

# Understanding the Factors Influencing Children's Participation in Brand Communities

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## Declarations

### Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis is my own work and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due references and acknowledgements are made. It contains no material which has been previously submitted by me for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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**Dated** 29/06/2018

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**Dated** 29/06/2018

**(Margurite L Hook)**

## Acknowledgements

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Second, to my fiancé Nathan. Thank you, Nate, for always supporting me, even though I may be in my own PhD world most of the time. You have helped me keep on track, and importantly told me when to take a much-needed break. Hopefully now this is over I will be less muddled and thinking about less than a million things all the time...hopefully.

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## 2. List of Publications Included as Part of the Thesis

### 2.1 Published Work, in Order of Appearance

1. Hook, M., Baxter S.M. & Kulczynski A. (forthcoming) Antecedents and Consequences of Participation in Brand Communities: A Systematic Literature Review, *Journal of Brand Management*, doi: 10.1057/s41262-017-0079-8

This paper is provided in Section 6.2 of the thesis.

2. Hook, M., Baxter S.M. & Kulczynski A. (2017). Antecedents and Consequences of Children's Brand Community Participation: A Replication and Extension Study, *Journal of Marketing Behavior*, 3(1), 63-72, doi: 10.561/107.00000042

This paper is provided in Section 6.3 of the thesis.

3. Hook M., Baxter S.M. & Kulczynski A. (2016). Children's Participation in Brand-Based Social Networks: Examining the Role of Evaluative Social Identity, Self-Esteem and Anticipated Emotions on Commitment and Desire to Recommend, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 40(5), 552-561, doi: 10.1111/ijcs.12300

This paper is provided in Section 6.4 of the thesis.

### 2.2 Unpublished Work, in Order of Appearance

1. Title: "I'm Like You, You're Like me, We Make a Great Brand Community!' Similarity-Attraction and Children's Brand Community Participation". Submitted to the *Journal of Brand Management* June 2018

This paper is provided in Section 6.5 of the thesis.

## **2.2 Copyright Permission Statement**

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### 3. List of Additional Publications

The following additional publications are relevant to the thesis and were prepared by the candidate. They are provided in Section 7 of this thesis.

#### **Additional Publication 1:**

Hook M., Baxter S.M. & Kulczynski A., (2016). Understanding the Complex Interplay Between Evaluative Social Identity, Negative Anticipated Emotions and Self-Esteem on a Child's Commitment to Brand Communities, *45<sup>th</sup> European Marketing Academy Conference 2016 – 'Marketing in the Age of Data'*, Oslo, Norway.

#### **Additional Publication 2:**

Hook M., Baxter S.M. & Kulczynski A., (2017). 'You're like me'. Children's brand community participation, *Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference 2017 – 'Marketing for Impact'*, Melbourne, Australia.

Note: The candidate also presented a work-in-progress version of this thesis as part of the 2016 Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Doctoral Colloquium in Christchurch, New Zealand.

## 4. Abstract

Child-oriented brand communities are increasingly being utilised by marketers, to encourage children's engagement and participation with brands. While brand communities have been extensively researched for adult participants, children are cognitively and socio-emotionally different to adults, prompting the need for targeted research in the area. This thesis by publication, comprising of four core publications and two supplementary papers, addresses the need to understand the factors influencing children's brand community participation. Through undertaking a mixture of secondary, descriptive and causal research, this thesis advances the knowledge of child brand community participants, aiding academics and practitioners alike.

Firstly, an analysis of the extant literature on brand communities was undertaken. Through consolidating the literature, it was revealed that several areas require academic attention, including that of child-oriented brand communities. Secondly, the replication of a seminal adult-oriented brand community model was performed, and extended to a child context. Results indicated that children's participation in brand communities was different to that of adults. Thirdly, a new model to predict children's participation was developed. Findings revealed that subjective group dynamics and personal self-esteem influenced children's brand community participation. Children with low personal self-esteem were seen to have stronger recommendation intentions and were more committed members, than children with high personal self-esteem. Lastly, causal research was undertaken to produce a model that predicts children's participation. The three-part experimental study showed that children had a stronger desire to participate when the community members were characteristically like themselves, and loyal to the community.

This thesis contributes to the brand community literature, presenting much needed information on child participants. The models developed and interdisciplinary theories employed, contribute to the brand community literature, providing new avenues through which to investigate brand community participation. Advice is provided to practitioners regarding the unique characteristics of child participants and how to effectively manage and promote child-oriented brand communities.

## 5. Thesis overview

This section provides an overview, explaining how the four core papers and two supplementary papers are linked to the overall research aim of the thesis. It begins with an introduction on the thesis topic, brand communities, which is followed by a summary of the thesis's aim, and the research questions. The overall research method is described briefly, as well as the associated ethical considerations that were addressed. The remainder of this section outlines the papers of the thesis, detailing how they relate to one another, the implications of each paper, and finally the significance and contributions of the papers.

Section 5 concludes with a description of the structure of the thesis.

## 5.1 Introduction

Brand communities are a popular marketing tool, encouraging consumers to build relationships with a brand and with other consumers. Defined as ‘a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a set of social relationships among admirers of a brand’ (Muniz Jr & O’Guinn, 2001, p 412), these communities facilitate the development of brand relationships and ultimately influence factors such as: brand loyalty, word-of-mouth, brand trust and purchase intentions (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012; Woisetschläger, Hartleb, & Blut, 2008).

Marketers have been employing brand communities as branding tools for many years with great success. One example, is the ‘*Harley Owners Group*’ *Harley-Davidson* brand community, which helped launch the brands’ value to over \$7.8 billion (Fournier & Lee, 2009). Other successful brand community examples include: *Camp Jeep* (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002), the *My Nutella Community* (Cova & Pace, 2006) and *Sephora* (Thumm, 2015; Ungerleider, 2014). In addition, *GoPro* has recently amassed a thriving community with around 6,000 videos uploaded everyday by loyal fans and users of their products (Foote, 2017).

Many brands are focussing their sights on encouraging child consumers such as: *Lego* (N. Lee, 2017; Lego, 2016), *Moshi Monsters* (Mind Candy, 2016), and *Mattel’s Barbie* (Mattel, 2016), to bolster excitement and engagement with the brand. For example, the ‘*Lego Life*’ brand community is specifically designed for children aged under 13, for use on modern devices such as tablets and smart phones, to connect members together (N. Lee, 2017). The app for ‘*Lego Life*’ had over 1 million android device downloads in its first year alone (LEGO System A/S, 2017).

The importance of child consumers cannot be underestimated. Children's spending and influencing power has reached over \$200 billion per year in the US, with spending focussing on big brand names such as *Disney*, *Mattel* and *Nike* (Collins & Mitchell, 2015). Marketing efforts are often directed at child consumers since they represent not one, but three market avenues: (1) consumers, (2) influencers and a (3) future market (Götze, 2002; McNeal, 1998).

Children form a relationship with brands, which becomes part of their self identity, meaning that to them, the brand has a sense of importance in their everyday life (Ji, 2002). Due to the significance of brands for children, the desire to use only brand-specific products is very strong (Reveladvertising, 2017). Marketing is often directed towards child consumers, since brands are of high importance to them (Collins & Mitchell, 2015). Despite child-oriented brand communities being employed by marketing practitioners, there is scant attention by academics.

The study of adult-oriented brand communities has led to hundreds of published papers. Since Muniz & O'Guinn's (2001) well-accepted definition of a brand community, many academics have been active in examining brand communities, and behaviour in these communities. Academics have studied several contexts, applied multiple approaches, examined various brand community forms (e.g. online and offline), and produced numerous unique models that utilise a range of constructs. The large number of studies and models produced during the last few decades have provided worthwhile findings; however, it is suggested that the vast array of information may be a source of confusion to academics and practitioners, due to the amount of information and lack of consistency across studies.



No summary or review of the literature had been undertaken, prior to the commencement of this thesis. The first paper of this thesis addressed the need to consolidate the brand community literature. *Paper One* entitled: “Antecedents and Consequences of Participation in Brand Communities: A Literature Review” (hereafter referred to as ‘*Paper One: Literature Review*’), addressed the first research question of the thesis:

*What are the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation?*

*Paper One: Literature Review* is a systematic literature review, undertaken to provide an in-depth analysis of the current knowledge of brand community participation. From the findings of *Paper One: Literature Review*, research questions were formulated for future research into the area of child-oriented brand communities, as well as other brand community areas. The subsequent papers of this thesis provide a foundation for investigating the proposed child-oriented brand community research questions.

One of the most cited adult-oriented brand community participation models, as identified in *Paper One: Literature Review*, was developed and tested by Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006). This led to an investigation examining whether this seminal adult-oriented model could be applied to the context of children. *Paper Two* addressed the research question:

*Do the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation differ between adult- and child- participants?*

To address this research question, a replication and extension study was undertaken, retesting Bagozzi and Dholakia’s (2006) model, utilising a child sample. *Paper Two* is entitled: “Antecedents and Consequences of Children’s Brand Community Participation: A Replication and Extension Study” (hereafter referred to as ‘*Paper Two: Replication and Extension*’). Comparisons were made between the adult participant findings in the

original study (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006), and the child participants of *Paper Two: Replication and Extension*'s study.

Having found in *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* that the model used to explain adult-oriented brand community participation did not fully predict the child participant behaviour, *Papers Three* and *Four* sought to begin research on the final research question of the thesis:

*What antecedents of brand community participation are unique to child participants?*

*Paper Three*, entitled: "Children's Participation in Brand-Based Social Networks: Examining the Role of Evaluative Social Identity, Self-Esteem and Anticipated Emotions on Commitment and Desire to Recommend" (hereafter referred to as '*Paper Three: New Model*'), created the first model to investigate the context of child-oriented brand community participation. Drawing from the theories identified in *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* and developmental psychology, *Paper Three: New Model* introduced the construct of personal self-esteem and the theory of Subjective Group Dynamics (SGD; Abrams & Rutland, 2008) into the field of brand communities.

Due to the significance of SGD on children's group interactions, and the findings of *Paper Three: New Model* showing that the theory explains child-oriented brand communities, SGD theory was chosen to be explored further. *Paper Four* continued the investigation on the impact of SGD on the drivers of children's brand community participation. A review of the previous studies exploring SGD amongst children revealed that similarity attraction, with regards to shared characteristics, can impact children's relationships (Berger, 2008; Haselager, Hartup, Lieshout, & Riksen-Walraven, 1998). Drawing from this knowledge, *Paper Four* investigated the role of similarity attraction and SGD on

children's brand community participation through undertaking three experimental studies. *Paper Four* is entitled: "'I'm Like You, You're Like me, We Make a Great Brand Community!' Similarity-Attraction and Children's Brand Community Participation" (hereafter referred to as '*Paper Four: Similarity Attraction*').

Two conference papers were also developed based on the overall research question. These papers were prepared and presented at separate international conferences by the candidate. *Conference Paper One* is entitled: "Understanding the Complex Interplay Between Evaluative Social Identity, Negative Anticipated Emotions and Self-Esteem on a Child's Commitment to Brand Communities" and *Conference Paper Two* is entitled: "'You're like me'. Children's Brand Community Participation". These are included in Section 7 at the end of the thesis as additional papers.

## **5.2 Research Aim**

The primary aim of the research was to:

*Understand the factors influencing children's participation in brand communities*

## **5.3 Research Questions**

- i. What are the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation?
- ii. Do the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation differ between adult- and child- participants?

- iii. What antecedents of brand community participation are unique to child participants?

## 5.4 Method

This section provides an overview of the research methods. Further explanation of the research method utilised for each paper is covered in the respective publication. Over the four papers, six studies were undertaken using a variety of research approaches (secondary, descriptive, and causal). The use of multiple research approaches was undertaken to broaden the dimensions and scope of the research (Mertens, 2014; Morse, 2016). The core of this thesis was quantitative, consisting of descriptive and causal methods, with a supplementary secondary research component, so that multiple research purposes were achieved.

The first study (*Paper One*), consisted of secondary data collection on brand community literature. A systematic review of over 1,900 articles was undertaken, with 41 examined and synthesised in detail. The systematic literature review method was chosen, as opposed to a narrative review. Although narrative reviews are often undertaken in social sciences, they are criticized for being singular accounts, with reviewed articles chosen at the authors' discretion, therefore subject to bias (Fink, 2001; Hart, 1998; Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). Systematic reviews, on the other hand, are favoured by many science disciplines due to the rigorous process undertaken to select articles for review (Mulrow, 1994). The systematic review method was chosen to ensure all relevant articles were analysed, not just the most cited or most 'important'. The five remaining studies all entailed the collection of primary data.

Study 2 (*Paper Two*), employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design, comprising of a quantitative questionnaire (questionnaires for all studies are provided in Appendix

9.3), using two samples (branded community and non-branded community) of Australian children aged 6-14 years. Participants were contacted via an external research panel company (“ResearchNow”). The use of external research panels to source participant samples is a popular method for behavioural researchers (Evans & Mathur, 2005), providing reliable data that is both representative of the general population (Roulin, 2015), and yields insightful results (Fulgoni, 2014).

Participants completed the survey, for Study 2 (*Paper Two*), online. Online survey collection has a number of significant advantages over offline collection that benefited all empirical studies. Specifically, the online collection method allowed greater flexibility for participants (Evans & Mathur, 2005) in terms of the time chosen to complete the respective survey. This meant that the survey could be undertaken after school hours, such as during the weekend. The online method also allowed for both parental consent and child assent to be collected simultaneously, fulfilling the ethics requirements of the research. Lastly, by conducting the research online, a large number of relevant participants were able to be sourced in a relatively short time, providing a more diverse and representative sample than face-to-face data collection (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

The two samples of Study 2 (*Paper Two*) were compared against each other, and against the original paper findings (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), using Analysis of a Moment Structures (AMOS), was employed to analyse the data. This analysis method was chosen to replicate the approach adopted in the original study. The use of SEM and AMOS in the field of marketing is common practice and largely accepted by academics (e.g. Hair, Gabriel, & Patel, 2014; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 2000).

Study 3 (*Paper Three*), again undertook a descriptive cross-sectional research design, using a sample of Australian children (6-14 years old) to participate in a questionnaire. The sample was accessed via an external research panel (“ResearchNow”) and directed to complete an online questionnaire, as per Study 2 (*Paper Two*). The data was analysed, and a model produced, through the application of the PROCESS macro in SPSS. PROCESS is a computational tool used to test mediation, moderation, as well as moderated mediation (Hayes, 2012). Study 3 (*Paper Three*) investigated these forms of relationships (mediation, moderation and moderated mediation) and therefore required a data analysis tool that could analyse for these effects. This form of data analysis has become commonly accepted, with many studies employing the method (Hayes, Montoya, & Rockwood, 2017).

Studies 4, 5 and 6 were combined to form *Paper Four*. Due to the purpose of examining cause-and-effect relationships (causal research), the research for *Paper Four* employed an experimental research design. Experimental research design is highly regarded, associated with robustness and producing trustworthy causal findings (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Research methods employing experimental designs are a prominent research approach in psychology and behavioural research (Christensen, Johnson, Turner, & Christensen, 2011).

Three separate studies were undertaken. For each study (4, 5 and 6) a separate sample of Australian children (6-17 years old), sourced via an external research panel (“ResearchNow”), were used. The experiment was conducted online, in an environment that allowed variables to be controlled for, to ensure manipulations were unlikely to be affected by extraneous factors (Bryman & Bell, 2011). All data analysis for *Paper Four* was undertaken through implementing the PROCESS macro in SPSS. The PROCESS tool

was again chosen due to its ability to analyse mediation, moderation and moderated mediation (Hayes, 2012).

The candidate undertook all aspects (across all methods: secondary, descriptive and causal) of the data collection, questionnaire development, data analysis and synthesis, for the six studies, across the four papers.

#### *5.4.1 Ethical Considerations*

Ethics approval was obtained for those empirical studies that involved human participants (see Appendix 9.1 for copies of the approvals given by the University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)). Due to the collection of only secondary data for *Paper One*, no ethics approval was required.

The primary ethical considerations, for all empirical studies, related to the participation of child respondents. When using a sample of children, guidelines advise parental or guardian consent needs to be acquired (Hill, 2005). In line with the University of Newcastle HREC guidelines (University of Newcastle, 2014), potential child respondents for the empirical papers (*Papers Two, Three and Four*), and their guardians, were provided with an information sheet explaining the general purpose of the research, and information on how confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained (copies of information sheets are provided in Appendix 9.2). Guardian consent and child assent to the research was required, prior to participation of the child. To ensure anonymity, no identifying information was gathered, with only basic demographic details collected (age, gender and school year).

## 5.5 Discussion

The popularity of brand communities amongst practitioners has spurred an increase in research investigating brand communities, however, only for adult participants. Given the importance of children as consumers and growing number of child-oriented brand communities, examining this area is argued to yield fruitful information. Whilst adult-orientated research may guide the understanding of brand community participation, it is argued differences in socio-emotional (Cicchetti & Cohen, 2006) and cognitive skills (Piaget, 1972) could impact a child's brand community participation. Due to these differences, the behaviours evidenced in adult-oriented brand communities may not convey the behaviours of child participants.

Socio-emotional development plays a key role in children's behaviour within group contexts (Betts & Stiller, 2014). Social skills are developed over time, a result of life experiences, interpretations of events, and the way experiences are valued (Voinea & Damian, 2014). With relationships being the centre of a brand community (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001; Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008), children's brand community participation is likely to be influenced by these less-developed social skills. Given this, an examination of developmental psychology literature was suggested to yield useful insights for understanding child-oriented brand communities. Developmental psychology studies have extensively explored children's social relationships and the influence of children's less developed social-emotional skills is evident (e.g. Abrams, Rutland, & Cameron, 2003; Bigler & Jones, 1997).

As well as socio-emotional skills, a child's cognitive development impacts how they interact in group contexts (Abrams et al., 2003). Children's perceptions of groups and social judgements take time to develop, thus impacting interactions in group settings



(such as brand communities), as evidenced in developmental psychology literature (e.g. Abrams et al., 2014, 2003; Engelmann, Herrmann, Rapp, & Tomasello, 2016). Cognitive development is not a simple process, and develops over time (Wohlwill, 1962). Consequently, children do not have the same cognitive ability as that of adults.

Drawing from the socio-emotional and cognitive ability differences between adults and children, the four papers and two conference papers of this thesis have provided a valuable step towards filling the gap in the brand community literature, regarding child-oriented brand community participation. *Paper One: Literature Review* identified the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation, compiling and organising them into logical categories, allowing for comparisons to be made across studies. Analysis of the extant literature revealed that some brand community areas are highly researched, and others need to be examined further, as they have received little to no attention, yet are important. Considering these findings, research questions were proposed to guide future research in the field.

*Paper Two: Replication and Extension* found that the seminal adult-oriented model produced by Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006), did not fully replicate for the child context. It was proposed that this may be due to developmental differences in cognitive (Piaget, 1972) and socio-emotional skills (Cicchetti & Cohen, 2006) between adults and children.

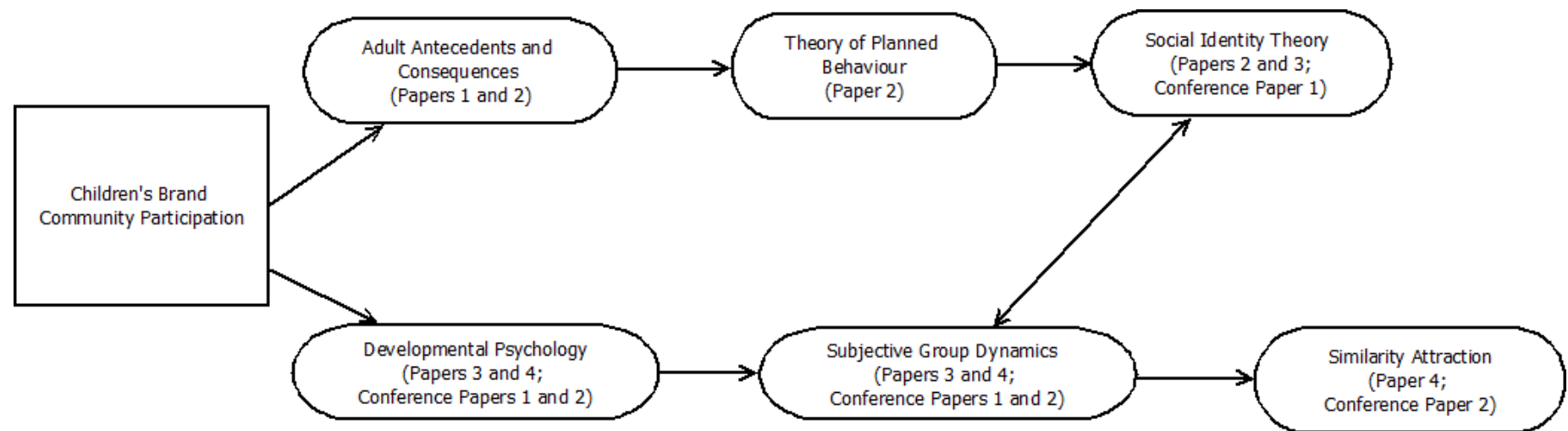
*Paper Three: New Model* examined the effect of evaluative social identity on brand community commitment and recommendations, including the mediating roles of positive and negative anticipated emotions, and the moderating influence of personal self-esteem. These variables were drawn from developmental psychology and the model examined in *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Harter, 1993). Key findings of *Paper Three: New Model* related to the moderating role of personal self-

esteem and the influence of subjective group dynamics. Low personal self-esteem children showed stronger relationships between evaluative social identity and both commitment and recommendations than children with high personal self-esteem. In addition, the mediating effect of positive and negative anticipated emotions felt by child members was due to the influence of in-group and out-group perceptions, as suggested by subjective group dynamics theory (Abrams & Rutland, 2008).

*Paper Four: Similarity Attraction* examined the effect of member similarity on participation desire, including the mediating role of respect towards the brand community and the moderating influence of member deviance. These variables were drawn from Subjective group dynamics theory (Abrams & Rutland, 2008), similarity attraction theory (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996; Haselager et al., 1998; Hunter, Fox, & Jones, 2016) and *Paper One: Literature Review's* findings (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Kim, Choi, Qualls, & Han, 2008). Through undertaking three studies in *Paper Four: Similarity Attraction*, children who perceived members of a brand community to be characteristically similar to themselves were shown to have higher participation desire. Once one member was seen as disloyal, however, this similarity attraction effect attenuated. This moderation effect was suggested to be due to the impact of subjective group dynamics on child-oriented brand communities.

Figure 1 provides a summary of how the key thesis topics are integrated, and which papers they correspond with. Two avenues of research were identified as relevant to child-oriented brand community participation, namely: findings from adult-oriented brand communities and developmental psychology. Through undertaking each separate study, these streams of research were examined and analysed, with links established amongst the streams.

Figure 1 - Integration of Key Concepts



## 5.6 Implications

Children have the opportunity to participate in some form of brand community every day, whether it is in a school playground, online via a website, or through an app on a smart device. This thesis has uncovered several important insights for the field of marketing related to child-oriented brand communities, with a particular focus on participation.

Firstly, marketers are provided with a concise summary of information regarding brand community participation, and how the form of community (online, offline or social-media-based) impacts participation. The results imply that the most common drivers and consequences of participation differ depending upon which form the brand community takes. Therefore, it is suggested that marketing strategies to encourage brand community participation should be adapted, based on the form of brand community employed.

Second, brand communities with child participants were found to be uniquely different to those with adult members. Due to this, it is proposed that marketers should not use the same strategies for both distinct target audiences (adults and children).

Third, the thesis highlights that children with low personal self-esteem are at risk of being manipulated by brands when they participate in their brand communities. Children and guardians should be educated on the potential misuse of brands, to help protect vulnerable child participants in brand communities. Marketers and academics also need to be made aware of this issue to help ensure children's wellbeing.

Fourth, the importance of developmental psychology in understanding child-oriented brand community participation is shown. Subjective group dynamics theory was applied to explain

the influence of member deviance on respect towards the community, and subsequently participation desire. There is evidence to suggest that communities can be harmed by deviant behaviour, and deviant members. Marketers are advised to monitor their brand communities for deviant members, due to the negative effects they present on attracting new participants and members.

Lastly, this thesis shows that unique antecedents are evident for child-oriented brand communities. Similarity attraction was shown to influence a child's desire to participate in a brand community. This suggests that elements such as member similarity should be promoted when seeking child participation in a brand community.

## **5.7 Significance and Contribution**

This thesis makes a significant contribution to the field of marketing, in particular brand communities, through its six studies, across four separate papers. Although research into brand communities is extensive (e.g. Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Hung, 2014; Sicilia & Palazón, 2008), this thesis adds to the literature through investigating the under-researched area of child-oriented brand communities.

By summarising and compiling the extant brand community literature, the current knowledge of brand community participation is synthesised. From an analysis of the antecedents and consequences of participation, it is shown that academics still need to address some areas, even though a substantial amount of research has been undertaken, as research questions are yet to be answered. The understanding of how these antecedents and consequences differ across brand community forms is highlighted, expanding upon academics' knowledge in this area.

The research of this thesis responds to calls for future research on child brand community participation (Flurry, Swimberghe, & Parker, 2014). Children are known to participate in these brand communities, and brands are developing communities specifically for children. Through undertaking the replication and extension study, this thesis demonstrates that child-oriented communities are different to adult-oriented communities, and therefore, adult findings are not applicable to children. This extends the understanding of brand community participation, and offers areas for future research.

The impact of personal self-esteem is presented to the area of brand communities to show how some children are more effected by the relationship between evaluative social identity and anticipated emotions. Anticipated emotions are introduced as a mediator on children's brand community relationships between evaluative social identity and the constructs: community commitment and community recommendations. By doing so, the understanding of anticipated emotions and social identity, with regards to brand communities, is also extended.

The theory of subjective group dynamics is introduced to the area of brand communities to explain children's participation. By showing that in-group norms and deviant behaviour influences child-oriented brand communities, the use of subjective group dynamics theory is extended. Specifically, member deviance is identified as a moderator on the relationship between member similarity and respect towards the community in the context of children.

