates to managing the specific site, the role of the site administrator and also how the managers can designate some of these roles to the consumers.


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Appendix

Southern Cross University
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC)

NOTIFICATION

To: Dr Simon Pervan/Mahmud Hassan
Graduate College of Management
mhassa11@scu.edu.au, simon.pervan@scu.edu.au

From: Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee
Division of Research, R. Block

Date: 20 December 2010

Project: Brand community practices in Facebook: How do they create value?

Approval Number ECN-10-222

The Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee has established, in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research – Section 5/Processes of Research Governance and Ethical Review, a procedure for expedited review by a delegated authority.

Your application has been considered by the HRESC, Tweed Heads/GC and has now been approved. Please note that this approval is subject to the usual standard conditions of approval.

Standard Conditions in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Statement) (NS).

1. Monitoring

NS 5.5.1 – 5.5.10
Responsibility for ensuring that research is reliably monitored lies with the institution under which the research is conducted. Mechanisms for monitoring can include:

(a) reports from researchers;
(b) reports from independent agencies (such as a data and safety monitoring board);
(c) review of adverse event reports;
(d) random inspections of research sites, data, or consent documentation; and
(e) interviews with research participants or other forms of feedback from them.

The following should be noted:

(a) All ethics approvals are valid for 12 months unless specified otherwise. If research is continuing after 12 months, then the ethics approval MUST be renewed. Complete the Annual Report/Renewal form and send to the Secretary of the HREC.

(b) NS 5.5.5
   Generally, the researcher/s provide a report every 12 months on the progress to date or outcome in the case of completed research specifically including:
   - The maintenance and security of the records.
   - Compliance with the approved proposal
   - Compliance with any conditions of approval.
   - Any changes of protocol to the research.

Note: Compliance to the reporting is mandatory to the approval of this research.

(c) Specifically, that the researchers report immediately and notify the HREC, in writing, for approval of any change in protocol. NS 5.5.3

(d) That a report is sent to HREC when the project has been completed.

(e) That the researchers report immediately any circumstance that might affect ethical acceptance of the research protocol. NS 5.5.3

(f) That the researchers report immediately any serious adverse events/effects on participants. NS 5.5.3

2. Research conducted overseas
   NS 4.8.1 – 4.8.21
   That, if research is conducted in a country other than Australia, all research protocols for that country are followed ethically and with appropriate cultural sensitivity.

3. Complaints
   NS 5.6.1 – 5.6.7
   Institutions may receive complaints about researchers or the conduct of research, or about the conduct of a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) or other review body.
Complaints may be made by participants, researchers, staff of institutions, or others. All complaints should be handled promptly and sensitively.

*Complaints about the ethical conduct of this research should be addressed in writing to the following:*

Ethics Complaints Officer  
HREC  
Southern Cross University  
PO Box 157  
Lismore, NSW, 2480  
Email: ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au

*All complaints are investigated fully and according to due process under the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and this University. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and you will be informed of the outcome.*

*All participants in research conducted by Southern Cross University should be advised of the above procedure and be given a copy of the contact details for the Complaints Officer. They should also be aware of the ethics approval number issued by the Human Research Ethics Committee.*

Sue Kelly  
HREC Administration  
Ph: (02) 6626 9139  
E. ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au

Prof Bill Boyd  
Chair, HREC  
Ph: 02 6620 3650  
E. William.boyd@scu.edu.au