Through introducing, and demonstrating, the effect of similarity attraction in child-oriented brand communities; the thesis expands the understanding of the drivers of children's brand community participation. Similarity attraction has been widely explored and evidenced in influencing children's relationship formation in only the field of psychology. Findings of this thesis indicate that children will desire participation when they perceive members are

characteristically similar. This demonstrates another context where similarity attraction occurs amongst children.

## **5.8 Structure of Thesis**

Having provided an introduction in Section 5, Section 6 presents the papers of the thesis. Section 6 begins with an explanation on the choice of journals for each of the four papers (Section 6.1). Following this, the papers are presented, in the order given above in Section 5. Each paper is prefaced by an introduction, and details how the paper contributes to the thesis, and more broadly the contribution made to the field of marketing. Then the full papers (as published or submitted) are provided.

*Paper One: Literature Review* is presented in Section 6.2 and provides the published review on the literature. The literature reviewed is used as the basis for the remaining papers of the thesis. *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* is then delivered in Section 6.3, *Paper Three: New Model* in Section 6.4, and finally *Paper Four: Similarity Attraction* in Section 6.5.

Section 7 then provides the additional papers (*Conference Paper One* and *Conference Paper Two*).

## 6. Published Papers

This section presents the papers that constitute this thesis. Three of the papers have been published in peer-reviewed journals and one is under review by a peer-reviewed journal. It begins with an explanation of the journal selection that occurred for each of the four papers. Following this, the papers are presented in order. Before each respective paper there is a statement of the contribution that the candidate and the co-authors made to the paper. In addition, an introduction on each paper is presented prior to the full publication being given. After the four papers are given, Section 7 provides the additional papers that were submitted as conference papers.



## 6.1 Criteria for Journal Selection

This section gives an explanation as to why the respective journals were chosen as a publication outlet for the individual papers that constitute this thesis. Several criteria were assessed prior to approaching the journal including: aims of the journal, Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) ranking (for more on this ranking guideline see Appendix 9.6), h-index (for more on this index see Appendix 9.7) and prior publications by the journal. All four journals chosen are discussed separately below in terms of this criteria, and any other relevant factors.

### 6.1.1 *Journal of Brand Management*

*Paper One: Literature Review* was published in the Journal of Brand Management (JBM). JBM's aim is to be the leading journal on brand management and strategy, focussing on discussing theory and practice of specific topics including that of online brand communities (Springer, 2018). This journal is an A-ranked journal, as defined ABDC ranking standards, signifying it is in the top 15-25% of journals in the field of Marketing. The strong standing of the journal is also shown through its h-index score of 28 (Scimago Lab, 2018b). The aim and ranking of JBM is a good fit with the purpose of *Paper One: Literature Review*, being a reference for academics and practitioners on brand community participation.

Since *Paper One: Literature Review* is a literature review, another key criterion during journal selection was the prior publication of literature review papers. Some journals in the marketing field only publish empirical papers and therefore would have been inappropriate to pursue in this case. JBM has previously published literature review papers on other topics, and comprises empirical papers on brand communities, some of which were incorporated into the review done by *Paper One: Literature Review*, strengthening the suitability of the paper for the journal.

### 6.1.2 *Journal of Marketing Behavior*

*Paper Two: Replication and Extension* is unique since it is a replication of a previously published article. The original paper (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) was published in the International Journal of Research in Marketing (IJRM), an A\*-rank journal (ABDC ranking), the highest ranking bestowed by ABDC. IJRM welcomes academics to replicate and extend upon its previously published studies, with a dedicated ‘replication corner’ that publishes replication papers in the recently established partner journal, the Journal of Marketing Behavior (JMB). JMB, while only formed in 2016, has been given a B-rank by ABDC. Although JMB is a B-ranked journal, all editors are from the parent, A\*-ranked journal, IJRM. This signifies that the high standard of the parent journal (IJRM) remains for JMB.

Another benefit of the journal is that both JMB and IJRM are associated with the European Marketing Academy (EMAC), a professional society for marketing academics and practitioners (EMAC, 2018). This association provides an extensive network through which the papers can be promoted and viewed.

To date *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* is the only brand community context paper published by JMB.

### 6.1.3 *International Journal of Consumer Studies*

*Paper Three: New Model* was published in the International Journal of Consumer Studies (IJCS), in a special issue release entitled “Children as Consumers”. This journal was chosen due to its high-ranking standard, and *Paper Three: New Model* was a good fit for the special issue topic: “Children as Consumers”.

IJCS is an A-ranked journal (ABDC), making it amongst the top journals in the marketing field, receiving a strong impact factor of 1.51 in 2016 (Clarivate Analytics, 2018b). Topics examined by IJCS include: consumer protection, consumer behaviour, consumer ecosystem and, family and household studies (John Wiley & Sons, 2018). Prior to accepting *Paper Three: New Model*, IJCS had previously published empirical papers on brand communities, using similar research methodologies. This further highlighted that *Paper Three: New Model* would be appropriate for, and in line with IJCS.

*Paper Three: New Model* has already been cited by other publications, showing the paper is having an impact in the field. Specifically, the following papers have referenced *Paper Three: New Model*:

1. Berge, S. (2017). Food co-operatives sustainably managing common pool resources as hyper-communities as outlined by consumer culture theory, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 41(5), 509-517, doi: 10.1111/ijcs.12359.
2. Lopex, A. and Rodriguez, R. (). Children and their brands: How young consumers relate to brands, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-06-2016-1842>.

#### 6.1.4 Journal of Brand Management

*Paper Four: Similarity Attraction* has been submitted to the Journal of Brand Management (JBM) and is currently under review. As stated above JBM is an A-ranked journal (ABDC ranking) with a high reputation in the field of marketing. The journal has been prevalent in publishing papers on the area of brand communities since the early 2000s (e.g. Boyd, Clarke, & Spekman, 2014; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Hickman & Ward, 2013; Lee, Lee, Taylor, & Lee, 2011; Quinn & Devasagayam, 2005; Wang, Butt, & Wei, 2011). Many of these brand community papers have been successful with strong citation rates associated e.g. over 380

(Hatch & Schultz, 2010), 44 (Lee et al., 2011) and 25 (Wang et al., 2011). JBM has also previously published studies on similarity attraction, in the context of social media (Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2014). Similarity-attraction is a core theory in *Paper Four*, further supporting the alignment of JBM for this paper.

## 6.2 Paper One: Literature Review

Full Citation:

Hook, M., Baxter S.M. & Kulczynski A. (forthcoming) Antecedents and Consequences of Participation in Brand Communities: A Systematic Literature Review, *Journal of Brand Management*, doi: 10.1057/s41262-017-0079-8

### 6.2.1 Statement of Contribution of Others

By signing below, I confirm that Margurite Hook was the sole contributor to the paper entitled “Antecedents and consequences of participation in brand communities: a literature review”. The co-authors (Stacey Baxter and Alicia Kulczynski) only provided guidance for the paper, with limited intellectual input.

X

Associate Professor Stacey Baxter  
Co-author

Faculty Assistant Dean Research Training

X

Dr Alicia Kulczynski  
Co-author

### *6.2.2 Third Party Copyright Acknowledgement*

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See Appendix 9.4.1 for a copy of the communications received from the rights holder.

### 6.2.3 Overview and Contribution of Paper

Brand community research in the marketing field has been undertaken for some time, with studies dating back to the early 2000s (e.g. Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; McWilliam, 2000; Muniz Jr & O’Guinn, 2001). Due to this there is no shortage of articles examining a key issue in the area, namely brand community participation. To date hundreds of articles have examined brand communities, proposing models that highlight antecedents and consequences of participation in these communities. The vast amount of literature on the area makes comparisons and the identification of under-researched areas difficult. *Paper One: Literature Review* sought to address this issue. The aim of *Paper One: Literature Review* was to identify and compare the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation that have been examined in academic journals. This aim was achieved through undertaking a systematic literature review.

A systematic literature review is an explicit and transparent review of published material, using a reproducible method, with set exclusion and inclusion criteria (Pluye, Hong, Bush, & Vedel, 2016; Tranfield et al., 2003). A strict process and method of collecting the articles is undertaken to ensure the results can be replicated, if desired.

A three-stage collection process was undertaken, with over 1,900 articles analysed. An inclusion and exclusion criteria process was followed, with articles that were not in line with the aim and scope of the research excluded from further review. All inclusion and exclusion criteria were documented to ensure the process could be reproduced in the future. The final article sample consisted of 41 articles which were then examined further. For each article, key details were collected, such as: type of brand community, research method, model developed,

and antecedents and consequences examined. This data was then summarised and compiled into meaningful groups so that comparisons could be made.

The main findings centred around the antecedents and consequences studied across three forms of brand communities (offline, online and social-media-based). An analysis of these antecedents and consequences showed that they could be placed into categories. Five categories for antecedents (self-related, social-related, information-related, entertainment-related and technology-related) and three categories for consequences (brand-related, brand community-related, and social-related). These categories uncovered interesting insights when comparing across forms of communities. For example, antecedents relating to the self (aspects to do with the individual member themselves) were the most prevalent for all brand community forms, except online brand communities. With regards to consequences, brand-related (e.g. brand loyalty) were the most common overall, however, brand-community related consequences (e.g. community commitment and community loyalty) was the highest for online brand communities.

In addition, areas that have received less attention were brought to focus, such as the lack of child-oriented brand community research, a finding pivotal for the current thesis and subsequent papers. Child-oriented brand communities were not the only under-researched area revealed. Research questions were proposed to address those areas that had been under-researched, drawn from the review findings.

The revelation that child-oriented brand communities have received very little attention sets the premise for the remainder of the current thesis. *Paper One: Literature Review* provides the literature base for the subsequent papers and proposed two research questions on child-oriented



brand communities. These research questions are addressed in *Paper Two: Replication and Extension*, *Paper Three: New Model* and *Paper Four: Similarity Attraction*.

*Paper One: Literature Review* presents a much-needed summary and review of the extant literature on brand communities. The information given provides a depository of information on brand communities for both academics and practitioners. Academics are also made aware of the numerous areas that require more attention, through the research questions developed.

The usefulness and contribution *Paper One: Literature Review* makes to the field was summed up by the following comment made by a reviewer from the Journal of Brand Management:

*“The aim and intention of the article "Antecedents and Consequences of Participation in Brand Communities: A Systematic Literature Review" is very relevant and could provide a fruitful next step in the continuous development of the body of knowledge on brand communities, which, as the author also states, is growing rapidly. The article could also provide a very useful overview of the existing body of knowledge for business managers, as in a range of practice fields there is also a widespread and growing belief in the brand community's potential in brand building and relationship management. Therefore, this article could become a relevant and beneficial contribution to both scholars within this field and to a broad range of practitioners.”*

**Antecedents and Consequences of Participation in  
Brand Communities: A Literature Review**

## **Abstract**

With hundreds of articles dedicated to investigating brand communities, there is now a need to consolidate the literature. This review addresses the need to reconcile the findings of brand community participation literature through undertaking a literature review. Over 1900 articles were examined, 41 in detail. Findings reveal that three forms of brand community participation have been studied: offline, online, and social-media-based, each uncovering the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation. Antecedents were grouped into five categories (self-related, social-related, information-related, entertainment-related and technology-related) and consequences into three categories (brand-related, brand community-related, and social-related). From the review, several future research directions are uncovered, including 16 specific research questions. By scrutinising the vast literature on brand community participation, and presenting multiple avenues for future research, this review presents findings useful for academics and practitioners alike.

## **Keywords**

Brand community participation, Literature review, Online brand communities, Offline brand communities, Social-media-based brand communities

## Introduction

The brands *Nutella*, *Jeep*, *Lego* and *Apple* may at first appear to have little in common; however, all use a brand community (or multiple) as part of their marketing strategy (Cova and Pace 2006; Lego 2016; McAlexander et al. 2002; Muñiz and Schau 2005). Numerous success stories show that a brand community can transform a brand. For example, *Harley-Davidson* used a brand community-centered marketing strategy to rescue their declining brand, which contributed to a brand value boasting \$7.8 billion (Filipe Lages and Montgomery 2004). The French cosmetics brand *Sephora* demonstrated that brand community success is not only for motor vehicle brands, with one million viewers every month participating in the brand community (Thumm 2015), and members of the brand community spending 2.5 times more than non-members (Ungerleider 2014).

Claimed by some as ‘the holy grail of brand loyalty’ (McAlexander et al. 2002, p 38), brand communities can provide great value for a brand. With the potential to offer brand differentiation and a sustainable competitive advantage (Thompson and Sinha 2008), brand communities present the opportunity to develop and foster long-term relationships with customers by providing a platform through which loyal customers can participate in activities together (Carlson et al. 2008; Hur et al. 2011; Muniz et al. 2001; Stokburger-Sauer 2010). By definition, a brand community brings together brand devotees to participate in shared rituals and traditions (Muniz et al. 2001).

Since brand communities provide an avenue for sustaining relationships with customers, a large amount of research has been dedicated to investigating the characteristics of brand communities and member participation in these brand communities (e.g. Cova and Pace 2006; Schau and Muniz 2006; Sierra et al. 2016). In addition, the rapid emergence of brand

communities developed by organisations, and communities developed by passionate brand advocates (for example see Cova and Pace 2006), has seen a rise in academic research into the area of brand communities (e.g. Annett-Hitchcock and Xu 2015; Baldus et al. 2015; Pahnla and Väyrynen 2015; Sierra et al. 2016; Syrjälä 2016). To date, several hundred articles have been published in the field of brand communities, with the number rapidly increasing in recent years (e.g. Sierra et al. 2016; Syrjälä 2016; Zheng et al. 2015). In particular, a key focus has been the investigation of antecedents and consequences of brand community participation. A review of the literature reveals that researchers are yet to consolidate this extensive body of knowledge. As a result, this paper seeks to encapsulate brand community participation by isolating the antecedents and consequences of participation identified in the extant literature.

The aim of the present study is to identify and compare the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation that have been examined in academic journals through an extensive literature review. From an academic point of view, consolidating the literature will be helpful in identifying areas of further significant research. In addition, the future research directions (including specific research questions) will help guide future studies in the field. From a practitioner's perspective, a comprehensive overview of the current knowledge on antecedents and consequences of brand community participation will help inform the creation and management of brand communities, and provide guidance on harnessing the full potential of brand communities for brands. The following sections define brand communities and discuss the method, findings, and future research directions arising from this comprehensive review.

## **Brand community definition**

A brand community is defined as ‘a specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a set of social relationships among admirers of a brand’ (Muniz et al. 2001, p 412). This definition is widely acknowledged and accepted in the brand community literature (e.g. Carlson et al. 2008; Tsai et al. 2012; Zhou et al. 2012). Another term used to explain these groups of brand devotees is ‘consumer tribes’ (Canniford 2011). Consumer tribes are groups of consumers that centre around a specific interest, idea, or behaviour; and sometimes include brands (Cova and Cova 2002). However, a brand is not an essential component of a consumer tribe, unlike brand communities where the brand takes centre focus (Canniford 2011). Although there is a difference between consumer tribes and brand communities, the literature crosses over substantially with many brand community studies integrating consumer tribe literature (e.g. Kuo and Feng 2013; Luo et al. 2015; Muniz et al. 2001). Due to this, consumer tribe literature incorporating a brand was included in the current review. For the purposes of this review, the term ‘brand community’ will be used to refer to both brand communities and consumer tribes (that focus on a brand).

All brand communities are said to display three characteristics: consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (Muniz et al. 2001). Consciousness of kind refers to the connection an individual feels towards the brand and community members, and the level of legitimacy they associate with this connection (Muniz et al. 2001). Shared rituals and traditions represent the shared consumption experiences by brand community members, the history, and the stories that are told in the community (Muniz et al. 2001). Lastly, moral responsibility refers to the duty that community members feel to stay in the group, retain members, and introduce new members (Muniz et al. 2001). A range of terms

have been applied to refer to different brand communities, these three characteristics, however, remain consistent (Casaló, Flavián, and Guinaliu, 2008; Madupu and Cooley, 2010a; Zhou and Amin, 2014). These brand community characteristics by Muniz et al. (2001) even provide three antecedents and consequences, depending upon the perspective viewed. Madupu and Cooley (2010b) viewed these characteristics as consequences, and contrastingly Zhou and Amin (2014) saw these as antecedents. This finding highlights the somewhat confusing nature of the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation, as many can have a dual role, that is, they may be viewed as either an antecedent or a consequence depending on the perspective taken.

## **Method**

A systematic literature review entails an explicit and transparent review of published material, using a reproducible method, with set exclusion and inclusion criteria (Pluye et al. 2016; Tranfield et al. 2003). In order to ensure that the method was reproducible for this review, the following steps were undertaken. First, guidelines were established regarding the scope and boundaries of the study. Second, a plan was made as to where the literature would be sourced. Third, selection criteria were established, with specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. For the last step, the final sample of literature was synthesised and the results were examined.

### ***Scope of study***

Due to the popularity and success of brand communities (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Cova and Pace 2006; Sicilia and Palazón 2008), as well as the value that brand communities provide for brands (e.g. Hur et al. 2011; Thompson and Sinha 2008); many studies have been

undertaken to identify the determinants of brand community participation (antecedents; Filipe Lages and Montgomery 2004), and what occurs as a result of participation (consequences). With regards to these antecedents, the terms ‘antecedents’ and ‘drivers’ are used synonymously in the brand community literature (e.g. Carlson et al. 2008; Hung 2014) to explain those variables that influence the dependent variable of study. In the current context the dependent variable is most commonly ‘brand community participation’.

### ***Search of articles***

Searches were conducted in multiple journal databases to identify articles that included the term ‘brand community/ ies’ in their abstract, title or keywords. In addition, due to the high level of similarity between ‘consumer tribes’ and ‘brand community, the term ‘consumer tribes’ was also used as a search term. Some have used the term ‘tribe’ or ‘consumer tribe’ synonymously with ‘brand communities’ (Kozinets 1999), whereas others suggest key differences exist (Canniford 2011). Due to use of the term ‘consumer tribes’ appearing in, and the incorporation of consumer tribe literature in many brand community studies (e.g. Kuo and Feng 2013; Luo et al. 2015; Wang et al. 2015); the term ‘consumer tribe/s’ was also employed in the article search. For the remainder of this paper the term ‘brand community’ will be used to refer to both those termed ‘brand community’ and ‘consumer tribe’ by the original author.

Research into brand communities has been undertaken in various journals and disciplines. For example marketing (e.g. Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Bruhn et al. 2014); computer science (e.g. Habibi et al. 2014; Kang et al. 2007); management (e.g. Baldus et al. 2015; Carlson et al. 2008; Zaglia 2013), and psychology (e.g. Lin 2008; Stokburger-Sauer 2010). Care was taken to ensure articles in a variety of fields and disciplines were included by using



a range of databases, specifically: Business Source Complete, ABI/Inform, Academic Source Complete, JSTOR, Proquest, Science Direct and WARC. Consistent with other systematic reviews in the area of marketing and management (Crawford and Gregory 2015; Snyder et al. 2016; Witell et al. 2015); only academic journals were studied. No books or other literature were included as not all these resources are readily available. Additional insights may be found upon examining other literature sources. This is a limitation of the current review.

### ***Selection of articles***

As the aim of this research is to identify all antecedents and consequences of brand community participation, inclusion and exclusion criteria were put in place during the literature searches, however, to ensure all relevant articles were included this criteria was broad. To be included in the first sample the following criteria had to be met: (1) the article was peer-reviewed, (2) published in English, (3) full text was available to download and (4) published in a scholarly journal (see Fig. 1).

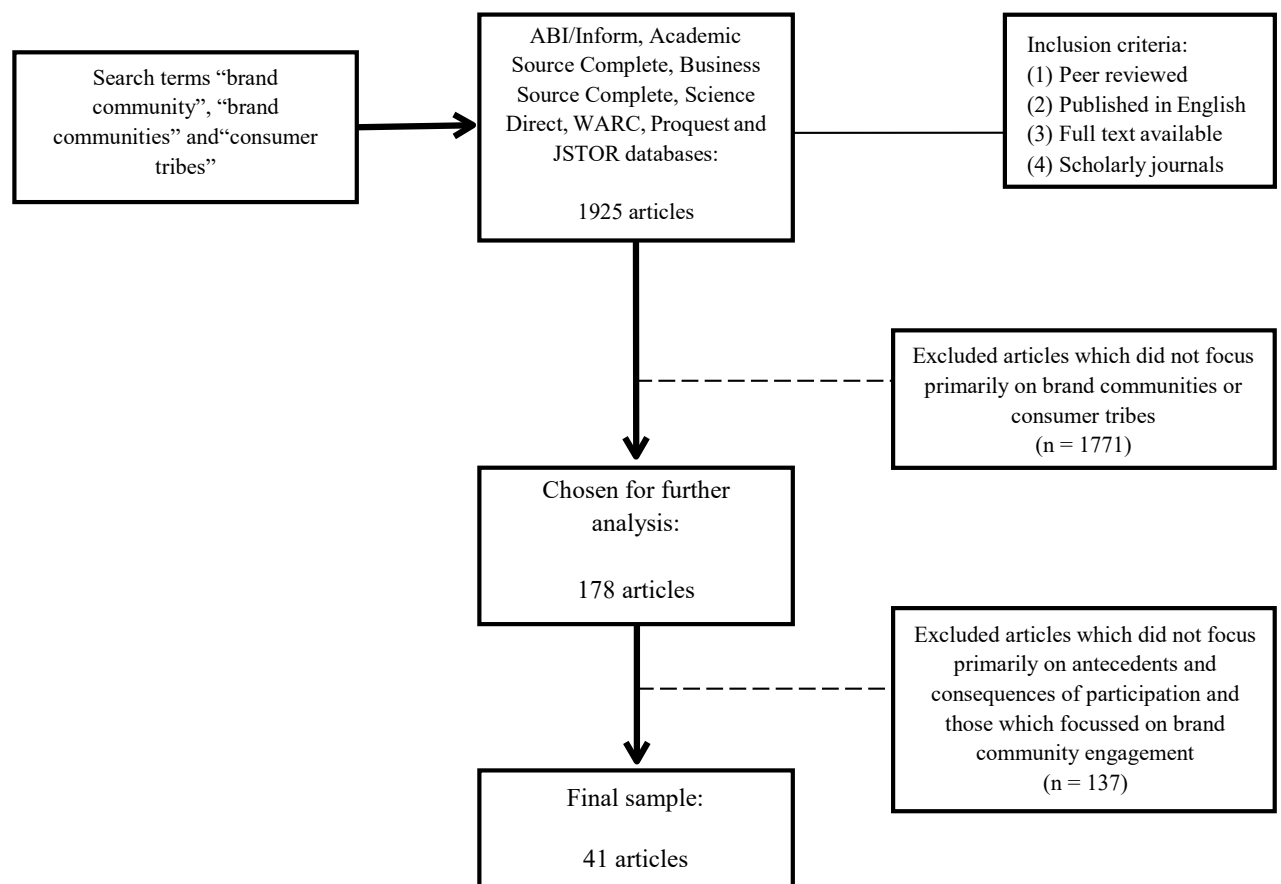
After the initial search of articles was undertaken, a second process of analysis was undertaken to determine the final sample of articles to be included in the review. Although many of the articles initially mentioned the term ‘brand community/ies’, in their abstract, only 178 focussed specifically on defining, explaining or analysing brand communities. These 178 articles were further analysed, and those that did not examine antecedents or consequences of brand community participation were excluded from the sample ( $n = 137$ ).

The final sample examined consisted of 41 articles.

## ***Coding and analysis***

Information was extracted and compiled from each individual article chosen for the final sample. The information collected included, but was not limited to, the following: year of publication, type of article (quantitative, qualitative or conceptual), research design, brand community form of focus, geographical context, brand community participation definition used, antecedents studied, consequences examined, and major findings. This information was compiled in a spreadsheet to create a comprehensive summary of all information used for this study.

*Figure 1 - Selection of Articles Process*



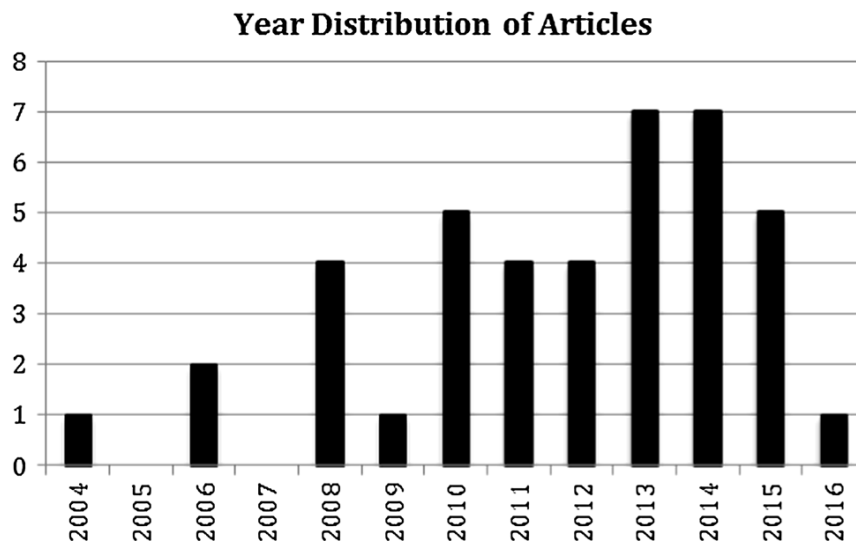
## ***Analysis and results***

The analysis and results have been categorised into five subsections. Specifically, these subsections discuss the (1) publication activity, (2) research design, (3) brand community forms, (4) brand community participation definitions, and (5) antecedents and consequences of brand community participation.

### ***Publication activity***

This subsection discusses the publication activity with regards to the 41 articles chosen for review. The final sample of articles emerged from over a decade of research (2006–2016, see Fig. 2, note the articles were compiled in mid-2016).

*Figure 2 - Year Distribution of Articles*



Whilst the literature on brand communities began earlier with Muniz et al. (2001) seminal article introducing and defining brand communities, studies started investigating brand community participation more specifically in 2006 (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Shang et al. 2006). Brand community participation received low and uneven attention until 2010.

Since 2010, there has been a steady publication of articles on brand community participation, with 24 of the 41 articles (59%) published since 2010.

## **Research design**

This subsection provides an overview of the research methodology of the brand community literature analysed in this review. From the 41 articles, only two (2) were conceptual (Madupu and Cooley 2010a; Zhou and Amin 2014), with the rest taking an empirical approach ( $n = 39$ ). Of these, four took a qualitative approach (Enginkaya and Yılmaz 2014; Goulding et al. 2013; Mitchell and Imrie 2011; Morandin et al. 2013), three used mixed methods (Taute and Sierra 2014; Royo-Vela and Casamassima 2011; Tsai et al. 2012), and 32 applied quantitative techniques only (e.g. Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Manthiou et al. 2014; Shang et al. 2006). Of those articles that took a quantitative or mixed method approach, all studies were cross-sectional in nature. The high number of empirical articles highlights researchers' preference for empirical evidence in brand community research, making greater theoretical and more generalisable findings.

High-involvement products were the most commonly studied, with a number examining technology brands, e.g. *Apple*, *Samsung* and *Sony* (Habibi et al. 2016; Shang et al. 2006; Wang et al. 2013, 2015), and car brands, e.g. *Harley-Davidson*, *Ford* and *Mazda* (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Marzocchi et al. 2013; Morandin et al. 2013; Zhou et al. 2013). At the other end of the scale, fast food brand communities were also found in the final sample of articles (e.g. Habibi et al. 2016; Manthiou et al. 2014).

The majority of articles used a sample of respondents from Asian countries ( $n = 19$ ), with China being the most common (e.g. Zhou and Amin 2014; Zhou et al. 2012), seven used an

American sample (e.g. Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Carlson et al. 2008; Habibi et al. 2016; Manthiou et al. 2014), and five were based in European countries (e.g. Casaló et al. 2008; Sánchez-Franco et al. 2012). Interestingly, only one study employed a sample from the Pacific-region countries, specifically New Zealand (Mitchell and Imrie 2011), and only one from Africa (Mzoughi et al. 2010). Five studies investigated a range of countries in their sample (e.g. Dholakia et al. 2004; Morandin et al. 2013; Royo-Vela and Casamassima 2011), and the remaining three did not specify where their sample was geographically based (Habibi et al. 2016; Madupu and Cooley 2010a; Woisetschläger et al. 2008).

Observation of the sample demographics used throughout the entire final sample found that brand community participation has only been examined for adult community members. Brands and product categories that arguably appeal to children, in addition to adults, were studied such as Nike (Jung et al. 2014), football teams (Woisetschläger et al. 2008) and theme parks (Carlson et al. 2008). However, relationships for child-participants were not explored. Although two of the studies employed a student sample (Manthiou et al. 2014; Sánchez-Franco et al. 2012), the youngest age for these participants was 18.

### **Brand community forms**

When observing the 41 articles studied, four forms of brand communities were found: offline, online, virtual, and social-media-based. An offline brand community constitutes the in-person face-to-face meetings of community members united around a focal brand, with infrequent interaction, and a high level of involvement required from the brand itself (e.g. ‘*Camp Jeep*’ see McAlexander et al. 2002). Online brand communities, on the other hand, have no geographical limitations and are instead located in an online, or virtual environment where members share information about a common brand (Jang et al. 2008; Lee et al. 2011;

Madupu and Cooley 2010b). Participation in online brand communities occurs in ways not possible for offline brand communities, with members able to participate via instant photo and video sharing at a global scale, as well as through discussions among members without talking face-to-face (Zaglia 2013). These online communities have also been termed virtual brand communities. A virtual brand community is a social group originating on the internet where information exchange occurs around one focal brand (Casaló et al. 2008). The definitions of both online and virtual brand communities emphasise the importance of exchanging information about a focal brand (Jang et al. 2008; Lee et al. 2011; Wang et al. 2012). As the two terms refer to the same overarching concept, for this review only the term ‘online brand community’ will be used to refer to both online and virtual brand communities. Lastly, social-media-based brand communities are formed on social media platforms such as ‘Facebook’ (Habibi et al. 2016) and ‘Weibo’ (Luo et al. 2015). Social media platforms are capable of hosting multiple branded communities simultaneously, unlike online brand communities where only one brand is the focus (Shang et al. 2006). For example, ‘Facebook’ hosts millions of brand communities (De Vries et al. 2012). Across the three brand community forms, studies have been undertaken to investigate why individuals participate and how their participation impacts their behaviours.

Online brand communities (n = 19, e.g. Casaló et al. 2008; Chen and Ku 2013; Hur et al. 2011) were the most discussed in the sample, with less attention given to offline (n = 13, e.g. Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Carlson et al. 2008; Tsai et al. 2012), and social-media-based brand communities (n = 9, e.g. Sánchez-Franco et al. 2012; Sung et al. 2010; Zhang et al. 2015). Although social-media-based brand communities had only nine articles in the final sample, there appears to be a current trend towards research on this form of community. All

the social-media-based brand community articles in the final sample were recently published (2010-present), compared with the other brand community forms (2006-present). Upon further examination of the publishing dates of the final sample, interest in online brand community research (online and social media) appears to be increasing, with 16 of the sample articles published since 2012.

### **Brand community participation definition**

Various terms were used throughout the 41 articles to explain brand community participation. Although there was some variation in terms used, key features were evidenced. Firstly, social intention forms the basis of participation and therefore has been used to measure brand community participation (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Mzoughi et al. 2010; Zhou et al. 2013). In other words, the intention to participate provides evidence of participation occurring (e.g. Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Mzoughi et al. 2010). The notion that intention can be used as an indicator of participation is important as in some brand communities, such as those using online mediums, member participation can be hard to observe (Shang et al. 2006). Participation in online brand communities need not be visible, as participation can involve ‘lurking’ or browsing the brand community without visible interactions occurring (Madupu and Cooley 2010a; Shang et al. 2006). Participation has also been measured based on observable behaviours, such as involvement in activities (Sánchez-Franco et al. 2012; Tsai et al. 2012; Wang et al. 2012), and providing help to other members (Casaló et al. 2008). By providing help to others (Casaló et al. 2008), and actively involving in the brand community (Sánchez-Franco et al. 2012; Tsai et al. 2012; Wang et al. 2012), members are not only participating, but it is suggested they are also committing to the community. Although the term ‘brand community commitment’ is consistently studied in isolation from brand

community participation, there appears to be a conceptual and empirical overlap across these two concepts. Specifically, brand community commitment refers to a members desire to sustain relationships formed within the brand community (Zhou et al. 2012). This is achieved by revisiting the community and exchanging information among members (Munnukka et al. 2015; Zhou et al. 2012). These elements all involve continued brand community participation, and therefore it is argued that brand community participation and brand community commitment both are indicators of participation.

Evidence that brand community participation and brand community commitment have the same core components can be seen when examining the specific measures used in prior research (e.g. Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Mzoughi et al. 2010; Tsai et al. 2012). Item similarity is seen when examining the constructs used to measure brand community participation and brand community commitment. Brand community participation items include statements such as ‘I intend to participate in activities...’ (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Mzoughi et al. 2010) and ‘I actively participate in brand community activities’ (Tsai et al. 2012). In comparison, brand community commitment items include statements related to, or explicitly involving participation such as ‘I will exchange information and opinions with brand community members’ (Hur et al. 2011; Jang et al. 2008) and ‘I am motivated to participate actively’ (Hur et al. 2011; Munnukka et al. 2015). The overlapping nature of brand community participation and commitment constructs requires researchers to clearly distinguish the two constructs in order to establish construct validity. Based on these findings, the terms brand community participation and brand community commitment will be treated synonymously for this review, and will be hereafter only referred to as ‘brand community participation’.



## **Antecedents and consequences**

This final subsection discusses the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation identified in the 41 articles studied. A large range of antecedents and consequences were examined in detail. After examining all the articles, categories were developed with relation to the focal area of each respective antecedent and consequence of brand community participation studied. Five categories of antecedents were found, and three categories of consequences, these are discussed below. Table 1 presents a summary of all the review findings, in descending order of frequency for each element. The results are grouped by form of brand community (offline, online and social-media-based).

### **Antecedents**

Five categories of antecedents were found and were termed, in order of overall prominence among the articles: self-related (n = 44), social-related (n = 34), information-related (n = 24), entertainment-related (n = 8) and technology-related (n = 3). These categories were decided upon based on the main focus of the construct in question, and as interpreted by the original author/s. These categories are discussed separately; however, they are, by nature, all interconnected. From simply looking at the prominence of the categories of antecedents found, it can be seen that self-related, social-related, and information-related have had the biggest impact and influence in brand community literature; however, each category of antecedents presents useful insights into brand community participation.

Table 1 - Summary of Findings

Offline Brand Community (n=13)		Online Brand Community (n=19)		Social-Media-Based Brand Community (n=9)	
<b>Antecedents</b>					
	Frequency		Frequency		Frequency
Self-related	20	Information-related	17	Self-related	8
Social-related	12	Social-related	16	Social-related	6
Information-related	2	Self-related	16	Information-related	5
Entertainment-related	1	Entertainment-related	5	Entertainment-related	2
Technically-based	0	Technically-based	2	Technically-based	1
<b>Consequences</b>					
Brand-related	8	Brand Community-related	17	Brand-related	6
Brand Community-related	4	Brand-related	11	Brand Community-related	2
Social-related	4	Social-related	6	Social-related	2
<b>Geographic Context studied</b>					
Americas	4	Asia	11	Asia	5
Asia	3	Multiple	3	Europe	2
Europe	2	Americas	2	Americas	1
Multiple	2	Not Specified	2	Not Specified	1
Africa	1	Europe	1	Africa	0
Australia/Pacific	1	Australia/Pacific	0	Australia/Pacific	0
Not Specified	0	Africa	0	Multiple	0
<b>Research Method</b>					
Quantitative	8	Quantitative	16	Quantitative	8
Qualitative	3	Conceptual	2	Qualitative	1
Mixed	2	Mixed	1	Mixed	0
Conceptual	0	Qualitative	0	Conceptual	0
<b>Sample Demographics</b>					
Adult	8	Adult	17	Adult	6
Student	0	Student	0	Student	3
Children	0	Children	0	Children	0

Interestingly, all but one of these categories (technology-related) take the perspective of the individual looking to participate in the community (consumer perspective). This shows that the main focus of the literature to date has been to study antecedents from the perspective of the consumer, rather than other viewpoints, such as the brand itself. One paper, however, uniquely addressed this brand-based perspective (Veloutsou and Moutinho 2009), investigating the impact of brand-related antecedents such as ‘brand reputation’ and ‘social visibility of the brand’. Since this was the only paper found to take this perspective, more research should be done in this area, in particular looking at these brand-related antecedents for different forms of brand communities (online, offline, and social-media-based).

### ***Self-related antecedents***

The most commonly examined antecedent category was the self-related antecedents, referring to those aspects that are to do with the individuals themselves. These antecedents looked at either how the individual (the consumer looking to participate in the community) perceives they relate to the brand community, or the personal benefits they will gain from participation. The importance of identity, and the formation of an individual’s social identity within the brand community context was found throughout the brand community literature sample (e.g. Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Morandin et al. 2013; Mzoughi et al. 2010) and was the most common self-related antecedent of brand community participation found. Social identity refers to when an individual sees themselves as part of the group (brand community) and feels an emotional significance by being part of that group (Tajfel 1978). Social identity is strongly connected to the social-related category of antecedents; however, since identification is primarily about how the individual sees themselves in relation to the community group, this was seen as a self-related antecedent rather than a social-related antecedent.

Zhang et al.'s (2015) study identified a unique self-related antecedent to participation, in the context of social-media-based brand communities: 'information technology habit', referring to an individual's use of certain information technology based on prior behaviours. When an individual uses a social media platform (e.g. 'Facebook') on a daily basis, and has done so for some time, this habit will influence their participation in a social-media-based brand community. The individual would be more likely to participate in a social-media-based brand community on 'Facebook' if there is already an established behaviour of using the 'Facebook' platform (Zhang et al. 2015).

Other self-related antecedents found included attitude (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006), and self-related motives for participating in the brand community, such as self-discovery (Dholakia et al. 2004; Madupu and Cooley 2010b, 2010b), and rewards (Jang et al. 2008; Sung et al. 2010; Zhou and Amin 2014). These rewards refer to incentives offered to consumers to encourage participation, such as coupons and special offers (Sung et al. 2010), termed by some as 'opportunity seeking' (Enginkaya and Yılmaz 2014), and present an interesting dilemma. Although rewards and incentives were found to have a strong positive impact on participation, when looking at the overall effect on participation outcomes, incentive seeking displayed the weakest relationship to loyalty (Sung et al. 2010). This suggesting the inclusion of incentives to members is not enough for an effective brand community, and other factors, perhaps social-related antecedents, are also needed.

### ***Social-related antecedents***

The second most common category of antecedents examined was social-related. The main focus of these antecedents is on the interpersonal relationships formed within a brand community, termed 'social benefits' that a member will desire from the brand

community (Jung et al. 2014; Kuo and Feng 2013), or ‘social needs’ (Wang et al. 2012). The ability to form relationships and connect with other individuals who are devoted to the brand is a key antecedent to brand community participation. Related to this notion is the culture that is shared between members (Zhou and Amin 2014), and the support given by community members (Sánchez-Franco et al. 2012); with these also acting as antecedents to participation.

The impact of trust on brand community participation was first identified in the online brand community sample, the need to establish a trust in the community and its current members (Casaló et al. 2008). With the brand community residing in the online environment, the issue of trust arises as it is harder for the member to establish trust, due to a lack of face-to-face interactions (Shang et al. 2006). Many studies in the online contexts (online and social-media-based) have acknowledged that consumers need to establish trust prior to participation (Casaló et al. 2008; Chen and Ku 2013; Hur et al. 2011; Shang et al. 2006; Tsai et al. 2012); however, no offline brand community studies have noted this.

The approval of others is also highlighted as an antecedent, for all forms of brand communities, through the term ‘subjective norms’ (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Mzoughi et al. 2010). If important others of the individual, such as friends and family, approve of the brand community and its members there is a stronger likelihood of participation occurring. This is drawn from the theory of reasoned action that has been applied in the brand community literature (e.g. Mzoughi et al. 2010).

### ***Information-related antecedents***

The third category of antecedents was concerned with the information members could gain from the brand community (information-related). Members seek a brand

community with the expectation of receiving information about the products or services of the brand in return (e.g. Jung et al. 2014; Kuo and Feng 2013; Madupu and Cooley 2010a, 2010b). Studies identified simply the ‘informational benefit’ (Jung et al. 2014) or ‘information need’ (Madupu and Cooley 2010a; Wang et al. 2012) that individuals desire from the community. A related aspect identified was the quality of information given (Chen and Ku 2013; Jang et al. 2008; Zhang et al. 2015; Zhou and Amin 2014) whereby a higher perceived quality leads to greater participation.

Interestingly, the information-related antecedents appear to be less important for offline brand communities, with only two studies identifying information-related antecedents. In contrast, a large number of information-related antecedents were discovered for online brand communities, with this being the largest category of antecedent for this form of brand community. Social-media-based brand communities also had a fairly high number, taking into account the sample size, compared to offline. This could signify that participants in offline community contexts are seeking more social and self-related benefits rather than informational and that participants in online community contexts demand more informational benefits from the community. This finding highlights that consumers desire different things, depending on the form of community in question.

### ***Entertainment-related antecedents***

Entertainment-related antecedents were also found, across all types of brand communities. Individuals expect a level of entertainment, and entertainment-related benefits, from the brand community (Madupu and Cooley 2010a). Although these antecedents were not as commonly found as the previous three categories (self-, social- and information-related), these antecedents provide interesting insights into brand

community participation.

Termed simply entertainment value (Dholakia et al. 2004) or hedonic benefits (Kuo and Feng 2013), the level of enjoyment or fun that a member can have in the brand community has been evidenced as an antecedent to participation across all community forms. These entertainment-related motives, however, are more prevalent in online brand communities, rather than offline or social-media-based. This could either imply that entertainment is not a key antecedent or that more research on entertainment-related antecedents is needed in these contexts (offline and social-media-based). Since the information-related category presents a much larger percentage of the antecedents across all types of communities, there is evidence to suggest that the need for consumers to gain information rather than entertainment is more important.

### ***Technology-related antecedents***

A category unique to the online-oriented brand communities (online and social-media-based) was the technology-related category. This category, in contrast to the other four, is concerned with the design and features of the community itself, rather than the individual members or benefits the brand community provides. These technology-related features of a brand community, even though they may be uncontrollable by the brand itself (e.g. social media platforms for social-media-based brand communities), can act as antecedents to brand community participation. In addition, the quality of the system used to run the brand community can also be an antecedent to participation (Jang et al. 2008; Zhou and Amin 2014). This category is the least frequently used throughout the sample, implying that these technology-related features are not as important as the other categories of antecedents. However, these features can still influence brand community participation and should not be ignored.

## **Consequences**

In relation to the consequences of brand community participation, three categories were discovered. These were, in order of prominence: brand-related ( $n = 25$ ), brand community-related ( $n = 23$ ) and social-related ( $n = 12$ ). Although each category is distinct, they are all interconnected. Most studies viewed consequences in terms of positive implications towards the brand (i.e. consequences from the perspective of the company). The only study in the current sample found to take a different view was Wang et al. (2013), who studied consequences from the view of the customer, or members of the brand community. Interestingly, these consequences (cognitive, social-integrative, personal-integrative and affective) can fit into the antecedent categories developed by this study (cognitive—information-related, social-integrative—social-related, personal-integrative—self-related, affective—entertainment-related). This was the only study that explored this context of consequences, emphasising more research is needed on member-related consequences.

### ***Brand-related consequences***

Brand-related consequences were the most prominent consequences throughout the sample analysed, and more especially for offline and social-media-based brand communities. A popular perspective many brand community studies have taken is concerned with the influence participation has on the brand as a whole (brand-related consequences).

With a very high interest in the marketing field generally, it is unsurprising that the subject of brand loyalty is of much interest in brand community literature and was the most studied brand-related consequence (e.g. Habibi et al. 2016; Jang et al. 2008; Luo et al. 2015; Madupu and Cooley 2010a; Munnukka et al. 2015; Scarpi 2010). Brand



community participation was consistently found to positively influence brand loyalty (e.g. Munnukka et al. 2015; Scarpi 2010). This area has even been extended to investigate ‘oppositional brand loyalty’, that suggests brand community members have such a high loyalty to the brand that they will strongly oppose competing brands (Madupu and Cooley 2010a). Purchase and repurchase intentions were other brand-related consequences found, with participation having a strong positive effect on both (e.g. Ho 2015; Lee et al. 2011; Munnukka et al. 2015).

### ***Brand Community-related consequences***

With the highest frequency of consequences for online brand communities, brand community-related consequences have received a lot of attention in the literature. These consequences are concerned with the influence that member participation has on the brand community itself, rather than the brand more generally. Interestingly, all brand community-related consequences were seen from the perspective of positive influences, with a clear avoidance of potential negative effects that could occur. This category of consequences included factors such as commitment to the community (Casaló et al. 2008; Hedlund 2014; Kuo and Feng 2013; Munnukka et al. 2015; Royo-Vela and Casamassima 2011; Zhou and Amin 2014), integrating into the community (Sánchez-Franco et al. 2012), and a loyalty to the brand community (Chen and Ku 2013; Woisetschläger et al. 2008). These brand community-related consequences were found for all forms of brand communities; however, significantly more attention has been given in this category to online brand communities. This implies that a key outcome of online brand communities is to create a loyalty to the community itself, as well as the brand, whereas for offline and social-media-based brand communities the emphasis is more directed towards brand-related consequences, such as brand loyalty and purchase intentions. However, this is only one interpretation and more research into this finding

is needed.

### ***Social-related consequences***

The last category of consequences found was social-related, referring to the actions of brand community members to talk to others about the brand and the brand community, after participating in the community themselves. These social-related consequences focused on the notion of word-of-mouth and recommendation to others, terms used synonymously in the brand community literature (e.g. Hedlund 2014; Hur et al. 2011). Unique terms employed by Scarpi (2010), ‘brand evangelism’ and ‘community evangelism’, also refer to these concepts. These social-related consequences, by nature, directly link to the other two categories, as they are concerned with informing others about both the brand and the brand community.

Although these social-related consequences appear to have a positive impact on the brand, there is the possibility that social activities of members can be negative in nature, rather than positive (Luo et al. 2015). Word-of-mouth is difficult to control, and there is the high possibility that negative, as well as positive, word-of-mouth can occur as a consequence of brand community participation, especially in the context of social-media-based brand communities (Luo et al. 2015). Interestingly, the majority of studies avoided this issue with attention focussed on the positive implications word-of-mouth can have for a brand and its brand community (e.g. Hedlund 2014; Munnukka et al. 2015; Woisetschläger et al. 2008).

Hur et al. (2011) focused on a somewhat negative social-related consequence, ‘constructive complaints’. These ‘constructive complaints’ refer to members complaining about the brand as a consequence of participation (a seemingly negative perspective), however, in a form that brands can then use to improve the product or

service in question (turning the negative reaction into a positive outcome). So, although in some forms this is a negative consequence of participation, this was viewed from a positive perspective for the brand, rather than negative (Hur et al. 2011).

### **Dual nature variables**

An important note to make is that this review has discussed the antecedents and consequences in terms of how the original authors viewed them; however, there are multiple ways to view each respective antecedent and consequence. For example, Kuo and Feng (2013) investigated certain benefits that a brand community can provide for its members. These benefits are identified by Kuo and Feng (2013) as antecedents in the context of the study, that is, consumers are more likely to participate in a brand community if they perceive that the brand community would provide certain benefits to them. However, these could also be viewed as a consequence of participation, i.e. an individual will gain benefits from participation in the community (Wang et al. 2013). This is just one example of a dual nature variable (can be both an antecedent and a consequence), and there are many variables in the brand community literature that could fit into this criterion. ‘Community integration’, studied as a consequence (Sánchez-Franco et al. 2012), is similar to such concepts as identification with the community, commonly seen as an antecedent, not a consequence (Carlson et al. 2008; Madupu and Cooley 2010a; Marzocchi et al. 2013).

This presents an issue of much confusion when examining the brand community literature, as variables can be both antecedents and consequences, depending upon the perspective taken. These dual nature variables present a challenge to both practitioners and academics alike, and warrant further investigation.

## Future research directions

The findings of this review highlight multiple avenues for future research. The following sections discuss suggested future research in the area of brand community participation, with specific research questions proposed.

Arising from the overlap found between the terms ‘brand community participation’ and ‘brand community commitment’, there is a need to better define these constructs. As identified from this review, an examination of the measures used for each term reveals that the two terms have been measured similarly (e.g. Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Mzoughi et al. 2010; Tsai et al. 2012). The similarity in terms raises the issue of construct validity, which needs to be addressed. Future research needs to analyse the terms ‘brand community participation’ and ‘brand community commitment’ together, rather than in isolation as evidenced by the articles studied in this review. To address this need, the following research question is proposed:

*RQ1 What are the conceptual and empirical differences between ‘brand community participation’ and ‘brand community commitment’?*

As identified in the results, none of the final sample employed child-age participants. Children, as young as five, are participating in brand communities when talking with peers about brands at school (Chaplin and John 2005). Some brands are also employing online brand communities targeted specifically for children including: *Lego* (Lego 2016), *Moshi Monsters* (Mind Candy 2016), and *Mattel’s Barbie* (Mattel 2016). Children participate in brand communities, based on exploratory studies (Flurry et al. 2014); however, their behaviour and the impact of the factors that influence their participation remain unknown, with no research investigating the antecedents and consequences, as evidenced by this review. Studies have investigated child-brand

relationships (e.g. Chaplin and John 2005; Chaplin and Lowrey 2010; Ji 2002, 2008); however, these also did not specifically examine the area of brand communities, or antecedents and consequences of brand community participation.

Whilst adult-orientated research may guide the understanding of brand community participation, it is argued that differences in socio-emotional (Cicchetti and Cohen 2006), and cognitive skills (Piaget 1972) could impact a child's brand community participation. Children participate in brand communities and have a substantial impact in the marketplace (Gorn and Florsheim 1985), however, have cognitive and socio-emotional differences to that of adults and therefore should be studied in a brand community context. To address this need, three separate, yet related, research questions are proposed as a starting point to understand child-participants in brand communities:

*RQ2 What are the antecedents to children participating in brand communities?*

*RQ3 What are the consequences of children participating in brand communities?*

*RQ4 Do the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation differ between adult- and child- participants?*

The findings of this review show that a majority of brand community studies focussed on an Asian context, with limited attention on other geographical contexts, especially Pacific regions (such as Australia and New Zealand), and African regions. Due to this, a need arises for future research to investigate whether or not these Asian context findings can be applied to other geographical contexts. One study has already provided evidence that these contexts are more dissimilar than similar (Madupu and Cooley 2010b). This study compared the contexts of India and America, finding that cultural differences significantly affected antecedents and consequences of brand community participation (Madupu and Cooley 2010b). However, this is the only study to be

undertaken that compares geographical contexts found by the current review, signifying more research can, and should be done in this area. To address this, the following research question is proposed:

*RQ5 Do the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation differ across cultural contexts?*

The majority of studies examined by this review focused on antecedents taken from the perspective of the customer, that is, what does the customer want or desire from the brand community. Although this is important for both practitioners and academics to understand, there are other perspectives that should be taken into account. Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009) were the only authors to look at the antecedents of brand community participation from a brand-related perspective, in an offline community only. Due to the limited research conducted thus far on perspectives other than the customer, it is suggested that future studies examine this further, through the following research question:

*RQ6 What roles do other perspectives (e.g. brand, company, lurker customer, active customer) play on antecedents to brand community participation, across all forms of brand communities?*

Even though the self-related antecedents of incentives and rewards were highlighted in this review, there is evidence to suggest these antecedents do not have as strong of an influence on brand community participation as other antecedents identified. This finding warrants an investigation into whether or not incentives and rewards alone are enough to influence participation, or, as this review suggests, other self-related and social-related antecedents are needed for participation to occur. To address this, the following research question is advised:

*RQ7 How effective are incentives and rewards (self-related antecedents) as antecedents to brand community participation?*

The finding of this review suggests that the categories of antecedents were not found to be consistently prominent across all forms of brand communities, highlighting that consumers may desire different benefits and features depending upon the form of brand community they are interested in participating in. A study comparing the desires of consumers across all three forms of brand communities (offline, online, and social-media-based) would shed light on this issue. These findings would especially help practitioners when developing a brand community. If certain benefits are more important for online than offline for example, such as information-related as this review suggests, developers should emphasise and feature these information-related benefits.

In addition, the entertainment-related antecedents were found to be more prominent in online brand communities, which could suggest these benefits are also highly valued by members. However, due to the small amount of antecedents found in the entertainment-related antecedents for offline and social-media-based contexts, more research should be done before confirming this proposition. Future studies should examine entertainment-related antecedents in offline and social-media-based brand communities. To aid future studies in on this issue, two research questions are suggested:

*RQ8 How do the desires of brand community members differ between forms of brand communities (offline, online, and social-media-based)?*

*RQ9 How do entertainment-related antecedents influence brand community participation in offline and social-media-based brand communities?*

Based on the findings of the self-related antecedent category, trust was only identified

as an antecedent for online brand community participation. Due to the fact the brand community is located online and not face-to-face, it is suggested trust is difficult to establish in the online environment (Casalo' et al 2008). In an offline brand community, members meet face-to-face and can even interact directly with the brand (Marzocchi et al. 2013). Trust is built on interactions between individuals and can be developed more quickly when interactions are face-to-face, rather than online (Gefen and Straub 2004). When the community is online, individuals have less information about other members (Casalo' et al. 2008) and, therefore, it is suggested trust needs to be established prior to participation, based on prior brand experiences outside of the brand community context. In offline brand communities, it is proposed that trust is assumed, or quick to develop due to face-to-face interactions (McAlexander et al. 2002), and therefore not an antecedent. Future research will need to investigate the antecedent of trust in terms of offline brand communities to confirm or disprove these propositions. The following research question is offered for future studies:

*RQ10 How does trust impact offline, online, and social-media-based brand community participation, respectively?*

A category of antecedents discovered by this review was technology-related antecedents. These were aspects such as the design and layout of online and social-media-based brand communities. These technology-related antecedents were only found for online and social-media-based communities, which is understandable as only these forms are dependent upon technology to operate. However, what is more interesting is that no design-related antecedents were found for offline brand communities. There are arguably design-related features that could act as antecedents for offline brand communities, for example the format of gatherings, and the systems in place to communicate with members during and outside of meetings. Future research



should explore what design-related antecedents there are for offline brand communities and how much they ultimately influence participation, with the following research question provided as a starting point:

*RQ11 How do design-related antecedents influence offline brand community participation?*

The majority of consequences found by this review related to the brand (brand-, brand community-, and social-related). Only one study was found to look at consequences from the perspective of the members of the brand community (Wang et al. 2013). Even the antecedents found by the current study suggest there are a number of member-related consequences that could occur from participation. Factors like social identity, entertainment, and information benefits could all arguably be viewed from a member's perspective as consequences. For example, a social identity can be formed due to participating in the brand community, and benefits can be gained from participation. These were reinforced by the member-related consequences found by Wang (2013) as they could be grouped into the five antecedent categories developed by this review. To aid future studies on this issue, the following research question is proposed:

*RQ12 What are the member-related consequences of brand community participation, across all forms of brand communities (offline, online, and social-media-based)?*

Based on this review, there is a suggestion that to achieve brand community-related consequences, online brand communities are the most appropriate form to take, and for brand-related consequences the best choice is a social-media-based or offline brand community. However, due to the lack of studies comparing different forms of brand communities it is hard to determine whether or not this assumption, that certain

consequences are more likely depending upon the type of community, is correct. Drawing from this, the following research question is proposed for future studies:

*RQ13 How does the form of community (offline, online, or social-media-based) influence the consequences of brand community participation?*

All articles studied were cross-sectional in nature, with none employing a longitudinal research design. This highlights that the long-term consequences of brand community participation are yet to be accurately captured. A comparative study, with a longitudinal research design, would be helpful to practitioners planning to develop a brand community, yet unsure as to which form (offline, online, or social-media-based) provides stronger positive brand-related consequences in the long-term. Future research should investigate the following research question:

*RQ14 What are the long-term consequences of brand community participation?*

As evidenced by this review, there has been very little attention given to examine whether brand communities can have negative consequences, as well as positive. Of all the articles studied, none looked at the negative consequences of brand community participation. Although this is understandable, as practitioners are arguably more interested in positive consequences, rather than negative, research into this area could provide very valuable information. An exploratory study should explore the extent to which brand community participation can lead to negative consequences for a brand; for example, when word-of-mouth is used in a negative manner, which has already been evidenced in offline brand communities (Hickman and Ward 2007; Luo et al. 2015; Phillips-Melancon and Dalakas 2014). It is likely that there are more negative consequences than just social-related and hence more research should be done in this area, specifically addressing the following:

*RQ15 What are the negative consequences (for all brand community stakeholders, e.g. community participants, the company) of brand community participation, across all forms of brand communities?*

One issue highlighted by this review was dual nature variables, which are those variables that can act as both antecedents to participation and consequences from participation, depending upon the perspective taken. These variables present an issue of confusion currently in the literature, as each author usually takes only a one-sided view of the variable, without acknowledgment of the other views that can be taken. This makes a comparison of findings across brand community studies very difficult. The development of a new term to describe these dual nature variables could help aid this confusion and current difficulty, helping practitioners and academics alike. Future research should look into these dual nature variables and provide better definitions for these variables in terms of brand communities, with the following research question suggested as a starting point for future studies:

*RQ16 What role do dual nature variables play in brand communities?*

## **Limitations**

Although a thorough literature review has been undertaken, the nature of a literature review presents an overarching limitation to the current, and all, literature reviews. A review entails an examination and consolidation of only the findings that have been published. Hence if a specific issue is less discussed in the reviewed literature, it is difficult to establish whether this issue is less relevant or, alternatively, whether there has been a lack of empirical focus. For example, in the current review some antecedents and consequences were less prevalent than others (e.g. entertainment-related

antecedents). There is not enough evidence to conclude that these entertainment-related antecedents are less important for brand community participation, or whether there is a lack of research on entertainment-related antecedents. All reviews cannot conclusively determine whether the findings uncovered are due to an empirical or researcher-based explanation.

## **Conclusion**

A total of 1925 articles were analysed as part of a literature review on brand community participation. The examined final sample consisted of 41 articles examining three forms: offline, online, and social-media-based brand communities. Multiple insights were found with regards to the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation. Firstly, five categories of antecedents were developed, based on an analysis of all 41 articles, these categories were: self-related, social-related, information-related, entertainment-related and technology-related. Secondly, three categories of consequences were developed, which were: brand-related, brand community-related, and social-related. From an analysis of these categories of antecedents and consequences, future research avenues were highlighted, through the formation of research questions. These research questions can act as a guide for future studies in the field of brand communities.

This review has consolidated the findings of brand community participation literature, presenting findings useful for both academics and practitioners. The findings of this study will be helpful to academics as antecedents and consequences of brand community participation have been summarised and many future research directions have been identified to aid studies in the field. The findings will also be useful to practitioners when developing brand communities as the findings provide a better

understanding of why consumers participate in brand communities and what this participation can result in for brands.

### **Compliance with ethical standards**

#### ***Conflict of interest***

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

## **References**

Refer to Appendix 9.5.1 for Paper 1 Reference List

### 6.3 Paper Two: Replication and Extension

Full Citation:

Hook, M., Baxter S.M. & Kulczynski A. (2017). Antecedents and Consequences of Children's Brand Community Participation: A Replication and Extension Study, *Journal of Marketing Behavior*, 3(1), 63-72, doi: 10.561/107.00000042

#### 6.3.1 Statement of Contribution of Others

By signing below, I confirm that Margurite Hook was the sole contributor to the paper entitled "Antecedents and Consequences of Children's Brand Community Participation: A Replication and Extension Study". The co-authors (Stacey Baxter and Alicia Kulczynski) only provided guidance for the paper, with limited intellectual input.

X

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### 6.3.3 Overview and Contribution of Paper

Brand community literature is dominated by an abundance of studies examining adult participants. *Paper One: Literature Review* highlighted this by finding that no empirically tested models had been developed or examined for child brand community participants. Of the hundreds of articles examining brand communities, there have been a few seminal studies that have arguably received more attention than others. One of these seminal papers is the 2006 work of Bagozzi & Dholakia entitled: “Antecedents and purchase consequences of customer participation in small group brand communities”.

Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006 has received over 1,190 citations (as of May 2018), making it an extremely influential paper in the brand community field. Given the popularity and influence of Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006, *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* sought to empirically test whether this model applied for children. The replication was undertaken to begin addressing *Paper One: Literature Review*’s research question of: *Do the antecedents and consequences of brand community participation differ between adult- and child- participants?*

The model developed by Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006 focusses on the theory of planned behaviour model (Ajzen, 1991), adding the components of social identity (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999), anticipated emotions (Bagozzi & Pieters, 1998) and desire (Bagozzi, 1992). The study showed that a mixture of social and psychological processes are undertaken for consumers to have a desire to, and subsequently, participate in a brand community. Given the differences in cognitive (Piaget, 1972) and socio-emotional (Cicchetti & Cohen, 2006) skills that exist between adults and children, *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* argued that the seminal Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006 model would not fully replicate for the child context.

Through collecting data from two samples of adult participants (*Harley-Davidson* brand community members and a non-branded motorcycle riding group) this model was validated in Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006. *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* utilised two samples (self-identified members of either: *Minecraft* brand community or a non-branded computer game community) of Australian children aged 6-14, replicating the process employed Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006. The results showed that the model replicated fairly well, however, not identically to the adult sample. Specifically, relationships that were significant for adults were found to be insignificant for children, and other relationships that were insignificant in the original study were found to be significant for children.

The findings of *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* highlight the significance of this thesis's research, providing empirical evidence that adult models cannot be directly applied to the child context. More broadly *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* has impact for both practitioners and academics. For practitioners the findings imply that methods used to attract adult participants may be inappropriate to use for child participants, signifying alternative methods should be developed and applied.

Academics are informed that adult-based models do not accurately capture children's behaviour in brand communities. This signifies more studies should be undertaken to develop child-context models. *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* sets the scene for the final two papers of the thesis. Drawing from the finding that adult-based models do not fully explain child-participants, new models specifically for children need to be developed. Both *Paper Three: New Model* and *Paper Four: Similarity Attraction* present new child-oriented models to spur research into the field.

The thoroughness of the research undertaken in *Paper Two: Replication and Extension* was praised by the Journal of Marketing Behavior editor through the following comment:

*“Congratulations on a solid piece of research”*

**Antecedents and Consequences of Children's  
Brand Community Participation: A Replication  
and Extension Study**

**Abstract**

Brand communities are a popular tool brands use to develop relationships with customers. Bagozzi and Dholakia's (2006) seminal article provides one model to explain participation in these brand communities. This research replicates and extends this model to the demographic of children. Results show that most relationships reflected those observed in the original study, however, some distinct differences were found. Findings highlight that adult-orientated brand community models may not be suitable to explain all child-members' attitudes and behaviors in brand communities.

**Keywords:**

Brand communities; branding and brand equity; children; social identity; theory of planned behavior

## **Introduction**

Since the beginning of the new millennium there have been several hundred articles published regarding brand communities. With over 1,000 citations, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) would be classified a seminal article within brand community literature. A brand community is defined as ‘a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a set of social relationships among admirers of a brand’ (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001, p. 412). These branded communities have become a popular marketing resource due to the valuable role they play in brand and product promotion, as well as customer relationship management (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001). Brand community popularity has prompted the development of many conceptual models, applying numerous theories, to explain brand community participation. One model is that presented by Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006), which introduced the Theory of Planned Behavior in combination with other elements into the brand community context.

Brand community research is dominated by adult-oriented studies. However, children as young as 5 also engage in these communities (Flurry et al. 2014). Little is known, however, about children’s behavior, and factors of influence in this area. Whilst adult-orientated research may guide our understanding of brand community participation, differences in socio-emotional (Cicchetti and Cohen 2006) and cognitive skills (Piaget 1972) could impact a child’s brand community participation. To the best of the authors knowledge, only two papers have investigated child or youth brand community participants: Sicilia and Palazón (2008) and Flurry et al. (2014). These two studies show that children participate in brand communities, however, they do not provide any empirical evidence as to the motives of children’s participation. Due to the popularity and influence of Bagozzi and Dholakia’s (2006) model in the field of brand community

research, an investigation into whether this model applies to the demographic of children will yield insightful results for both academics and practitioners.

## **Method**

This study replicates Bagozzi and Dholakia's (2006) model, extending it to the demographic of child brand community participants (Australian children aged 6–14 years old). The product category of computer games was chosen in place of motorcycles for this study. Replicating Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006), data were collected from two independent groups: (1) those who self-identified as being a Minecraft brand community member; and (2) those who self-identified as being a computer game community member.

The survey was conducted online with parental consent, and child assent obtained prior to participation. A total of 761 child participants completed the survey, 372 in the brand community group and 389 in the non-branded community group. The age of the participants was approximately evenly distributed within each group ( $M_{BC} = 9.98$  years;  $M_{nBC} = 10.71$  years). For the brand community, the majority of participants were male (63.4%; 36.6% female) and for the non-branded community, the majority were female (63.2%; 36.8% male). Table 1 shows a comparison between the current and original samples. Differences exist between the ages of participants, year of data collection, gender distribution of participants, focal brand community and data collection method.

*Table 1 - Method Comparison*

	<b>Current Study</b>	<b>Bagozzi &amp; Dholakia</b>
<b>Year of Data Collection</b>	2016	2006
<b>Brand Studied</b>	Minecraft	Harley-Davidson
<b>Participant Population</b>		
Brand Community	372	154
Non-Branded Community	389	298
Total	761	452
<b>Participant Characteristics – Brand Community</b>		
Age	6 – 14 (mean = 9.98)	23 – 73 (mean = 47.5)
Gender	63.4% male (36.6% female)	74% male (26% female)
<b>Participant Characteristics – Non-Branded Community</b>		
Age	6 – 14 (mean = 10.71)	20 – 67 (mean = 43.2)
Gender	63.2% female (36.8% male)	83.6% male (16.4% female)
<b>Data Collection</b>		
Brand Community	Online	Mail
Non-Branded Community	Online	Online
<b>Data Analysis</b>	Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling	Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling

All constructs from the original article were employed. However, in some instances, minor alterations were made to reflect the language ability of participants through the use of synonyms (for example, ‘depressed’ was altered to state ‘sad’). Additionally, all scales were changed from 7-point Likert scales to 5-point Likert scales as these are more suitable for child participants (Borgers and Hox 2001).

Table 2 summarizes the means, standard deviations and reliability scores of the 13 constructs for both groups of data collected. The reliability scores for the majority of measures were above 0.70, except for perceived behavioral control, and cognitive social identity in the non-branded community. The original article also had low reliability for the perceived behavioral control measure. Unlike the original article the measures of group behavior and brand-related behavior resulted in high reliability scores in this study.



Table 2 - Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities of Scales

Scale	Current Study						Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006)					
	Brand Community			Non-Branded Community			Brand Community			Non-Branded Community		
	M	SD	$\alpha$	M	SD	$\alpha$	M	SD	$\alpha$	M	SD	$\alpha$
Attitudes	5.59	0.74	0.86	4.84	0.71	0.82	5.31	1.15	.94	5.59	1.05	.88
Subjective Norms	5.16	0.96	0.84	4.57	0.83	0.79	5.76	1.50	.87	5.77	1.45	.80
Positive Anticipated Emotions	5.80	0.71	0.92	5.35	0.84	0.93	4.59	1.59	.95	4.97	1.39	.91
Negative Anticipated Emotions	2.86	0.96	0.95	2.46	0.94	0.94	1.82	1.08	.95	2.24	1.19	.90
Desires	4.35	1.05	0.87	3.52	1.01	0.85	5.19	1.43	.93	6.07	1.03	.85
Cognitive Social Identity	4.92	0.94	0.83	4.36	0.89	0.68	4.14	1.71	.90	4.21	1.62	.88
Affective Social Identity	5.56	0.83	0.83	4.93	0.98	0.85	4.61	1.64	.91	4.88	1.57	.87
Evaluative Social Identity	4.39	0.95	0.73	3.60	0.92	0.69	4.30	1.89	.96	4.74	1.92	.94
Perceived Behavioural Control	5.32	0.77	0.35	3.13	0.73	0.36	4.71	1.64	.57	4.86	1.48	.62
Brand Identification	2.91	1.18	-	-	-	-	4.79	2.04	-	-	-	-
Social Intention	4.51	1.12	0.86	3.61	1.13	0.82	3.86	.93	.90	4.32	.90	.82
Group Behaviour	3.28	0.92	0.78	2.64	0.90	0.85	1.02	.73	.74	.95	.60	.51
Brand-Related Behaviour	2.91	0.86	0.81	1.54	0.32	0.71	2.15	.66	.62	2.01	.63	.55

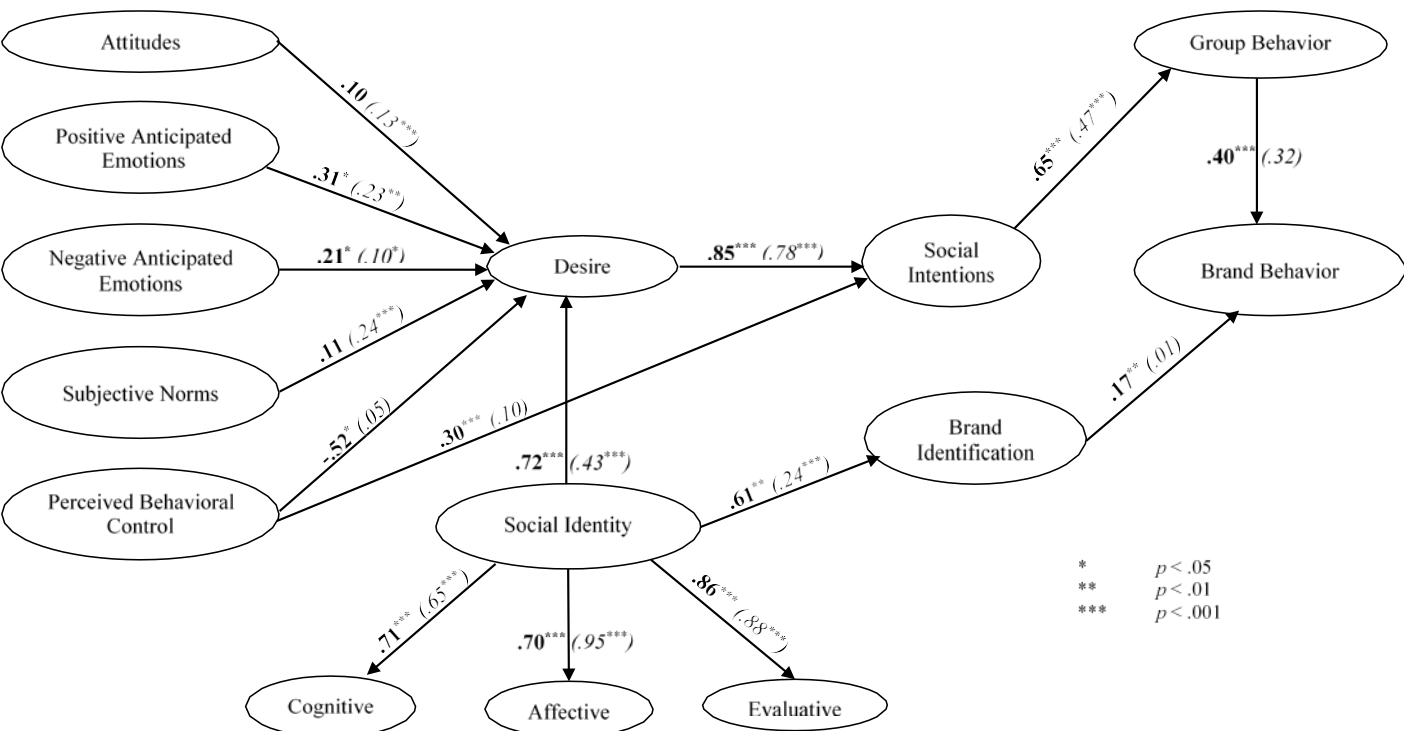
Note: All 5-point scale means from the current study were converted to 7-point means for comparison.

## Results and Discussion

Based on the original analysis method, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) were performed to produce a model fitting both groups of data (brand and non-branded communities), to identify the significant relationships between variables of interest. Both models did not fit as well as the original study: brand community:  $\chi^2(471) = 1078.78, p \approx .00$ , RMSEA = .059, NNFI = .92, CFI = .92; non-branded community:  $\chi^2(440) = 997.48, p \approx .00$ , RMSEA = .057, NNFI = .92 CFI = .93. In addition, as shown in Figures 1 (brand community) and 2 (non-branded community), the paths and significance did not directly replicate those reported by Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006). Interestingly, some of the paths that were insignificant are significant in the current study and vice versa, differences were also observed in respect

to relationship strength and direction. In particular, while Bagozzi and Dholakia found a positive relationship between perceived behavioral control and desire, a negative relationship was observed in this study. The change in relationship direction may be driven by the nature of the sample. Specifically, compared to adults, children possess less control over their behavior (Baumrind 1978), resulting in the negative effect.

Figure 1 - Findings for Structural Equation Model: Brand Community (n = 372)

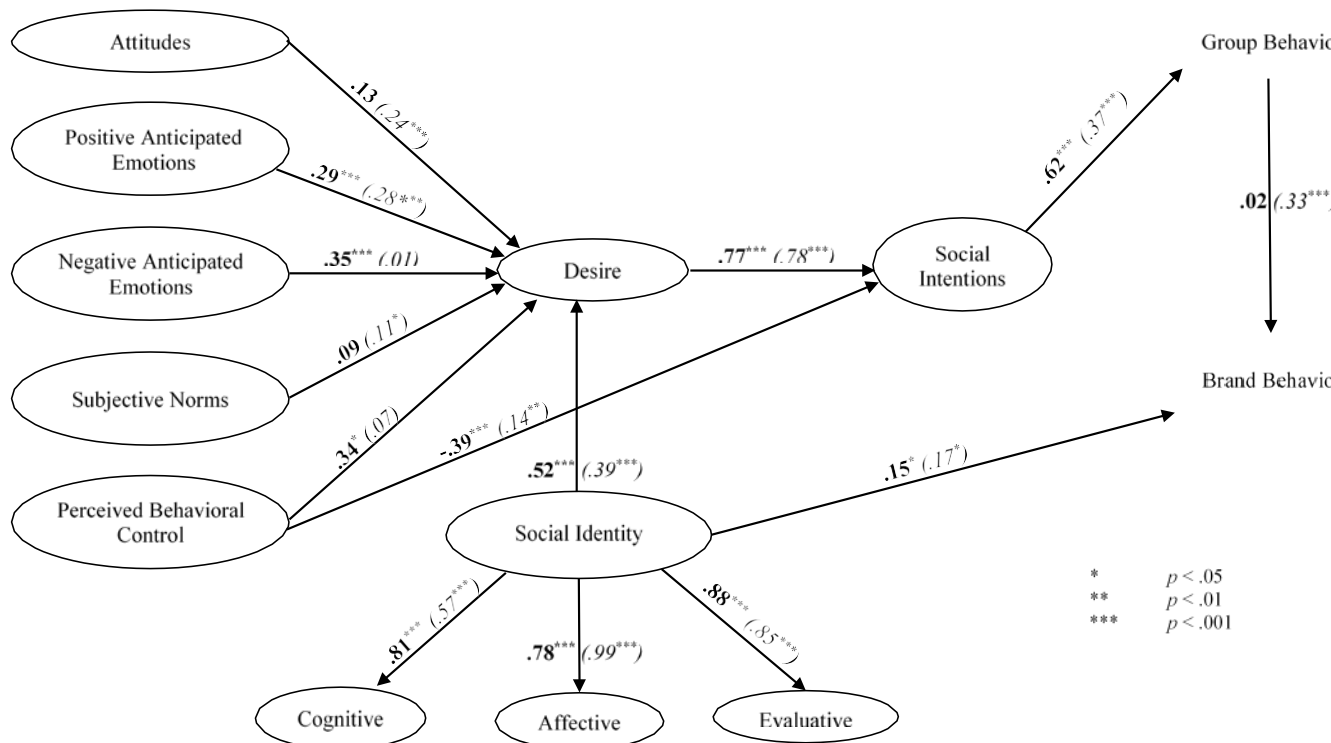


Current study findings are bolded, findings from Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006) are italicized in brackets

Another interesting finding is that both attitudes and subjective norms were not significantly associated with desire (both brand and non-branded communities), unlike the Bagozzi and Dholakia's (2006) findings. This suggests that these components of the theory of planned behavior may not be suitable for a child context, in particular for child participants in brand communities. In contrast, the relationship between group behavior and

brand behavior (for the brand community) changed from non-significant to significant in the current study suggesting that group behavior has a more significant influence on brand behavior in the context of children compared to adults. These findings reinforce prior research that demonstrated group influence is of particular importance for children (e.g. Dishion and Tipsord 2011; Hawkins and Coney 1974).

Figure 2 - Findings for Structural Equation Model: Non-Branded Community (n = 389)



Current study findings are bolded, findings from Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006) are italicized in brackets

Considering the model overall, five coefficients transferred from insignificant to significant, five coefficients switched from significant to insignificant and sixteen coefficients remained the same in terms of significance. This suggests that the results replicate fairly well in the new context of children.

Tests of mediation were also performed and compared to Bagozzi and Dholakia's (2006) findings (see Table 3). Unlike the original findings, social identity, attitudes, positive anticipated emotions and subjective norms were found to have a significant direct effect on social intentions, and were not fully mediated by desire. For the non-branded community, similar results were found with social identity, attitudes and negative anticipated emotions all having a significant direct effect on social intentions.

*Table 3 - Summary of Direct Effects ( $\chi^2$  difference and p-values)*

	Current Study		Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006)	
	Brand Community	Non-Branded Community	Brand Community	Non-Branded Community
Social Identity – social intentions	$\chi^2 = 8.43$ , $p < .001$	$\chi^2 = 5.55$ , $p < .001$	$\chi^2 = .66$ , $p > .30$	$\chi^2 = .37$ , $p > .56$
Attitude – social intentions	$\chi^2 = 8.19$ , $p < .001$	$\chi^2 = 8.47$ , $p < .001$	$\chi^2 = .13$ , $p > .70$	$\chi^2 = 5.29$ , $p < .05$
Positive anticipated emotions – intentions	$\chi^2 = 2.12$ , $p = .02$	$\chi^2 = 1.25$ , $p = .13$	$\chi^2 = .16$ , $p > .68$	$\chi^2 = 1.50$ , $p > .21$
Negative anticipated emotions – social intentions	$\chi^2 = .04$ , $p = .81$	$\chi^2 = 6.92$ , $p = .24$	$\chi^2 = .55$ , $p > .46$	$\chi^2 = .55$ , $p > .48$
Subjective Norm – social intentions	$\chi^2 = 16.90$ , $p < .01$	$\chi^2 = 18.37$ , $p = .34$	$\chi^2 = .48$ , $p > .49$	$\chi^2 = 2.68$ , $p > .10$
Social identity – group behavior	$\chi^2 = .53$ , $p = .32$	$\chi^2 = .55$ , $p = .39$	$\chi^2 = 3.38$ , $p > .07$	$\chi^2 = 9.07$ , $p < .001$
Attitude – group behavior	$\chi^2 = 1.41$ , $p = .16$	$\chi^2 = 3.83$ , $p < .03$	$\chi^2 = .48$ , $p > .49$	$\chi^2 = .99$ , $p > .35$
Positive anticipated emotions – group behavior	$\chi^2 = 1.75$ , $p = .12$	$\chi^2 = .26$ , $p = .60$	$\chi^2 = .23$ , $p > .66$	$\chi^2 = 4.54$ , $p < .05$
Negative anticipated emotions – group behavior	$\chi^2 = .56$ , $p = .45$	$\chi^2 = .73$ , $p = .37$	$\chi^2 = .16$ , $p > .68$	$\chi^2 = 1.38$ , $p > .24$
Subjective Norm – group behavior	$\chi^2 = .68$ , $p = .39$	$\chi^2 = .04$ , $p = .83$	$\chi^2 = .67$ , $p > .30$	$\chi^2 = .81$ , $p > .40$
Perceived Behavioral Control – group behavior	$\chi^2 = 1.49$ , $p = .21$	$\chi^2 = .04$ , $p = .83$	$\chi^2 = .34$ , $p > .57$	$\chi^2 = 2.00$ , $p > .17$

*Note: These results are the direct effects after accounting for the indirect effects of desire and social intention.*

In addition, for the non-branded community positive anticipated emotions had a significant direct effect on group behavior, similar to the findings of Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006). Interestingly, the fit levels were similar across all four cases (the two from the current study and the two from Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006) also highlighting that the results replicated fairly well.

Employing methods used by Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006), tests were also conducted to assess the difference in the correlations between the two models (brand community versus non-branded community). To do this a simultaneous CFA for the latent variables constant across the groups was performed to show whether there was a significant difference between the correlation coefficients. The 12-factor model did not fit as well as the original study:  $\chi^2(880) = 2016.08$ ,  $p \approx .00$ , RMSEA = .041, NNFI = .92, CFI = .93. Unlike the original study, however, the test of equality of factor loadings showed that the hypothesis of invariance could be rejected:  $\chi^2(20) = 20.116$ ,  $p \approx .00$ .

*Table 4 - Summary of Significant Differences Between Models*

	Brand Community	Non-Branded Community
Attitude – Desire	.12	.13
Positive Anticipated Emotions – Desire	.27	.31
Negative Anticipated Emotions – Desire	.30	.30
Subjective Norm – Desire	.11	.10
Perceived Behavioral Control – Desire	-.27***	-.16
Social Identity – Desire	.17***	.07
Perceived Behavioral Control – Intentions	.65**	.59
Desire – Intentions	.85	.78
Intentions – Group Behavior	.65	.68
Social Identity – Brand Behavior	.07*	.20
Group Behavior – Brand Behavior	.06***	.15

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

This result shows that the addition of the ‘brand’ into the community significantly modifies the structure of the model. Further analysis shows that five paths were significantly different between the groups, based on  $\chi^2$  difference tests (see Table 4).

### **Conclusion, Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

This paper has replicated Bagozzi and Dholakia’s (2006) seminal work, using different participants, namely children aged 6–14 years old. Bagozzi and Dholakia’s (2006) model replicates well for this new context. However, there are some unique differences for

children's brand community participation, in overall model fit, path significance and moderating effects. Unlike Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006), results of this study show a significant difference between the brand community and non-branded community models. This finding is particularly interesting as it may suggest the incorporation of the 'brand' into the community has a stronger influence on children compared to adults.

In addition, the mediating role of desire was found to be vastly different for child members. The results show that once a child forms positive attitudes, positive anticipated emotions or a social identity with the community, a direct positive effect on social intentions is observed, with desire not necessary for the relationship to occur. This may be due to children not being able to distinguish between desire, attitudes and emotions (Schult 2002), therefore desire adds no predictive element to the formation of this relationship. This is further supported by the lack of significant relationship between attitudes and desire, for both the branded and non-branded communities, in contrast to the findings of Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006). It is therefore suggested that future research be conducted to understand the role of desire for childbrand community members.

Since Bagozzi and Dholakia's (2006) model does not fully explain children's brand community participation, additional future research is warranted. Specifically, future research should look at developing a new model that better explains children's brand community participation. Researchers should consider the inclusion of variables that are uniquely relevant to child-aged brand community participants (such as self-esteem).

## Appendix – Correlation Matrices

### *Minecraft Brand Community*

	PBC	SN	NAE	PAE	ATT	SIDE	DES	SINT	BID	GBEH	ESI	ASI	CSI
PBC	1												
SN	.66	1											
NAE	-.42	-.16	1										
PAE	.59	.46	-.12	1									
ATT	.52	.50	-.08	.80	1								
SIDE	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	1							
DES	-.30	-.07	.37	.11	.12	.71	1						
SINT	.04	.13	.20	.27	.26	.61	.77	1					
BID	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.61	.44	.37	1				
GBEH	.10	.13	.09	.22	.20	.39	.47	.64	.24	1			
ESI	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.86	.62	.53	.53	.34	1		
ASI	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.70	.50	.43	.43	.27	.60	1	
CSI	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.71	.51	.44	.44	.28	.62	.50	1
BBEH	.04	.05	.04	.09	.08	.26	.26	.32	.26	.43	.22	.18	.18

### *Non-Brand Community*

	PBC	SN	NAE	PAE	ATT	SIDE	DES	SINT	GBEH	ESI	ASI	CSI	BBEH
PBC	1												
SN	-.61	1											
NAE	.15	-.17	1										
PAE	-.46	.44	.04	1									
ATT	-.45	.46	.18	.76	1								
SIDE	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	1							
DES	.15	.01	.42	.29	.30	.52	1						
SINT	-.28	.24	.26	.40	.40	.40	.71	1					
GBEH	-.18	.16	.18	.27	.27	.28	.49	.69	1				
ESI	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.88	.46	.35	.24	1			
ASI	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.78	.41	.31	.22	.68	1		
CSI	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.81	.43	.33	.23	.71	.63	1	
BBEH	<-.01	<.01	<.01	.01	.01	.15	.09	.08	.07	.13	.12	.12	

*Note: PBC = Perceived Behavioral Control, SN = Subjective Norms, NAE = Negative Anticipated Emotions, PAE = Positive Anticipated Emotions, ATT = Attitude, SIDE = Social Identity, DES = Desire, SINT = Social Intentions, GBEH = Group Behavior, ESI = Evaluative Social Identity, ASI = Affective Social Identity, CSI = Cognitive Social Identity, BBEH = Brand Behavior*

## References

Refer to Appendix 9.5.2 for Paper 2 Reference List



## 6.4 Paper Three: New Model

Full Citation:

Hook M., Baxter S.M. & Kulczynski A. (2016). Children's Participation in Brand-Based Social Networks: Examining the Role of Evaluative Social Identity, Self-Esteem and Anticipated Emotions on Commitment and Desire to Recommend, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 40(5), 552-561, doi: 10.1111/ijcs.12300

### 6.4.1 Statement of Contribution of Others

By signing below, I confirm that Margurite Hook was the sole contributor to the paper entitled “Children’s Participation in Brand-Based Social Networks: Examining the Role of Evaluative Social Identity, Self-Esteem and Anticipated Emotions on Commitment and Desire to Recommend”. The co-authors (Stacey Baxter and Alicia Kulczynski) only provided guidance for the paper, with limited intellectual input.

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### 6.4.3 Overview and Contribution of Paper

Having established that child- and adult-participants do not behave identically, *Paper Three: New Model* sought to produce the first child-oriented brand community model. *Paper Three: New Model* incorporated constructs from the model used in Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006 (studied extensively in *Paper Two: Replication and Extension*), constructs identified in *Paper One: Literature Review*, and introduced variables from psychology, to develop and test a new child-oriented model. The aim of *Paper Three: New Model* was to examine the influence of evaluative social identity on brand-based social network<sup>1</sup> commitment and network recommendations, specifically for children.

Drawing from the Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006 model examined in *Paper Two: Replication and Extension*, the theories of anticipated emotions and evaluative social identity were again tested. The dependent variables employed for the study were commitment and recommendations. These variables were identified in *Paper One: Literature Review* as consequences of participation, with evidence that suggested children too show these consequences in a brand community context (Buckingham, 1993; Cicchetti & Cohen, 2006).

Evaluative social identity centres around the preference of the in-group (brand community), as opposed to the out-group (those not in the brand community) (Ellemers et al., 1999). This in-group, out-group notion has also been studied, outside of the brand community field, in developmental psychology, using the term Subjective Group

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<sup>1</sup> For this paper the term ‘brand-based social networks’ was used instead of “brand communities” to align with the chosen journal’s (International Journal of Consumer Studies) focus.

Dynamics (SGD) (Abrams & Rutland, 2008). *Paper Three: New Model* introduced SGD theory to the brand community field to help explain children's participation.

The underlying proposition of SGD theory is that the value of the in-group (in this case the brand community) is sustained when members endorse the norms of the group (Marques, Abrams, Paez, & Martinez-Taboada, 1998). The value of the group is threatened when members endorse the norms of opposing groups or go against their in-group norms (Marques et al., 1998). SGD theory suggests child members of a group have a bias towards the in-group, desiring to sustain the value of the group (Abrams & Rutland, 2008). Due to this bias, the members have a strong desire to uphold the norms of the group.

*Paper Three: New Model* proposed that a group norm in a brand community context is loyalty, shown through regular participation. The desire to uphold these norms results in positive anticipated emotions when the child can participate, and negative anticipated emotions when the child cannot participate. These anticipated emotions consequently lead to community commitment and recommending the community to others.

Children with low personal self-esteem flourish when supported by a group (Boulton & Smith, 1994) and therefore benefit more from commitment and recommendations. They also have more to gain from upholding the in-group norms. In addition, due to the stronger sense of disapproval they feel (Harter, 1993) children with low self-esteem are the most likely to strive to uphold the norms. Due to this, the moderating role of personal self-esteem was also introduced in *Paper Three: New Model*.

The proposed model was empirically tested using a sample of Australian children (6-14 years old) that were self-identified members of a Minecraft brand community. The collected data supported the model proposed, with significant relationships found for all

hypotheses. Findings revealed that children with low personal self-esteem were the most likely to experience negative emotions if they could not participate, and positive emotions when they could participate. These emotions (both positive and negative) then lead to a commitment to the community and recommending the community to others. The underlying cause of these intentions (community commitment and recommendations) was due to the desire to uphold the in-group norms and fear of being ostracised from the community if the norms were disobeyed, in line with SGD theory (Abrams, Rutland, & Cameron, 2003).

The findings of *Paper Three: New Model* present useful insights for academics and practitioners. The first model for a child-oriented brand community was produced and empirically tested, with new mediating and moderating relationships. A new theory through which children's brand community participation can be examined, namely SGD theory, was provided. Practitioners were advised that children with low personal self-esteem may be more vulnerable and therefore care should be taken to avoid societal backlash. Society in general was also made aware that targeting certain groups of children could occur.

The significance and relevance of *Paper Three: New Model* was indicated by one reviewer from International Journal of Consumer Studies through the following comment:

*This article is certainly relevant and of interest for the field of marketing; particularly in relation to increasing children's online brand engagement.*

**Children's participation in brand-based social  
networks: Examining the role of evaluative social  
identity, self-esteem and anticipated emotions on  
commitment and desire to recommend**

## **Abstract**

Social networks involving the social interactions and personal relationships of brand devotees (brand-based social networks) are valuable company and marketing resources, playing a major role in brand and product promotion, and facilitating word-of-mouth. This research sought to examine the influence of evaluative social identity on brand-based social network commitment and network recommendations, specifically for children. The sample for the study comprised 394 Australian children, 6–14 years of age, who participate in an informal offline social network for the brand ‘Minecraft’. This research introduces anticipated emotions (positive and negative) as the mechanisms underlying the influence of evaluative social identity on brand-based social network commitment and network recommendations. Specifically, when children are unable to participate in the brand network, they will experience negative emotions. When children are allowed to participate positive emotions are experienced. These emotions, both positive and negative, are found to enhance children’s commitment to the brand-based social network and also their desire to refer the network to non-members. Further, this research provides evidence that the relationship between evaluative social identity, and both network commitment and network recommendations, is only observed for children with low personal self-esteem. This research provides unique insight into the under-researched area of children and brand-based social networks, and introduces new moderating and mediating effects on established relationships, with findings useful for both academics and practitioners.

## **Keywords**

Brand-based social networks, children, self-esteem, negative anticipated emotions, evaluative social identity.

## Introduction

The importance of children as consumers cannot be underestimated. Children's spending and influencing power has reached over \$200 billion per year in the US, with children spending money on big brand names such as *Nike*, *Mattel* and *Disney* (Collins and Mitchell, 2015). The purchasing of branded products arises from the increasing engagement of children with brands, with one popular engagement medium being social networks. Whilst 'social network' is today synonymous with online social networking sites such as Facebook (Rennie and Morrison, 2013), the term refers to a set of social relationships (Li and Zhang, 2015), not bound by context (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008). One type of social network utilized by marketers is brand-based social networks (also termed brand communities). Brand-based social networks are 'a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a set of social relationships among admirers of a brand' (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001, p. 412). Brand networks are incorporated into marketing strategies to encourage engagement with brands (Habibi et al., 2014). These networks can be of any size, online or offline, and informal or formal in nature, as long as the focus of the network is that of a brand (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). A brand network is unique in the sense that the group is united by a focal brand as opposed to another interest such as a topic, religion or hobby.

Brand network engagement has been shown to lead to commitment, whereby members continually maintain a relationship with the brand and network (Kuo and Feng, 2013), and recommend the network to others (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Network commitment is displayed through loyalty and caring about the future of the network by members (Chan and Li, 2010), whereas network recommendations are shown when a member recommends the network to other non-members (Algesheimer et al., 2005). A review of literature reveals researchers have focused on understanding adult brand network



commitment and network recommendations (e.g., *Harley Davidson* and *Jeep*; McAlexander et al., 2002), with limited interest in understanding outcomes for children's network engagement (Flurry et al., 2014). The emergence of child-orientated brand-based social networks (e.g. *Mattel, My Lego Network*, Flurry et al., 2015), however, shows brands understand the value of establishing a forum where child and adolescent brand-users can engage. Since children are known to participate in these brand-based social networks it is important to understand how these networks influence child participants. This research will aid in understanding the implications associated with children's participation in brand-based social networks, at a marketing and also societal level.

With social identity playing a crucial role in prior adult-orientated brand network studies (Dholakia et al., 2004; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Casaló et al., 2008), and subjective group dynamics used to understand children's group behaviour (Abrams et al., 2003) this research aims to build on these theories in order to understand the effect of children's evaluative social identity on offline brand-based social network commitment and network recommendations. Whilst previous adult-oriented studies have found a positive relationship between social identity and network commitment (e.g. Casaló et al., 2008), they have not considered the role of negative and positive anticipated emotions in explaining the relationship, or how personal self-esteem might impact this relationship. Evaluative social identity has also been widely cited as a key influencer of an adult's desire to engage with brand networks (e.g. Dholakia et al., 2004). Psychologists have demonstrated a relationship between evaluative social identity and collective self-esteem defined as self-esteem derived from group involvement (De Cremer and Oosterwegel, 1999). This research, however, adopts an alternative perspective, investigating the moderating role of personal self-esteem, which is an individual's sociability and values (Luhtanen and Crocker, 1992). In addition, the mediating effect of negative anticipated

emotions on the relationship between evaluative social identity and network commitment and recommendations is explored. With children playing a critical role in the market place, as consumers, influencers and the future market (Gorn and Florsheim, 1985), coupled with a child's need to engage and be part of a group (Harter, 1999); it is argued that understanding the combined role of evaluative social identity, personal self-esteem and emotional anticipation will not only provide a unique contribution to marketing literature, but will also be of interest to brand managers and society as a whole, seeking to better understand child brand-based social network members and the implications of child participation.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. Firstly, a discussion of the theoretical framework of the research, followed by an outline of the method and design approach. Next, the results are presented, followed by the discussion, limitations and proposed future research.

## **Literature review**

### ***Social identity***

Social identity theory is widely recognized as a key aspect of brand network participation (Algesheimer *et al.*, 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006). An individual forms a social identity when they see themselves as part of a group (or groups), and understands the emotional significance of being in that group (Tajfel, 1978). An individual's social identity comprises of three components: cognitive, affective and evaluative (Ellemers *et al.*, 1999). Evaluative social identity, the component of social identity considered in this research, refers to the comparison of in-group and out-group choices (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006). This aspect of social identity centres on the value the member places on being part of one group instead of another, or how the individual evaluates their in-group

membership. Evaluative social identity has strong ties to collective self-esteem, unlike the other two components of social identity, that is, cognitive and affective (Ellemers *et al.*, 1999).

Bennett and Sani (2004) demonstrate that from approximately five years of age, children have the cognitive ability to self-categorise themselves as being part of a group (or groups), and acknowledge their identities within these groups. From approximately seven years of age children experience evaluative social identity beginning with children differentiating between in-group and out-group, and is experienced when a child positively evaluates their in-group membership (Bennett and Sani, 2004).

The relationship between evaluative social identity and network commitment has been well established in adult-oriented research (e.g. Dholakia *et al.*, 2004; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006). Network commitment refers to an individual's desire and willingness to develop and maintain a relationship with the brand-based social network (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999). Once members engage and develop relationships, the desire to continue these relationships strengthens, based on their need to sustain their identity within the network.

Research in developmental psychology has established that children begin to develop loyal and stable relationships from around the age of six years (Cicchetti and Cohen, 2006). During this stage children have a mature appreciation of friendship and the feelings of others (Cicchetti and Cohen, 2006). Since children can develop these loyal relationships, it is suggested that children will feel a sense of commitment to a brand-based social network in the same way that they commit to other types of relationships.

Whilst researchers are yet to examine the effect of evaluative social identity on children's brand-based social network commitment, drawing from developmental psychology literature, it is hypothesized that:

*H1: There is a positive relationship between evaluative social identity and network commitment.*

Members of brand-based social networks are described to display three characteristics: consciousness of kind, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Moral responsibility refers to the responsibility network members feel towards telling others about their network (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001), that is, network recommendations. Literature has examined how engagement in brand-based networks leads to network recommendations (Algesheimer *et al.*, 2005) for adults, however, no study has tested the direct relationship between evaluative social identity and network recommendations, for either adult or child networks. Since network recommendations are vital to brand network growth and sustainability (Carlson *et al.*, 2008), it is important for both practitioners and academics to understand the direct antecedents of network recommendations.

Psychologists have found that children discuss topics with friends, including brands and products (Buckingham, 1993). This shows that children make recommendations to others and are capable of feeling a sense of moral responsibility in relation to the brand network. It is argued that when a child feels high evaluative social identity with a brand network they will establish a sense of moral responsibility to inform others about the group. They feel important to the group and hence feel a need to recommend the group to others in an attempt to expand the group. If a child has a low level of evaluative social identity, then the brand network is not important to them and hence will not form a sense of moral responsibility. This leads to the following hypothesis:

*H2: There is a positive relationship between evaluative social identity and network recommendations.*

### ***Subjective group dynamics***

The subjective group dynamics model can explain how children interact within social groups (Abrams *et al.*, 2003). Whilst subjective group dynamics is yet to be examined in regards to brand-based social networks, it is suggested that the theory provides a useful framework for explaining brand network behaviour. Subjective group dynamics theory holds that members have a bias towards in-group members and strive to uphold the norms of the in-group (Abrams *et al.*, 2003). Favouritism for in-group members and rituals is derived from a desire to increase an individual's social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). It is posited that a child who feels important to the brand-based social network (i.e., part of the 'in-group') will also feel a sense of evaluative social identity, resulting in a need to uphold in-group norms.

Group loyalty is a prescriptive norm within subjective group dynamics theory (Valkenburg *et al.*, 2006; Abrams and Rutland, 2008), and maintaining contact is suggested to be a way to show loyalty to the group (brand-based social network). One key characteristic of brand network members is moral responsibility to recommend the network to others (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001), and therefore represents another in-group norm. Children actively talk about brands with peers (Elliott and Leonard, 2004) and are therefore capable of directly or indirectly making brand network recommendations. By following the in-group norm of maintaining contact, the child will feel positive emotions (e.g. happy, glad, excited), in the same way children will also want to recommend the network to others, to uphold the moral responsibility of being a member.

It is posited that when children feel positive emotions from participation in the brand network, they will want to continue a relationship with the network and hence establish a commitment to the network. In addition, when children associate positive emotions with a brand, it is likely that they will talk about the brand to others (Elliott and Leonard, 2004). It is also argued that positive anticipated emotions, from following in-group norms, will have a mediating effect on the relationships between evaluative social identity and network commitment, and evaluative social identity and network recommendations. That is, positive anticipated emotions will explain the relationship between evaluative social identity and network commitment and recommendations. These arguments lead to the following hypotheses:

*H3: Positive anticipated emotions mediate the relationship between evaluative social identity and (a) network commitment and (b) network recommendations.*

According to subjective group dynamics theory, a deviant member is a threat to the in-group and the norms that they uphold (Abrams and Rutland, 2008). When a child feels a group is important to them, their group social identity has a high influence on the feelings a child will experience (Cassidy, 2009). It is suggested that if a child, with high evaluative social identity (i.e., part of the in-group), is temporarily impeded from participating in the brand network (e.g., parent limiting contact), the in-group norm of maintaining contact will not be upheld. When the child returns to the group, they may anticipate that they will be treated differently, because of their inability to uphold the in-group norm. A deviant member is seen as a threat to the reputation and values of the group (Abrams *et al.*, 2008) and as such is less accepted by members than normative members (Abrams *et al.*, 2007). In these instances it is suggested that a child, with high evaluative social identity, who is impeded from participating with the brand-based social network will experience negative emotions (e.g., sadness, anger) since they cannot engage with the brand network, and may

be seen as a deviant member. These negative anticipated emotions arising from an obstruction to participate in the brand-based social network will mediate (explain) the relationship between evaluative social identity and the consequences of engagement (network commitment and network recommendations).

When children experience evaluative social identity they form strong group favouritism (Bennett and Sani, 2004). The development of in-group favouritism is strong and lasting, occurring in children as young as five (Aboud, 2003). Regardless of whether or not the child has deviated against the norms, they themselves will still feel an evaluative social identity with the brand-based social network. This continued feeling of evaluative social identity with the brand network conveys continued favouritism with the in-group. Because of this, members will still uphold their commitment and recommend the network even if negative anticipated emotions occur. The strong favouritism with the in-group will not change by fear of potential removal, and therefore will not change a child's commitment to the brand network. It is also argued that the network commitment will continue since failing to do so would constitute a further possible reason for others to ostracize them from the network, since this could be considered as continued deviance of the in-group norms. According to subjective group dynamics theory deviant members may be kept in the in-group if they begin to follow the rules after breaking them, however, continuing to not follow the rules will violate the group membership (Abrams and Rutland, 2008).

This leads to the following hypotheses:

*H4: Negative anticipated emotions mediate the relationship between evaluative social identity and (a) network commitment and (b) network recommendations.*

### ***Moderating role of personal self-esteem***

A child's social identity is strongly influenced by their self-esteem (Corenblum, 2014), which constitutes collective and personal aspects (Luhtanen and Crocker, 1992). The collective aspect refers to an individual's self-esteem within a group context, and the personal aspect refers to an individual's values and sociability as a whole (Luhtanen and Crocker, 1992). Personal self-esteem is not limited to a single group influence and is most volatile around the ages of 6 through to 11 (Trzesniewski *et al.*, 2003). The theory of social identity posits an increase in evaluative social identity is positively related to collective self-esteem (Corenblum, 2014), however, since personal self-esteem encompasses underlying sociability and values (Luhtanen and Crocker, 1992) it is suggested personal self-esteem will play a moderating role on evaluative social identity relationships. That is, the level of personal self-esteem will change the relationship between evaluative social identity and network recommendations and commitment.

Children with low personal self-esteem flourish when supported by a peer or group, as this increases their sociability (Boulton and Smith, 1994), suggesting children with low self-esteem will benefit from brand networks more than children with high self-esteem. Personal self-esteem is, therefore, posited to moderate the relationship between evaluative social identity and both network commitment and network recommendations. The supporting benefits the child with low personal self-esteem receives from the network will drive commitment, so they can continue to receive support. In other words, children with low personal self-esteem will feel supported in the brand network and hence will want to keep participating in the network to receive more of this support. Children with high personal self-esteem, however, will not require this support. This is because of their high level of personal self-esteem, and hence network commitment will not be as high as those children with low personal self-esteem. A larger group, or brand network, provides



more support (Pendley *et al.*, 2002), suggesting children with low personal self-esteem will make recommendations to increase members and the size of their support group (brand-based social network). In addition, a child with low personal self-esteem will want to recommend the network so that others can see they have a sense of moral responsibility and are therefore a normative member (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

Maintaining a connection to the in-group is more beneficial to children with low self-esteem (Hogg and Abrams, 1990). The connection to the network helps the child raise their personal self-esteem, perhaps unconsciously, and without the network the child's personal self-esteem could fall further. These theories imply that children with low personal self-esteem will benefit more from both network commitment and network recommendations than that of children with high personal self-esteem. Those children with high personal self-esteem will not rely on the brand network as much for support as they already have high sociability (Luhtanen and Crocker, 1992). These arguments lead to the following hypotheses:

*H5: Personal self-esteem moderates the relationship between evaluative social identity and (a) network commitment and (b) network recommendations.*

The relationship between evaluative social identity and negative anticipated emotions is only expected to occur when a child has low personal self-esteem, as individuals with low personal self-esteem cognitively process negative implications more than positive implications, because of the ultimate consequences that could occur (Baumeister *et al.*, 2001). For example, for a child participating in a brand-based social network, the consequence felt from following the in-group norms is simply a continuation to be accepted, however, when in-group norms are not followed the consequence felt is higher, as this could mean being ostracised from the group.

Social and group interactions have been widely evidenced as impacting a child's personal self-esteem (Boulton and Smith, 1994; McGee *et al.*, 2006). It is therefore argued that personal self-esteem will impact the relationship between evaluative social identity and network commitment and recommendations, and negative anticipated emotions and network commitment and recommendations. According to psychologists, children with low personal self-esteem feel the consequence of approval, or disapproval, of others more strongly than children with high self-esteem (Harter, 1993). Therefore the consequences of not following in-group norms is suggested to be more strongly felt for children with low personal self-esteem, when the group feels important to them (i.e. high evaluative social identity). A child with high evaluative social identity, yet low personal self-esteem will experience strong negative emotions when brand-based social network contact is temporarily impeded. The child will be concerned with brand network rejection, since they are not upholding an in-group norm. Because of this it is hypothesized that:

*H6: Personal self-esteem moderates the relationship between evaluative social identity and negative anticipated emotions.*

## **Method**

### ***Sample and data collection***

Three hundred and ninety four randomly selected Australian children (6–14 age,  $M_{\text{age}} = 9.94$ ), who self-identified as participating in an informal offline brand-based social network, completed an online questionnaire. The ages of 6–14 were chosen, in line with the United Nations definition of a child (United Nations, 2013). Parental consent, and child assent, was obtained prior to participation. The research focused on informal offline social networks formed by child admirers of the brand, *Minecraft*, where networks are formed in social settings such as the school playground and after-school groups, of an

undefined size. *Minecraft* is a contemporary brand with significant youth engagement. There are over 100 million registered *Minecraft* users (Mojang, 2015), with 20% of these players under the age of 15 (Minecraft Seeds, 2015). Because of this large following and popularity among children, the brand-based social network was considered appropriate. To establish the child participants were active in a *Minecraft* brand-based social network filter questions were asked at the beginning of the questionnaire. To qualify for this research participants needed to both play *Minecraft* and talk to others offline about *Minecraft*.

### ***Measurement***

All measures were drawn from existing literature, with minor alterations made in some instances to reflect the language ability of participants (e.g., ‘depressed’ was altered to state ‘sad’), see Table 1 for a summary of all measures. Specifically, the scale items for evaluative social identity, negative anticipated emotions and positive anticipated emotions were adapted from Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006); network commitment from Chan and Li (2010); network recommendations from Algesheimer *et al.* (2005); and the items for personal self-esteem were those which were employed by Harter (1982). In addition, a measure for perceived behavioural control was adapted from Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) and included in the models as a covariate. The covariate was included in the analysis to account for any bias relating to the ease with which the child could engage with (have access or be permitted to engage with) the brand-based social network. These data were collected so that the measure of negative anticipated emotions and positive anticipated emotions was reliable, since these directly measure the impact when network contact was impeded or allowed.

Table 5 - Summary of Measurement Items

Construct	Measure Source	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Evaluative Social Identity	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006)	The friends I talk about Minecraft to, need me I am the leader of the friends I talk about Minecraft with	.706
Negative Anticipated Emotions	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006)	If I can't talk to my friends about Minecraft I will feel: Not sad – sad Not at all angry – angry Like I haven't done something bad – like I have done something bad Not afraid – afraid Not annoyed – annoyed Not worried – worried Not guilty – guilty Not uncomfortable – uncomfortable Not nervous – nervous	.944
Positive Anticipated Emotions	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006)	If I talk to my friends about Minecraft I will feel: Not excited – excited Not happy – happy Not great – great Not proud – proud Not brave – brave Not comfortable – comfortable	.903
Community Commitment	Chan and Li (2010)	I would feel sad if Minecraft wasn't around anymore I care about the future of Minecraft If I didn't play Minecraft for a few days, I would try and play as soon as I could	.898
Community Recommendations	Algesheimer <i>et al.</i> (2005)	I always want to tell people that Minecraft is awesome If my friends or family are looking for a game to play, I would tell them to play Minecraft	.872
Personal self-esteem	Harter (1982)	Some kids feel they are a good person/ other kids do not feel they are a good person Some kids are happy the way they are/ other kids are not happy the way they are Some kids feel good/ other kids do not feel good Some kids are sure they are doing the right thing/ other kids are sure they are not doing the right thing Some kids want to stay the same/ other kids do not want to stay the same Some kids do things fine/ other kids do not do things fine	.701
Perceived Behavioural Control (Covariate)	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006)	To talk with my friends about Minecraft is (Easy – Hard)	-

### ***Data analysis***

For analysis the PROCESS macro bootstrapping procedure (Hayes, 2013) in SPSS was applied to test all hypotheses. Two separate models were employed to firstly test the mediating effects of negative anticipated emotions and positive anticipated emotions (Model 4,  $n = 10,000$ ) and secondly to test the moderating effect of personal self-esteem (Model 8,  $n = 10,000$ ). The primary reason for choosing the PROCESS method was so that multiple mediating effects could be tested simultaneously while also testing moderated mediation. In addition, both indirect and direct effects of the interactions can be found using the PROCESS method (Hayes, 2013).

### **Results**

First, Model 4 (Hayes, 2013) was employed to test the effect of evaluative social identity on network commitment and network recommendations as well as the mediating role of anticipated emotions (both positive and negative). A significant positive relationship was found between evaluative social identity and network commitment, in support of H1 ( $p = <.001$ ). This result shows that as evaluative social identity increased, so too did network commitment. A higher level of evaluative social identity led to a higher level of network commitment, and a lower evaluative social identity led to a lower level of network commitment. As expected a significant positive relationship was also found between evaluative social identity and network recommendations ( $p = < .001$ ), supporting H2. That is, as evaluative social identity increased, network recommendations also increased, and as evaluative social identity decreased, so too did network recommendations.

To test for a mediating effect (for both positive anticipated emotions and negative anticipated emotions) the PROCESS macro bootstrapping procedure ( $n = 10,000$ ) was employed (Preacher *et al.*, 2007). The PROCESS macro procedure calculates two

regression models: the first tests the effect of the independent variable (evaluative social identity) on the mediator (positive anticipated emotions); the second model tested the effect of the mediator on the dependent variables: network commitment and network recommendations. The results from this model showed a significant indirect effect of evaluative social identity on network commitment and network recommendations (that is, via positive anticipated emotions) for both dependent variables (network commitment:  $\beta = .556$ , 95% CI = .438 to .674; network recommendations:  $\beta = .631$ , 95% CI = .501 to .761), supporting H3a and H3b.

The same procedure was applied by estimating the model again using network commitment and network recommendations as the dependent variables, and this time with negative anticipated emotions as the mediating variable. The first model tested the effect of the independent variable (evaluative social identity) on the mediator (negative anticipated emotions); the second model tested the effect of the mediator on the dependent variables: network commitment and network recommendations. Similar to positive anticipated emotions, significant results were observed when the mediating role of negative anticipated emotions was considered (network commitment:  $\beta = .303$ , 95% CI = .218 to .388; network recommendations:  $\beta = .246$ , 95% CI = .152 to .340) supporting H4a and H4b.

Results indicate that both positive and negative anticipated emotions explain the relationship between evaluative social identity and network commitment and recommendations. The results are presented in Figs. 1 and 2.

Figure 1 – Research Model of Mediating Effects on Network Commitment ( $\beta$ )

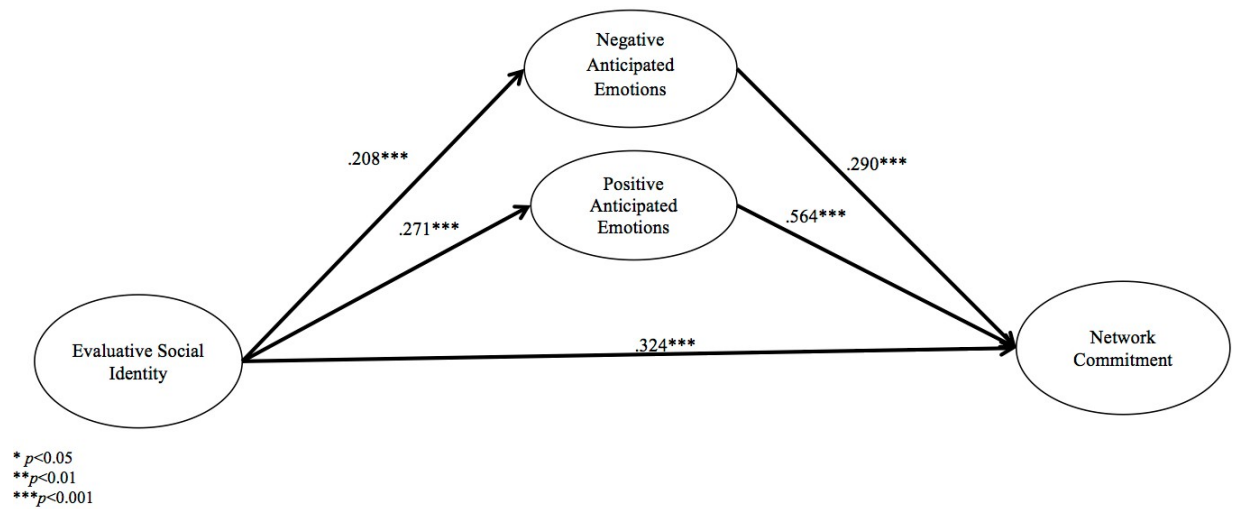
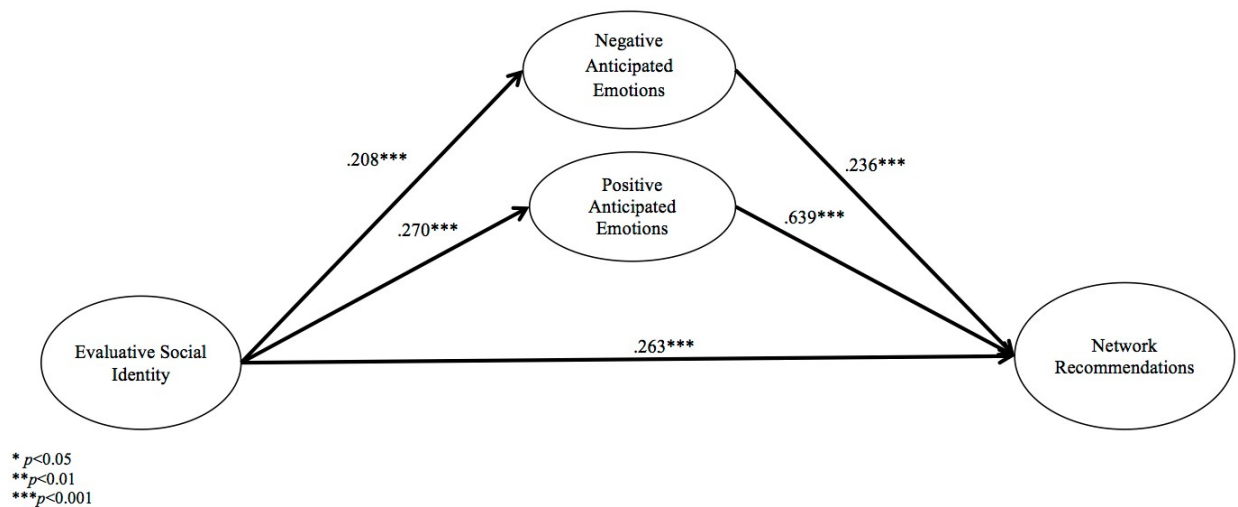


Figure 2 – Research Model of Mediating Effects on Network Recommendations ( $\beta$ )



Next, to test the moderating role of personal self-esteem, Model 8 was estimated (Hayes, 2013). The impact of personal self-esteem on the relationship between evaluative social identity and both dependent variables (network commitment and network recommendations) was found to be significant (network commitment:  $p = .007$ , network recommendations:  $p = .048$ ), supporting H5a and H5b. The relationship between evaluative social identity and network commitment and network recommendations,

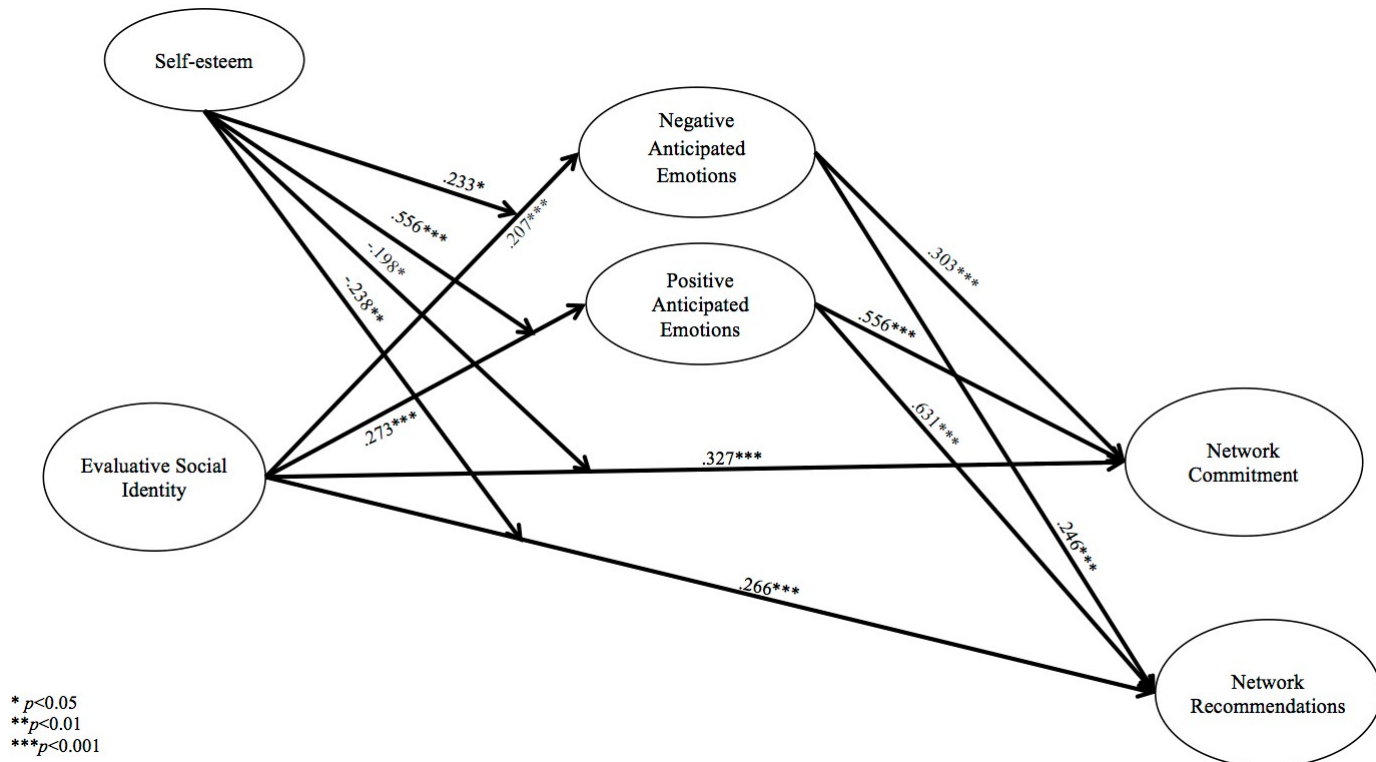
respectively, was stronger for children with low personal self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.444, p < .001$ ;  $\beta = 0.363, p < .001$ ) than children with high self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.211, p < .001$ ;  $\beta = 0.169, p = .014$ ). Personal self-esteem was also found to moderate the effect of evaluative social identity on negative anticipated emotions ( $p = .022$ ), where the relationship between evaluative social identity and negative anticipated emotions was only significant for children with low personal self-esteem. As predicted, personal self-esteem had no impact on the relationship between evaluative social identity and positive anticipated emotions ( $p = .263$ ).

When testing for moderated-mediation (H6), the key indicator is the indirect effect of the interaction on the dependent variable through the mediator (Preacher *et al.*, 2007). To determine the moderated-mediation effect, a bootstrapping approach was employed using the PROCESS macro (Preacher *et al.*, 2007) that estimated the significance of two paths: evaluative social identity x personal self-esteem → negative anticipated emotions → network commitment, and evaluative social identity x personal self-esteem → negative anticipated emotions → network recommendations. This is the Model 8 approach recommended by Preacher *et al.* (2007). In the context of the models estimated, moderated-mediation is demonstrated when the 95% confidence interval for the parameter does not include zero (Preacher *et al.*, 2007). Results show that the 95% boot-strapped confidence interval for the indirect effect of the interaction (evaluative social identity x personal self-esteem) did not include zero across the two dependent variables: network commitment ( $\beta = 0.071, 95\% \text{ CI} = 0.003 \text{ to } 0.155$ ) and network recommendations ( $\beta = 0.057, 95\% \text{ CI} = 0.002 \text{ to } 0.132$ ), supporting the existence of a significant moderated indirect effect. That is, negative anticipated emotions explain the effect of the interaction between evaluative



social identity and personal self-esteem on network commitment and network recommendations. The detailed results are presented in Fig. 3.

Figure 3 – Research Model of Mediating Effects on Network Commitment ( $\beta$ )



## Discussion

The results of this study present numerous insights into children's interactions with offline brand-based social networks, highlighting important societal and managerial implications. Firstly, results show that children, who had high evaluative social identity, felt positive emotions when they could interact with the brand-based social network, leading to both network commitment and network recommendations. These results are in line with subjective group dynamics theory, showing children who are complying with the in-group norms, such as maintaining group contact (Valkenburg *et al.*, 2006) feel positive emotions from following the in-group norms. Children are then motivated to commit to the brand-based social network and also recommend the network to others.

Secondly, children who had a strong sense of evaluative social identity felt negative emotions when they believed they would be hindered from connecting to the brand-based social network. Although these negative emotions were evident, the consequences of commitment and recommendations were also still evident. This is in line with subjective group dynamics theory whereby children form a strong favouritism towards the in-group, and still feel group favouritism even after going against the in-group norms (Abrams *et al.*, 2003). These findings highlight an issue of concern relating to brand-based social networks, and how they have the ability to affect the emotions of child-age participants to make them feel sad, angry and worried when they might not be able to participate. Parents should be aware of this to ensure the well-being of their children when participating in brand networks.

Thirdly, results show that personal self-esteem moderates the relationship between evaluative social identity and network commitment, and evaluative social identity and network recommendations. When a child with low personal self-esteem establishes an evaluative social identity with a brand-based social network they will be more committed to the network, however, when a child has high personal self-esteem, the effect of evaluative social identity on network commitment and network recommendations weakens. These results reflect self-esteem literature arguments whereby children with low personal self-esteem cope better when they feel group support (Boulton and Smith, 1994). In addition, the need of a child with low personal self-esteem to continue participating in the network in order to increase their self-esteem is also seen through this result. These findings highlight concerns that children with low personal self-esteem may be targeted by brands as an avenue for commitment to a brand network. Parents aware of their child having low personal self-esteem should monitor their child's interactions in these brand networks to make sure brands do not take advantage of them.

Similarly, findings show that children with low personal self-esteem and high evaluative social identity with the brand-based social network are more likely to make recommendations to others about the brand network. This highlights that children with low personal self-esteem are pressured to uphold the in-group norm of group recommendations to others, a form of moral responsibility for the brand network. Children with high personal self-esteem were not likely to make network recommendations, highlighting that children with high personal self-esteem were less susceptible to peer pressure and did not feel that in-group norms had to be followed. This is in line with predictions based on previous literature (Boulton and Smith, 1994) and shows that children with low personal self-esteem were more affected by negative emotions when prevented from participating in the brand-based social network. The results could imply a stronger desire to be part of the brand-based social network for children with low personal self-esteem, compared with the children with high personal self-esteem. In addition, only negative anticipated emotions, significantly affected commitment and recommendations, supporting previous theory that negative emotions have a stronger impact on those with low personal self-esteem than positive emotions (Leary *et al.*, 1995). Again, these findings highlight a concern that children with low personal self-esteem can be targeted by brands, in this case to spread recommendations to others to join the brand-based social network. Of perhaps even more concern is the possibility that these recommendations will lead to even more children with low personal self-esteem becoming vulnerable to these brand networks.

Lastly, negative anticipated emotions were found to act as the driving mechanism on network commitment and network recommendations, in line with subjective group dynamics theory (Abrams *et al.*, 2003). This emphasizes that children's commitment and recommendations are mediated by anticipated negative emotions (fear of not upholding

in-group norms) when temporarily impeded from network participation. Children are committed to the group out of fear that if in-group norms are neglected they will be ostracized from the in-group (brand-based social network).

### **Limitations and directions for future research**

A number of limitations are recognized highlighting avenues of future research. The current study focused on one brand: '*Minecraft*'. Whilst it is anticipated that results obtained in this study would be replicated when examining alternate brand-based social networks, future research should confirm this assumption. This research only focused on an informal, offline brand-based social network. The conceptual framework produced should be tested for an online brand-based social network, to compare findings between offline and online brand-based social networks. The characteristics of online brand-based social networks, such as the lack of face-to-face interactions, could change the level of support children with low personal self-esteem feel. The online environment allows users to become almost anonymous (or assume another identity), and can dramatically change how users interact. Because of this, it is argued that the results of this study would be different when applied to an online brand-based social network.

In addition, this research focused on one component of social identity only, that is, evaluative social identity. Future research may look to extend the conceptual framework presented in this study to also include the cognitive and affective (Ellemers *et al.*, 1999) components, to produce a holistic view of the issue. Self-esteem has links to children's well-being, children with low self-esteem often being victims of bullying (e.g. Valkenburg *et al.*, 2006). Because of the high tendency for a child to be victimized when they experience low self-esteem, it is speculated that children with low self-esteem would feel bullied if norms were not upheld. In addition, it is suggested that children with low

self-esteem may be bullied into obeying the norms, instead of following the norms because of network loyalty. The present study did not include bullying in the model, however, future research should explore this area.

Finally, as this study is one of the first to test children's interactions in brand-based social networks, more research should look into this area. Observations of children's behaviour will uncover insights into child participation in comparison with adults, and provide valuable knowledge into how to design networks for children. A comparison study between adult and children's participation in a brand-based social network would highlight interesting differences key to designing networks suitable for child interaction.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, results revealed that evaluative social identity has an effect on offline brand-based social network commitment and network recommendations for children aged 6–14 years. Specifically, the relationship between evaluative social identity and two consequences (network commitment and network recommendations) can be explained by anticipated emotions when participating with or being prevented from participating in the brand-based social network. That is, those children with evaluative social identity were more likely to experience positive emotions when they could engage, and negative emotions when impeded from participating in the brand-based social network, leading to stronger network commitment and network recommendations. Further, the relationship for negative anticipated emotions is dependent upon whether a child has low or high personal self-esteem, with the relationship not observed for children with high personal self-esteem.

With limited research undertaken to examine children's brand-based social network commitment and network recommendations, this research provides a unique contribution

to social network, social identity and subjective group dynamics literature. Findings of this research would be of interest to academics, and marketing practitioners, specifically those involved with social networks aimed at children. Parents too would take interest in the findings, as the issues raised should be monitored to ensure children are safely interacting in brand-based social networks.

## **References**

Refer to Appendix 9.5.3 for Paper 3 Reference List

## 6.5 Paper Four: Similarity Attraction

Title: “I’m Like You, You’re Like me, We Make a Great Brand Community!’ Similarity-Attraction and Children’s Brand Community Participation”

Submitted to the *Journal of Brand Management* June 2018

### 6.5.1 Statement of Contribution of Others

By signing below, I confirm that Margurite Hook was the sole contributor to the paper entitled “‘I’m Like You, You’re Like me, We Make a Great Brand Community!’ Similarity-Attraction and Children’s Brand Community Participation”. The co-authors (Stacey Baxter and Alicia Kulczynski) only provided guidance for the paper, with limited intellectual input.

X

Associate Professor Stacey Baxter  
Co-author

Faculty Assistant Dean Research Training

X

Dr Alicia Kulczynski  
Co-author



### 6.5.2 Overview and Contribution of Paper

'Birds of a feather flock together', a famous saying that typifies the psychological concept of similarity attraction. *Paper Four: Similarity Attraction* contributes to the thesis by providing a comprehensive three-part study investigating the role of similarity attraction and continuing the investigation on Subjective Group Dynamics (SGD), begun in *Paper Three: New Model*. Drawing from studies in psychology and marketing, three experimental studies were undertaken with the aim of understanding the impact of similarity between child brand community members (sharing of characteristics such as: age, background and opinions) and SGD on their brand community participation desire.

Similarity attraction has been evidenced in a wide range of areas, from adult romantic relationships (Montoya & Horton, 2004; Singh, Tay, & Sankaran, 2016) to interpersonal relationships amongst children as young as three (Fawcett & Markson, 2010). The desire to establish relationships with others is often due to a common or shared possession of a characteristic, especially in the context of children (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996; Haselager et al., 1998; Hunter et al., 2016).

Given that the core of a brand community is the relationships amongst individuals (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001) and children have been widely shown to participate with similar others (e.g. Aboud & Mendelson, 1996; Haselager et al., 1998; Hunter et al., 2016), the theory of similarity attraction was anticipated to play a role in child-oriented brand community relationships. Children that perceived a brand community to have characteristically similar members to themselves, were posited to have an increased respect for the community and therefore a higher desire to participate.

Building upon the study of *Paper Three: New Model*, SGD theory was also examined. Specifically, the role deviant members have on the reputation of the group. Deviant

members threaten the reputation of the entire group, not just their own (Abrams et al., 2003). Given this, a moderating role of member deviance was proposed on the model.

Three experimental studies were undertaken, each employing separate samples of Australian children aged 6-17 years. Studies 1 and 2 were between subjects designs, with participants allocated to either one of two experimental conditions: low member similarity or high member similarity. Study 3 was a 2 (member similarity) x 2 (member deviance) factorial design, with participants randomly allocated to one of four experimental conditions: low member similarity and deviant member, low member similarity and normative member, high member similarity and deviant member, or high member similarity and normative member.

The findings of the three studies showed that children were more likely to desire participation in the brand community when the current members were perceived as similar to themselves. This relationship was explained by the respect felt towards the community. However, these relationships were only seen when there was no deviant member present. A deviant member caused a significantly lower desire to participate, even when the members were perceived as similar to the child, due to a lower level of respect towards the community.

*Paper Four: Similarity Attraction's* findings contribute significantly to the current thesis and to the field. For the current thesis, *Paper Four: Similarity Attraction* provides a model through which to explain children's brand community participation, a significant contribution to the aim of this thesis (understanding the factors influencing children's participation in brand communities). For academics, the theory of similarity attraction was introduced into the brand community field, along with the concept of respect towards

a brand community. Both of these concepts can be integrated into future studies to uncover new insights in the field.

Drawing from the results of *Paper Four: Similarity Attraction*, practitioners are advised to promote children's brand communities in a manner that emphasises the similarity of current members to new potential members (e.g. 'come play with kids just like you'). The role of deviant members is also brought to attention, an important issue for both academics and practitioners to be aware of.

*Paper Four: Similarity Attraction* is yet to be published, however, is currently under review at the Journal of Brand Management.

**‘I’m Like You, You’re Like me, We Make a Great  
Brand Community!’**

**Similarity-Attraction and Children’s Brand  
Community Participation.**

## **Abstract**

*'Birds of a feather flock together'*, a famous saying that typifies the psychological concept of similarity-attraction. Moving beyond a common interest in a brand, this research employs similarity-attraction theory to understand the impact of similarity between child brand community members (sharing of characteristics such as: age, background and opinions) on their brand community participation desire. Australian children (n = 466) aged 6 - 17 participated in one of three experimental studies to assess the impact of member similarity, respect, and member deviance on brand community participation desire. Results suggest that greater member similarity enhances children's desire to participate in a brand community, with this effect explained by an increased respect felt towards the community. In addition, when a community member is deviant (disloyal to the community); respect, and subsequently participation desire, declines. By introducing the theory of similarity-attraction to child-oriented brand communities; the research contributes to the sparse literature on child-oriented brand communities, with results highlighting that marketers should emphasize member similarity when promoting brand communities aimed at children.

## **Keywords:**

Brand Communities, Children, Similarity-attraction, Respect, Group Dynamics

## **1. Introduction**

Brand communities aimed at a child audience are a very popular and valuable marketing resource, playing a major role in brand and product promotion, and facilitating word-of-mouth. For example, in 2016, Lego launched their brand community ‘Lego Life’ (Lee, 2017). This brand community received instant popularity, with over one million downloads of the app on android devices alone, within its first year of operation (LEGO System A/S, 2017). ‘Lego Life’ is specifically targeted at children under the age of 13, and encourages its members to share their experiences of the ‘Lego’ brand with others (Lee, 2017). Although many child-orientated brand communities are employed to engage children with brands; only a small number of academics have attempted to understand and explain child-orientated brand community behavior, and the implications for marketers and brands (Flurry, Swimberghe, and Parker, 2014; Hook, Baxter, and Kulczynski, 2016).

Brand communities are a specialized community that rely on the social relationships established between admirers of a brand (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). The relationships in a brand community are formed due to a common interest towards a focal brand (Cova and Pace, 2006). Whilst a common interest in the focal brand is important, and is at the center of every brand community (Cova and Pace, 2006); there is evidence to suggest a greater similarity between a group of individuals is especially important for successful interactions among children. Developmental psychology explains that the more similarities there are between children, the greater the likelihood a relationship will form (Aboud and Mendelson, 1996). Of even more importance, relationships will last, for an extended period, when there is a higher level of shared characteristics between children (Aboud and Mendelson, 1996). Drawing from these findings, it is suggested that a greater similarity between child brand community members will lead to the formation of

enduring relationships within a brand community. Investigating similarity between child brand community members (beyond the similarity of a shared interest in the brand) will yield useful results for practitioners looking to create long term relationships with children through employing a brand community.

The attraction between similar individuals has been termed by psychologists as ‘similarity-attraction’ (Byrne, 1971). The majority of psychology researchers agree that a similarity between individuals is more likely to foster strong social relationships, than a dissimilarity between individuals (e.g. Montoya and Horton, 2004; Singh, Chen, and Wegener, 2014). Research to date on similarity-attraction has focused primarily on the formation of, and interaction within interpersonal relationships. For instance, the formation of social relationships (e.g. interactions within a school classroom) among children has been found to be influenced by similarity-attraction (Hunter, Fox, and Jones, 2016). When children perceive others to be similar to themselves, they will form relationships with them (e.g. Haselager, Hartup, Lieshout, and Riksen-Walraven, 1998; Hunter *et al*, 2016). Although there is a collection of research on similarity-attraction in the psychology field, there has been little attention from other fields, including marketing. This research introduces similarity-attraction theory to explain children’s brand community participation.

When looking at interpersonal relationships in marketing, the concepts of trust (e.g. Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013; Delgado-Ballester, 2004; Morgan and Hunt, 1994), loyalty (e.g. Marzocchi, Morandin, and Bergami, 2013; McAlexander, Kim, and Roberts, 2003) and even love (e.g. Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence, 2008; Noel and Merunka, 2013) have been examined extensively in relation to brands. The current study, however, is introducing respect as an alternative construct that explains participation

desire. Drawing from previous studies in psychology (e.g. Gueguen, Martin, and Meineri,

2011; Montoya and Horton, 2004; Singh *et al*, 2014), similarity between members is proposed to increase the level of respect felt towards the brand community, and this respect is what leads to a desire to participate. In addition, building upon findings that children harshly evaluate disloyal group members (Abrams, Rutland, Ferrell, and Pelletier, 2008), it is proposed that a disloyal member will influence the respect members feel towards the community, and subsequently influence their brand community participation desire.

To examine the effect of similarity-attraction, respect towards the brand community, and member deviance on children's desire to participate in a brand community, three experimental studies were undertaken. Study 1 establishes that a high level of brand community member similarity results in a higher desire to participate in the community when compared to a low level of brand community member similarity. In Study 2, it is demonstrated that the indirect effect of member similarity on desire to participate is explained through a perceived respect for the community. The bounds of the effect of respect are empirically revealed in Study 3. Specifically, the results provide evidence to suggest that the effectiveness of member similarity on respect is attenuated when there is a deviant member (disloyal to the community) in the community, subsequently diluting the desire to participate in the brand community.

## **2. Similarity-Attraction and Child Brand Community Participants**

Similarity-attraction theory (termed by some as the 'homophily hypothesis'; Kandel, 1978) suggests individuals interact with those that share similar characteristics to themselves (Gueguen *et al*, 2011). There are multiple theories as to why this attraction occurs (Nangle, Erdley, Zeff, Stanchfield, and Gold, 2004), with one theory termed the 'effectance motive' describing the need for a predictable, certain, and meaningful



interpretation of the world (Byrne and Clore, 1967; White, 1959). Through interacting with others who support and validate an individual's views (due to being characteristically similar); this 'effectance motive' is strengthened and nurtured (Byrne and Clore, 1967). Conversely, when an individual interacts with others that have dissimilar views (differing characteristics to their own) there is little support and validation (Byrne and Clore, 1967).

Similarity-attraction has been evidenced across a wide range of contexts, from adult romantic-oriented relationships (e.g. Montoya and Horton, 2004; Singh and Ho, 2000), through to the formation of interpersonal relationships in children as young as three years old (Fawcett and Markson, 2010). Focusing specifically on child-oriented studies, similarity between a range of characteristics, both physical and non-physical have been shown to influence relationship formation. For example, physical characteristics such as hair color (Fawcett and Markson, 2010) and age (Hartup, 1989); as well as non-physical characteristics like opinions (Epstein, 1989), and type of humor (Hunter *et al*, 2016). The more of these characteristics children have in common, the greater the likelihood a relationship will be formed and, the more likely the relationship will last (Aboud and Mendelson, 1996).

To date, the majority of studies on brand community participation have focused on adult participants, with very few dedicated to a child context (Flurry *et al*, 2014). Initial evidence suggests that findings from adult-oriented studies are not directly applicable to children (Hook, Baxter, and Kulczynski, 2017). Specifically, relationships evidenced as being significant in adult participants, for example between attitudes and desire, were not found for children (Hook *et al*, 2017). For example, findings indicated that desire was not necessary for social interaction and related community behavior to occur, the formation of positive attitudes lead directly to social interaction, unlike adults (Hook *et al*, 2017).

In addition, relationships between group behavior and brand behavior, found insignificant for adults were instead found to be significant in the child context (Hook *et al*, 2017). These results signify that more needs to be done to understand this niche area.

Little is known about the drivers of children's participation in brand communities, nor how children form relationships in branded communities. Similarity-attraction theory informs us that children are more likely to form stronger, and longer lasting relationships when they share similar characteristics (Haselager *et al*, 1998; Hunter *et al*, 2016). Drawing from this, it is proposed that similarity-attraction theory can be used to explain children's participation in brand communities, since these communities constitute groups of interpersonal relationships. Specifically, when a child perceives the brand community members to be similar to themselves (high member similarity), in terms of range of characteristics (age, background, culture and opinions), they will have a higher desire to participate in the community. Drawing from similarity-attraction theory, the following hypothesis is posited:

*Hypothesis 1: High (low) member similarity will result in a greater (lower) desire to participate in the brand community.*

### **3. Similarity-Attraction and Respect**

Respect, or admiration, towards an individual is known to influence similarity-attraction relationships (Lydon, Jamieson, and Zanna, 1988), and individuals assess the extent to which they respect others (termed 'cognitive quality') prior to commencing a relationship (Montoya and Horton, 2004). The characteristics an individual holds are ranked as being correct and superior (Montoya and Horton, 2004), and therefore when others are characteristically similar (portray similar characteristics as themselves); they will be highly admired, or respected, in turn leading to a greater desire to establish a relationship

(Singh *et al*, 2014). On the other hand, if an individual has little to no characteristics in common, there is no level of admiration, or respect, and in turn little, or no desire to establish a relationship (Singh *et al*, 2014).

The respect an individual feels can be directed not only towards one specific individual, but also towards a group of individuals (Ellemers, 2012; Huo and Binning, 2008). Just as one can respect an individual due to the attitudes and opinions they hold, an individual can also respect a collective (Ellemers, Doosje, and Spears, 2004), such as a group, team or community. Based upon previous findings (Ellemers, 2012; Ellemers *et al*, 2004; Huo and Binning, 2008), in the current context of brand communities, it is proposed that there are two levels of respect. Firstly, the respect felt towards each individual member (individual respect), and secondly the respect felt towards the collective brand community as a whole (collective respect), inclusive of all members. Since a brand community is a 'set of social relationships' (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412), it is the interactions between multiple members, rather than one on one interactions that are of more importance, and therefore, collective respect is more relevant to the current study of brand communities.

In reference to adult interpersonal relationships, collective respect, sometimes called 'intragroup respect' (Stürmer, Simon, and Loewy, 2008) or 'respect within group' (Tyler, Degoe, and Smith, 1996), is very important within group contexts, and is suggested to influence group-related behavior, such as participation (e.g. Branscombe, Spears, Ellemers, and Doosje, 2002; Simon and Stürmer, 2003; Tyler *et al*, 1996). When an individual is respected by the group, and in turn respects the group as a whole, it is argued that there will be a higher likelihood of group-based participation. In other words, it is expected that a positive relationship between collective respect and participation, will occur.

Previous child-oriented studies (Dunham, Newheiser, Hoosain, Merrill, and Olson, 2014; Haselager *et al*, 1998) also suggest that collective respect is relevant to child interpersonal relationships, with utilization of terms such as ‘social acceptance’ and ‘social rejection’, relating to those the child ‘liked most’ and ‘liked least’. When a child perceives another to be characteristically similar, they are more likely to be accepted socially (‘liked most’), and contrarily when there is little similarity they are socially rejected (‘liked least’) (Haselager *et al*, 1998). Although ‘respect towards a group’ has not specifically been investigated before, ‘liking’ (social acceptance or social rejection) is argued to be a simplified portrayal of respect.

Drawing from these previous findings, it is proposed that respect towards the brand community can be used to explain the relationship between brand community member similarity and desire to participate in the brand community, in the context of child participants. Specifically, respect is suggested to mediate the relationship between member similarity and participation desire, whereby an increase in respect towards the community will result in an increase in participation desire. Respect towards the community will increase when the child perceives the brand community members’ to be characteristically similar, rather than dissimilar, to themselves. This leads to the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: Respect mediates the relationship between member similarity and participation desire.*

#### **4. Member Deviance**

Subjective group dynamics theory states that children strive to sustain a positive social identity within a group (Abrams, Rutland, Cameron, and Marques, 2003). Sustaining a positive social identity is impacted by whether group norms (rules within the

group) are upheld (Abrams *et al*, 2008). In brand communities, loyalty to the community is one such norm (Hook *et al*, 2016), whereby members of the brand community are expected to stay loyal, i.e. stay a member of the community. If a member of the brand community becomes disloyal (for example, wants to join a competing brand community), this member is considered a deviant member (Hook *et al*, 2016). Disloyalty can be determined as a result of a combination of factors over time, or arise from a single instance (Abrams *et al*, 2003). Research has suggested that a single-instance preference for a competing brand community can be seen as a source of disloyalty (Hook *et al*, 2016). A deviant member is a threat to the group and its norms (Abrams and Rutland, 2008) and as such are less accepted by members, both at an individual level and collectively (Abrams *et al*, 2007). Normative members are more accepted, individually and collectively, since they are not going against the norms (Abrams *et al*, 2007). Previous child-oriented studies in psychology have investigated subjective group dynamics and similarity attraction in isolation, however, the current study draws these concepts together in an alternative context of brand communities.

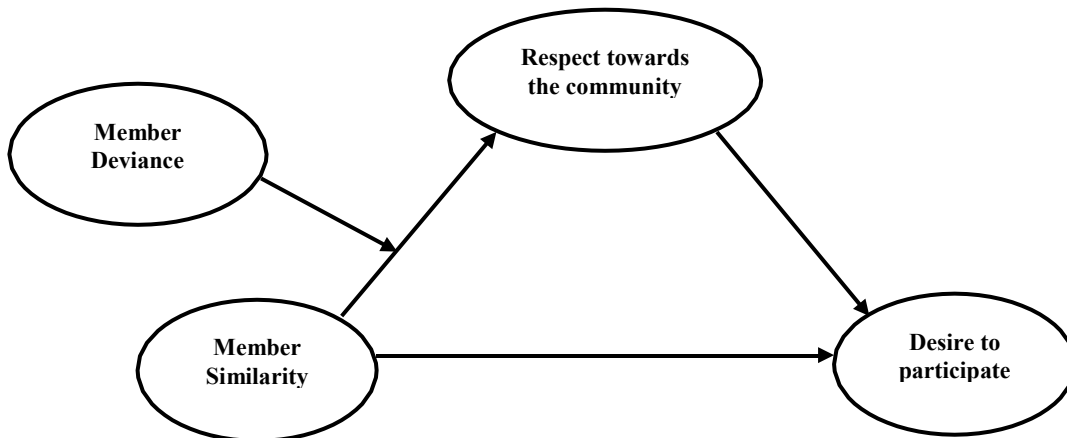
The threat deviant members pose to the group (Abrams *et al*, 2008) is suggested to negatively influence the respect felt towards the brand community. If a child is looking to join the brand community but sees that not all members are loyal to the group (in other words there is a deviant member present), it is likely they will have a lower respect towards the brand community as a whole. A misalignment of values and attitudes will occur, since there is a current member being disloyal, which in turn will result in a loss of respect for the community. This loss of respect will lead to a lower desire to participate in the community. Conversely, if all current members are seen as loyal to the brand community, there is no reason to disrespect the community.

Drawing from subjective group dynamics theory stating that deviant members are judged harshly and impact group interactions (Abrams, Rutland, Pelletier, and Ferrell, 2009), it is argued that member deviance will moderate the relationship between member similarity and respect. That is, an individual will lose respect for the brand community when they witness deviant behavior by a member, irrespective of how characteristically similar they are to the group members. These arguments lead to the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3: Member deviance moderates the relationship between member similarity and respect.*

Drawing from prior literature in developmental psychology, social psychology and marketing, Figure 1 presents a conceptual model for the impact of similarity-attraction within the context of child-oriented brand communities.

*Figure 2 - Conceptual Model and Hypotheses*



## 5. STUDY 1

Study 1 aims to demonstrate the effect of brand community member similarity on desire to participate in the brand community. The study proposes that when child-age participants perceive that brand community members are similar to themselves (in terms

of age, background, culture and opinions) they will have a higher desire to participate in the brand community.

### ***5.1 Participants and Procedures***

A sample of 142 child-members of the Australian general public aged between six and 17 years (71 male, 71 female;  $M_{Age} = 11.53$ ,  $SD_{Age} = 3.32$ ), were recruited through an Australian research panel company to participate in an online experiment. This method is consistent with the approach undertaken by Baxter, Ilicic, Kulczynski, & Lowrey (2017), Baxter & Lowrey (2014) and Hook *et al* (2016). A between subjects design was employed, with participants randomly allocated to one of the two experimental conditions: low member similarity ( $n = 72$ ) or high member similarity ( $n = 70$ ). This sample exceeded that required for statistical power of .80, with an a priori alpha level of .05 and estimated medium effect size ( $f = .25$ ) (that is,  $n > 128$ ; G\*Power).

First, participants were asked to rate their attitude towards the brand ‘Tip Top’ on three seven-point scales drawn from Mitchell and Olsen (1981) (*dislike/like*, *bad/good*, *uninteresting/interesting*; Cronbach  $\alpha = .913$ ). ‘Tip Top’ is a well-known Australian food brand. Participants were then presented with the following scenario: *Imagine that you are thinking of joining the 'Tip Top' community. There are lots of members in the 'Tip Top' community. Participants were also told in the scenario, dependent upon the condition, that the members of the community: are the same (different) age as you, have the same (different) culture as you, have the same (different) opinions as you and have the same (different) background as you.* The high similarity condition used the word *same*, the low similarity condition used the word *different*. The manipulation of member similarity was adapted from prior similarity-attraction studies (Balmer, Powell, Karaosmanoğlu, Banu Elmadağ Baş, & Zhang, 2011; Hung, 2014). Participants were then asked to report the

degree to which they agreed with three statements (seven-point scales) that focused on their desire to participate in the 'Tip Top' brand community (e.g. *"I want to interact together with the 'Tip Top' community" does not describe me/describes me very much*; Cronbach  $\alpha = .954$ ) drawn from Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Pearo (2004). Next, participants were asked to report the degree to which they were similar to the members of the brand community to assess the perceived level of member similarity (four statements using seven-point scales; *not at all/a lot*) (e.g. *"The members of the 'Tip Top' community are similar to me in terms of age"* Cronbach  $\alpha = .951$ ). Simple demographic information was also obtained.

## **5.2 Manipulation and Confound Checks**

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to check if the manipulation of member similarity was successful. There was a significant difference in perceived member similarity across the two experimental conditions, with those participants in the high member similarity condition perceiving a higher similarity than those in the low member similarity condition ( $p < .001$ ,  $M_{\text{HighSim}} = 4.80$ ,  $SD_{\text{HighSim}} = 1.46$ ;  $M_{\text{LowSim}} = 3.36$ ,  $SD_{\text{LowSim}} = 1.51$ ). This result signifies the manipulation of member similarity was successful. In addition, another independent samples *t*-test was performed to ensure no confounding effects occurred with regards to pre-formed attitudes towards the brand 'Tip Top'. Results of the *t*-test showed that there was no significant difference across participants with regards to attitude towards the brand 'Tip Top' ( $p = .109$   $M_{\text{HighSim}} = 4.84$ ,  $SD_{\text{HighSim}} = 1.65$ ;  $M_{\text{LowSim}} = 4.42$ ,  $SD_{\text{LowSim}} = 1.46$ ).

## **5.3 Results**

Hypothesis one proposed that member similarity would influence a child's desire to participate in a brand community. Specifically, it was expected that when a child-



participant perceived the members of the brand community to be similar to themselves (high member similarity), there would be a higher desire to participate when compared to brand community members who were not similar (low member similarity). To test this hypothesis an ANOVA model was estimated, with desire to participate in the brand community as the dependent variable. Results confirmed that member similarity had a significant effect on brand community participation desire ( $F(1,140) = 6.65, p = .011, \eta^2 = .045$ ). Results showed that those who were informed that brand community members were very similar to themselves (high member similarity) reported a significantly greater participation desire when compared to those who were informed the members were not similar to themselves (low member similarity) ( $M_{\text{HighSim}} = 4.09, SD_{\text{HighSim}} = 1.79; M_{\text{LowSim}} = 3.34, SD_{\text{LowSim}} = 1.67$ ), supporting Hypothesis one.

Given the wide age range of participants used in the current study, an additional test was performed to check that age did not impact the findings. Two age cohorts were created (6-11 years old and 12-17 years old), similar to groups used by others when investigating children (Abrams *et al*, 2007, 2003). Using these two age cohorts, the PROCESS model 1 was employed ( $n = 10,000$ , Preacher *et al*, 2007), to confirm that the age of participants did not moderate the observed similarity effect, using desire to participate as the dependent variable. A significant moderating effect was not observed ( $\beta = .686, p = .239, R^2\Delta = .010$ ), demonstrating that the effect of member similarity is not conditional on age.

## **6. STUDY 2**

Study 2 aims to demonstrate that the effect of member similarity on desire to participate is explained through a perceived respect for the members of the community. This second study posits that when child-participants perceive the members of the brand community to be characteristically similar to themselves, they will have a higher level of respect for

the brand community. The level of respect will, in turn, positively influence desire to participate in the brand community.

### **6.1 Participants and Procedures**

A sample of 143 child-members of the Australian general public aged between six and 17 years (83 male, 60 female;  $M_{Age} = 11.94$ ,  $SD_{Age} = 3.54$ ), were recruited through an Australian research panel company to participate in an online experiment. A between subjects design was employed, with participants randomly allocated to one of the two experimental conditions: low member similarity ( $n = 71$ ) or high member similarity ( $n = 72$ ). This sample exceeded that required for a statistical power of .80, with an a priori alpha level of .05 and estimated medium effect size ( $f = .25$ ) (that is,  $n > 128$ ; G\*Power).

First participants were asked to rate their attitude towards the brand, 'Kleenex', using the measures from Study 1 (Cronbach  $\alpha = .913$ ). Then participants were presented with the same scenario and member similarity situation (random allocation to one member similarity condition) as per Study 1, however, using the brand 'Kleenex' where applicable. An alternative brand was chosen for each separate study to strengthen the generalizability of the findings across brands. 'Kleenex' is a well-known tissue brand in Australia. As per Study 1, participants desire to participate in the community was then measured (Cronbach  $\alpha = .954$ ). Next, participants were asked to report the degree to which they agreed with four statements (seven-point scales; *strongly disagree/strongly agree*) that measured their perceived respect for the brand community members (e.g. "The members of the 'Kleenex' community are probably good at everything they do" Cronbach  $\alpha = .942$ ) adapted from Singh, Chen, and Wegener (2014). Participants were also asked to report the degree to which they were similar to brand community members

as per Study 1, however, replacing the brand ‘Tip Top’ with the brand ‘Kleenex’ (Cronbach  $\alpha = .951$ ). Finally, basic demographic information was obtained.

## **6.2 Manipulation and Confound Checks**

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to check that the manipulation of member similarity was successful. There was a significant difference between the two manipulation conditions, with those participants in the high similarity condition perceiving a higher similarity than those in the low similarity condition ( $p < .001$ ,  $M_{\text{HighSim}} = 5.08$ ,  $SD_{\text{HighSim}} = 1.25$ ;  $M_{\text{LowSim}} = 3.60$ ,  $SD_{\text{LowSim}} = 1.39$ ). This result signifies that the manipulation of member similarity was successful.

In addition, replicating the process applied in Study 1, an independent samples *t*-test was performed to ensure no confounding effects occurred with regards to pre-formed attitudes towards the brand ‘Kleenex’. Results of the *t*-test showed that there was no significant difference across participants with regards to attitude towards the brand ‘Kleenex’ ( $p = .524$ ,  $M_{\text{HighSim}} = 5.15$ ,  $SD_{\text{HighSim}} = 1.37$ ;  $M_{\text{LowSim}} = 5.01$ ,  $SD_{\text{LowSim}} = 1.32$ ).

## **6.3 Results**

Hypothesis two argued that the relationship evidenced in Study 1, between member similarity and desire to participate, could be explained by the perceived level of respect felt towards the brand community. To test this hypothesis, the PROCESS macro bootstrapping procedure ( $n = 10,000$ , Model 4) was employed (Preacher *et al*, 2007). Results demonstrated that respect mediated the relationship between member similarity and participation desire ( $\beta = .404$ , 95% CI = .066 to .742,  $p = .020$ ), see Table 1 for summarized regression results. These results support Hypothesis two, showing that respect towards the community is the driver for desire to participate in the brand community. A high level of similarity between members, increased the respect felt

towards the brand community. This increase in respect, lead to an increase in desire to participate in the brand community. Conversely, when there was a low level of similarity between members, the level of respect decreased, as to did desire to participate.

*Table 6 - Regression Results (Study 2)*

	Beta	t	p
Dependent variable: Respect towards the community			
Member Similarity (X)	.404	2.362	.020
Dependent variable: Desire to Participate			
Respect towards the community (M)	.867	7.422	<.001
Member Similarity (X)	.336	1.390	.167

To confirm that the age of participants did not moderate the observed respect effect, the procedure employed in Study 1 was again utilized for Study 2 with participants grouped into the same two age cohorts (6-11 and 12-17 years old). Specifically, the PROCESS model 1 was employed ( $n = 10,000$ , Preacher *et al*, 2007), with respect as the dependent variable. A significant moderating effect was not observed ( $\beta = -.151$ ,  $p = .667$ ,  $R^2\Delta = .001$ ), demonstrating that the effect of respect is not conditional on age.

## 7. STUDY 3

Study 3 aims to empirically test the bounds of the effect of respect, by examining the moderating effect of member deviance on the relationship between member similarity and respect towards the community. This concluding study proposes that member deviance will impact the relationships evidenced in Study 2. Specifically, when a deviant member is introduced into the brand community, respect felt towards the community is hypothesized to decrease, when there is a high member similarity.

### **7.1 Participants and Procedures**

A sample of 181 members of the Australian general public aged between six and 17 years (83 male, 98 female;  $M_{Age} = 11.85$ ,  $SD_{Age} = 4.00$ ), were recruited through an Australian research panel company to participate in an online experiment. A 2 x 2 (member similarity: high member similarity vs low member similarity; member deviance: deviant member vs normative member) factorial design was employed, with participants randomly allocated to one of the four experimental conditions: low member similarity and deviant member ( $n = 43$ ), low member similarity and normative member ( $n = 49$ ), high member similarity and deviant member ( $n = 48$ ), or high member similarity and normative member ( $n = 41$ ). This sample exceeded that required for a statistical power of .80, with an a priori alpha level of .05 and estimated medium effect size ( $f = .25$ ) (that is,  $n > 180$ ; G\*Power).

As per the previous studies (Study 1 and Study 2), the attitude towards the brand, 'Kraft', was measured (Cronbach  $\alpha = .884$ ), and the same scenario and member similarity situation (random allocation to one member similarity condition) were presented, using the brand 'Kraft' where applicable. 'Kraft' is a well-known Australian food brand. A manipulation for member deviance was also introduced. Specifically, participants were given one of the following scenarios, dependent upon the condition they were randomly allocated (deviant or normative member). As it only takes one member to impact the dynamics of a child-oriented group (Abrams, Rutland, Palmer, and Purewal 2014), a single deviant member was chosen for the 'member deviance' condition. For the 'deviant member' condition participants were told: "*Alex is one member of the 'Kraft' community but thinks that another community is better and has heaps of fun things to do there. Alex wants to leave the 'Kraft' community and join another community*". For the 'normative member' condition participants were told: "*Alex is one member of the 'Kraft' community*".

and thinks that this community is good and has heaps of fun things to do. Alex wants to stay a member of the 'Kraft' community". The scenarios for member deviance were adopted and adapted from Abrams *et al* (2014). The name 'Alex' was chosen as this is a non-gender specific name, and therefore less likely to produce gender-biased results (Abrams, Rutland, Palmer, Pelletier, *et al*, 2014). Following the scenario all participants were presented with the measures for *desire to participate* (Cronbach  $\alpha = .944$ ) and *respect towards the community* (Cronbach  $\alpha = .928$ ) as per Study 1 and Study 2, using the brand 'Kraft' where applicable. Participants were asked to report the degree to which they agreed with four statements to determine if they had correctly interpreted the manipulation of member similarity as per the previous studies (Cronbach  $\alpha = .951$ ). In addition, participants were also asked to report the degree to which they agreed with one statement (seven-point scale; *very unloyal/loyal*) to determine if they had correctly interpreted the manipulation of member deviance ("To what extent do you think Alex is being loyal to the 'Kraft' community"). Finally, basic demographic information was obtained.

## **7.2 Manipulation and Confound Checks**

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to check the manipulation of member similarity was successful. There was a significant difference between the two member similarity manipulation conditions, with those participants in the high similarity condition perceiving a higher similarity than those in the low similarity condition ( $p < .001$ ,  $M_{\text{HighSim}} = 4.83$ ,  $SD_{\text{HighSim}} = 1.21$ ;  $M_{\text{LowSim}} = 3.74$ ,  $SD_{\text{LowSim}} = 1.39$ ). This result signifies the manipulation of member similarity was successful and occurred as desired.

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to check the manipulation of member deviance was successful. There was a significant difference between the two member

deviance manipulation conditions, with those participants in the member deviance condition perceiving ‘Alex’ as being more disloyal than those in the normative member condition ( $p < .001$ ,  $M_{\text{Norm}} = 5.28$ ,  $SD_{\text{Norm}} = 1.30$ ;  $M_{\text{Dev}} = 4.00$ ,  $SD_{\text{Dev}} = 1.60$ ). This result shows the manipulation of member deviance was successful.

To ensure no confounding effects occurred with regards to pre-formed attitudes towards the brand ‘Kraft’, a between-subjects ANOVA was performed. Results of the ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference across participants, with regards to attitude towards the brand ‘Kraft’ ( $F(1,177) = 2.32$ ,  $p = .077$ ,  $\eta^2 = .038$ ). This result signifies that preexisting attitudes towards the brand ‘Kraft’ did not impact the results of the study ( $M_{\text{HighSimDev}} = 4.90$ ,  $SD_{\text{HighSimDev}} = 1.46$ ;  $M_{\text{HighSimNorm}} = 5.43$ ,  $SD_{\text{HighSimNorm}} = 1.14$ ;  $M_{\text{LowSimDev}} = 4.83$ ,  $SD_{\text{LowSimDev}} = 1.43$ ;  $M_{\text{LowSimNorm}} = 4.77$ ,  $SD_{\text{LowSimNorm}} = 1.13$ ).

### **7.3 Results**

Hypothesis three proposed that member deviance would moderate the relationship between member similarity and respect, as shown in Study 2. When a deviant member was introduced to the brand community, the effect of member similarity on respect towards the brand community was expected to attenuate. To test Hypothesis three, the PROCESS macro bootstrapping procedure ( $n = 10,000$ , Model 7) was used (Preacher *et al*, 2007). Significant results were found across the models supporting the propositions made.

Firstly, the interaction between the two manipulated variables (member similarity x member deviance) significantly predicted respect towards the community ( $\beta = .659$ ,  $p = .032$ ). This respect, consequently, predicted desire to participate in the brand community ( $\beta = .938$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As expected, a moderated mediation effect was observed ( $\beta = .618$ , 95% CI = .064 to 1.025). Specifically, results showed that the mediating effect of respect

was found to attenuate when member deviance was present ( $\beta = .019$ , 95% CI =  $-.409$  to  $.449$ ). In the deviant member and high member similarity condition, there was a significantly lower level of respect when compared to the normative member and high member similarity condition ( $p = .003$ ,  $M_{\text{HighSimDev}} = 4.28$ ,  $SD_{\text{HighSimDev}} = 1.12$ ;  $M_{\text{HighSimNorm}} = 5.04$ ,  $SD_{\text{HighSimNorm}} = 1.10$ ). For the low member similarity conditions, member deviance had no significant influence on respect ( $p = .965$ ,  $M_{\text{LowSimDev}} = 4.26$ ,  $SD_{\text{LowSimDev}} = 1.11$ ;  $M_{\text{LowSimNorm}} = 4.34$ ,  $SD_{\text{LowSimNorm}} = 0.76$ ). These results all support Hypothesis three. See Table 2 for a summary of the regression results and Figure 2 for a graphical representation.

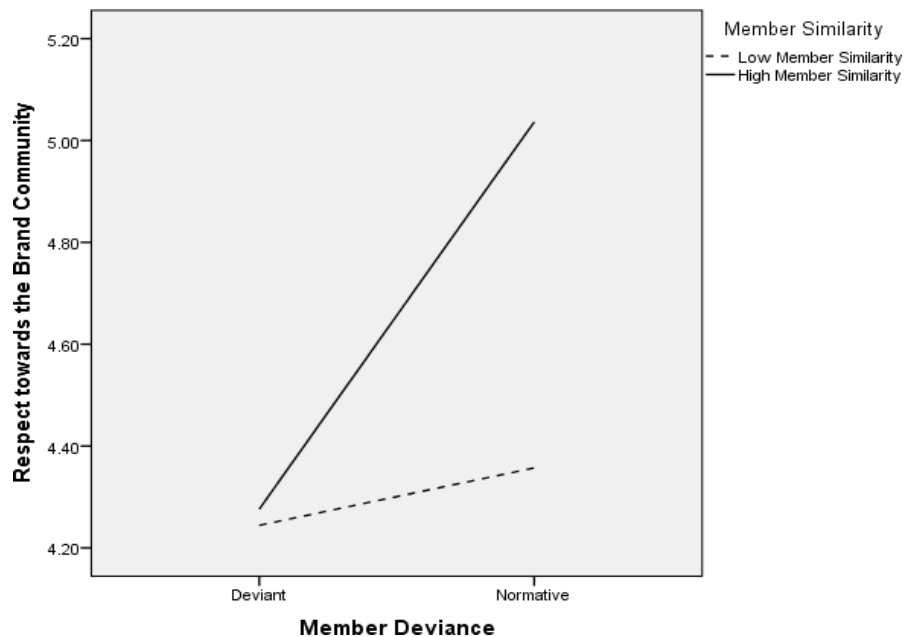
*Table 7 - Regression Results (Study 3)*

	Beta	t	p
Dependent variable: Respect towards the community			
Member Similarity (X)	.348	2.277	.024
Member Deviance (W)	.426	2.784	.006
X x W	.659	2.156	.032
Dependent variable: Desire to Participate			
Respect towards the community (M)	.938	11.118	<.001
Member Similarity (X)	.210	1.173	.243

To confirm that the age of participants did not moderate the observed member deviance effect, a similar procedure to Studies 1 and 2 was applied with participants grouped again into two age cohorts (6-11 and 12-17 years old). Specifically, the PROCESS model 3 was employed ( $n = 10,000$ , Preacher *et al*, 2007), with respect as the dependent variable. A significant moderating effect was not observed ( $\beta = .631$ ,  $p = .298$ ,  $R^2\Delta = .006$ ), demonstrating that the effect of member deviance is not conditional on age.



Figure 3 - Effect of Similarity and Deviance on Respect



## 8. General Discussion and Conclusions

Despite children actively engaging in brand communities, limited research has been conducted to understand this phenomenon. Drawing from previous research in psychology that has evidenced the effect of similarity-attraction in relationships amongst children (e.g. Haselager *et al*, 1998; Rubin, Lynch, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, and Booth, 1994), this research introduced similarity-attraction as a factor influencing children's brand community participation desire. The results from the three studies suggest that a common brand interest is not the only factor of similarity influencing participation desire; with children shown to have a stronger desire to participate in a brand community when they believe the members are similar to themselves (e.g. age and opinions). These results reflect those obtained by psychologists who have demonstrated that a higher similarity between children is more likely to promote relationship formation, and enduring relationships (Aboud and Mendelson, 1996).

The effect of member similarity on participation desire was found to occur due to an increase in the level of respect felt towards the brand community. That is, when a child perceives community members as similar to themselves, they have a greater respect for the collective community. These results are consistent with previous findings in psychology that demonstrate respect highly influences similarity-attraction relationships (Lydon *et al*, 1988; Singh *et al*, 2014). In addition, the current results provide further evidence that respect is also important for child relationship formation, building upon previous studies in this niche area (Haselager *et al*, 1998) and drawing attention to respect in the field of marketing.

However, the mediating effect of respect is not without boundaries. The results from the last study showed that when a deviant member was introduced into the brand community, there was a significant decrease in the level of respect and ultimately the desire to participate. Respect decreased, when the community members were similar, emphasizing the impact of member deviance on respect towards the brand community. Specifically, when a member of a brand community was disloyal, respect for the group decreased, even though the community members were similar. It is proposed that this is due to a misalignment between the values and attitudes held by the individual looking to join the community and the community itself, since one member was going against the group. Subjective group dynamics theory explains this result, by stating that deviant members threaten the reputation of the group, and are harshly evaluated (Abrams *et al*, 2009). It is suggested that the deviant member introduced into the current study threatened the reputation and values of the group. In the conditions when there was high similarity between the members, the reputation of the group was damaged because there was a deviant member present. This caused the child to negatively evaluate the group, leading to a lower perceived respect and subsequently lower participation desire.

The results of the three studies present interesting findings, with implications for academics and practitioners alike. Firstly, the current research adds to the sparse literature on children's involvement with brand communities. The theory of similarity-attraction is introduced to the area of brand communities, providing new evidence for child-oriented brand community participation. For practitioners, results suggest that marketers should emphasize member similarity when promoting brand communities to children (e.g., "come talk to kids just like you!"). Accentuating to children that they will be engaging with children, who are similar to them, is likely to have a positive impact on participation and increase the number of members in the community. Further, results indicate that member deviance has a negative effect on participation desire. It is suggested that marketers should monitor member interactions with the goal of identifying and eliminating deviant behavior. Marketers should also portray that members are loyal to the brand community, in promotion material targeting new members, in an attempt to minimize any negative influence of deviance that could occur. Future research should be undertaken to determine how deviant members can be identified, and how to manage deviant behavior to aid practitioners utilizing brand communities.

While the current research has been conducted in a method that prioritizes reliability and validity, the research is not without limitations. One main limitation is the use of a fictitious brand community. A fictitious brand community was used, and was necessary, to ensure the effect of member similarity could be controlled, however, due to this, additional factors may influence the results in a real-world context. Factors such as the number of members in the community may impact the relationships found. When there is a large brand community (many members), there is a high likelihood that there will be a greater range of ages, personalities and backgrounds, this may change the results evidenced in the current study. In addition, when the community is online, a number

factors unique to the online environment come into play, such as avatars (Sicilia and Palazón, 2008), that could change the results. Children in these communities may in fact want to take on a different identity, and in essence be completely unique, not similar, to others. Another limitation was the use of characteristics to determine member similarity, not actual similarity. Although characteristics have been used in previous research to examine similarity (Balmer et al., 2011; Hung, 2014), other approaches to examining similarity between members could yield useful results. Instead of informing participants they are similar or dissimilar to each other, future research should look at incorporating a measure of similarity into the study.

With regards to the member deviance manipulation, the current study did not specify the type of member or popularity of the deviant member, however, this could have interesting implications. For example, if a popular group member or ‘leader’ is the disloyal member the impact on respect felt towards the group may be more significant than a general member of the brand community. Future research should explore whether the level of popularity or status of the deviant member impacts the effects found in the current study.

Again, in relation to the variables employed, the only dependent variable used in this study was brand community participation desire. Interesting insights may be gained from an examination of alternative dependent variables. Future research should investigate whether member-similarity impacts other factors in child-oriented brand communities, for example, actual behavior in the brand community, rather than just desire.

Lastly, the current research was cross-sectional in nature, signifying no long-term consequences could be generalized from the results. A longitudinal study, examining the long-term effects of a brand community with characteristically similar child-members

could present interesting insights on the consequences of participation, such as community loyalty, word-of-mouth recommendations and even brand loyalty.

### **Conflict of Interest**

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

**References**

Refer to Appendix 9.5.4 for Paper 4 Reference List

## 7. Additional Papers

The following section presents the additional papers that were prepared and presented by the candidate at national and international conferences. Conference Paper 1, presented in 2016 by the candidate, is given first, Conference Paper 2 is then provided. This second conference paper was delivered in 2017, by the candidate.

To conclude the thesis, the references and appendix are provided in Section 8 and Section 9, respectively.

## 7.1 Conference Paper 1

The following paper (Conference Paper 1) is entitled: “Understanding the complex interplay between evaluative social identity, negative anticipated emotions and self-esteem on a child’s commitment to brand communities”. This paper was prepared and presented on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016, by the candidate, at the European Marketing Academy Conference (EMAC), with guidance provided by the co-authors (Stacey Baxter and Alicia Kulczynski). The conference was held in Oslo, Norway, with the theme: “Marketing in the Age of Data”. Conference Paper 1 is closely tied to the study undertaken in *Paper Three: New Model*.



**Understanding the complex interplay between  
evaluative social identity, negative anticipated  
emotions and self-esteem on a child's commitment  
to brand communities**

**Abstract:**

Applying social identity and subjective group dynamics theory, this research sought to empirically examine the influence of evaluative social identity, negative anticipated emotions and self-esteem on children's brand community commitment. Results obtained from an online survey of 394 Australian children aged 6 to 14 years revealed that evaluative social identity has a conditional indirect effect on brand community commitment. Specifically, for children with low self-esteem, the effect of evaluative social identity on community commitment was found to be mediated by negative anticipated emotions; however, this mediated effect was not observed for children with high self-esteem. This paper provides a unique insight into the under-researched area of children and brand communities, with findings useful for both academics and practitioners.

**Keywords:** Communities, Children, Self-Esteem

**Track:** Product and Brand Management

**Authors:** Margurite Hook, Dr Stacey Baxter and Dr Alicia Kulczynski

## 1. Introduction

Brand communities, namely “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a set of social relationships among admirers of a brand” (Muniz Jr & O’Guinn, 2001, p 41), have been shown to be a useful tool for marketers, facilitating the development of consumer-brand relationships (Ouwensloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008). Both online and offline brand communities are incorporated into marketing strategies to encourage engagement with brands and products (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). Engagement with a brand community has been shown to lead to community commitment, whereby members continually maintain a relationship with the brand (Ouwensloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008), and it is these community members that are most valuable for a brand (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). A review of literature reveals that researchers to date have focused on understanding adult brand community commitment (e.g., *Harley Davidson* and *Jeep*; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002), with limited work undertaken to understand children’s commitment to brand communities (Flurry, Swimberghe, & Parker, 2014). The recent emergence of child-orientated brand communities (e.g., Mattel, My Lego Network, Flurry et al., 2015), however, provides evidence that brands understand the potential value of establishing a forum for which child and adolescent brand-users can engage.

Adopting a social identity and subjective group dynamics framework, this research seeks to understand children’s brand community commitment. Evaluative social identity (ESI, i.e., emotional attachment to a community), in particular, has been widely cited as an important factor influencing an adults desire to engage with a brand community (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004). Specifically, ESI was found to be a determinant of group behaviour in a brand community, and in addition, a stronger relationship was evident for small group brand communities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006).

Building on existing knowledge, this research seeks to understand the effect of a child’s

ESI on brand community commitment. As social interactions among children are known to be influenced by self-esteem (e.g. Boulton & Smith, 1994) it is suggested that self-esteem may impact the effect of ESI. Additionally, ESI may lead to negative anticipated emotions when the child is blocked from the community, which in turn has an influence on community commitment. It is argued that the effect of ESI on community commitment will be moderated by an individual's self-esteem, with negative anticipated emotions from being blocked from the brand community playing a mediating role.

With children playing a critical role in the market place (consumers, influencers, future market, Gorn & Florsheim, 1985), coupled with children's need to engage and be part of a group (Harter, 1999) it is argued that an understanding of the combined role of ESI, self-esteem and negative emotional anticipation will not only provide a unique contribution to marketing literature, but will also be of interest to brand managers, seeking to understand child brand community members. The following paper will first discuss the theoretical development of the research, followed by a brief outline of the method and design approach, the results are then presented with a short discussion following to conclude the paper.

## **2. Theoretical development**

This research seeks to understand children's brand community commitment, that is, their desire and willingness to develop and maintain a relationship with the brand community (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). To develop the conceptual framework the theories of social identity, subjective group dynamics and self-esteem were investigated, each of these is discussed below.

## **2.1 Social Identity**

Social identity theory is widely recognised as a key aspect of brand community participation (e.g. Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) . An individual is said to have achieved social identity when they see themselves as part of a group (or groups), and understand the emotional significance of being in the group (Tajfel, 1978). An individual's social identity comprises three distinct components: cognitive, affective and evaluative (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999). Evaluative social identity, the focus of this research, refers to the negative and positive feelings an individual associates with being a part of the group (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999). ESI also encompasses an individual's comparison of in-group and out-group choices and preferences (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006).

Bennett and Sani (2004) demonstrate that from approximately five years of age, children have the cognitive ability to not only self-categorise themselves as being part of a group (or even multiple groups), but also acknowledge that they have identities within these groups. However, it is not until approximately seven years of age that children experience ESI (Bennett & Sani, 2004). The emergence of ESI begins with children differentiating between in-group and out-group and is ultimately identified when a child positively evaluates their in-group membership (Bennett & Sani, 2004).

The link between ESI and brand community commitment (or continuing participation behaviour) has been well established in literature (e.g. Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004), it is therefore hypothesised that a positive relationship will also be observed for child brand community members (*H1*).

## ***2.2 Subjective group dynamics***

The Subjective Group Dynamics (SGD) model can be used to explain how children interact within social groups (Abrams, Rutland, & Cameron, 2003). Whilst SGD has not been applied in brand community literature; SGD may provide a useful framework for explaining brand community behaviour. SGD is based on social identity theory, and holds that members of groups have a bias towards in-group members and strive to uphold the norms of the in-group (Abrams et al., 2003). Favouritism for in-group members and rituals originates from a desire to increase an individual's social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It is therefore posited that a child who sees themselves as important to the group (i.e., part of the 'in-group') will feel a sense of ESI, resulting in a need to uphold in-group norms.

In the context of a children's brand community, maintaining contact with the brand community regularly is considered an in-group norm (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006). Therefore if a child, with high ESI (in-group) is temporarily blocked from participating in the brand community (e.g., parent limiting contact), when the child returns to the group they may feel that they are treated differently to other in-group members, or even seen as an out-group member due to an inability to uphold in-group norms. In these instances it is suggested that the blocked, high ESI community member will experience negative emotions (e.g., sadness, anger).

When children experience ESI and see themselves as part of the in-group, they form a strong favouritism towards the group (Bennett & Sani, 2004). It is suggested that when faced with potential removal from the in-group, a child will remain committed to the brand community, due to a continued favouritism with the in-group, and they will attempt to maintain their position in the in-group after being blocked from engagement. It is

therefore hypothesised that negative anticipated emotions will mediate the effect of evaluative social identity on community commitment (*H2*).

### ***2.3 Moderating role of self-esteem***

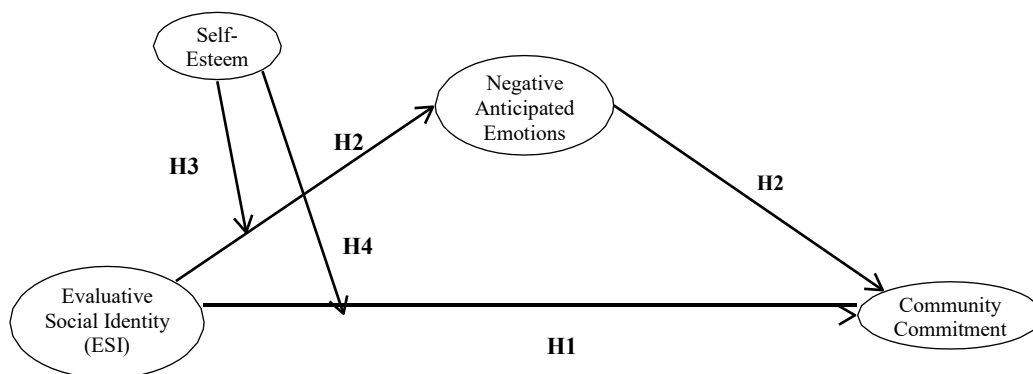
The theory of social identity posits that an increase in in-group attitudes is positively related to self-esteem (Corenblum, 2014), however, no research is yet to explore whether self-esteem moderates social identity relationships. As ESI is directly associated with the positive and negative feelings experienced when part of a group (community), it is argued that self-esteem will moderate the effect of ESI on both brand community commitment and negative anticipated emotions. Social and group interactions have been widely evidenced at strengthening a child's self-esteem (e.g. Boulton & Smith, 1994). Self-esteem has been linked to a child's well-being, with children possessing low self-esteem often becoming victims of bullying (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Valkenburg et al., 2006). Although self-esteem has largely been researched as an outcome of community involvement, it is argued that self-esteem has a moderating role when considering the relationship between ESI and negative anticipated emotions.

Drawing from SGD, it is suggested that the effects of not upholding the in-group norms would be felt more strongly for members with low self-esteem, as they would not have the confidence that they will remain in the in-group after they have not followed the norms. Children with low self-esteem lack confidence and rely more on group and peer support (Boulton & Smith, 1994). As a result, a child with high ESI (e.g., feels they are needed by the group), yet low self-esteem, will experience strong negative emotions when contact with the brand community is blocked. Additionally, they will be more concerned that they will be rejected by the rest of the brand community since they are not upholding an in-group norm. On the other hand, a child with high ESI and high self-esteem, will not

feel concerned with rejection from the brand and therefore will not feel negative anticipated emotions when blocked from the community. It is therefore hypothesised that self-esteem moderates the relationship between evaluative social identity and negative anticipated emotions (*H3*).

Self-esteem is also suggested to moderate the relationship between evaluative social identity and community commitment (*H4*). Specifically, drawing from research that has shown that children with low self-esteem cope better when they feel they are supported by a peer or community group (Boulton & Smith, 1994). It is argued that children with low self-esteem will demonstrate stronger commitment to a brand community when compared to children with higher levels of self-esteem (who do not require community support). Figure 1 shows the proposed conceptual model and also a summary of the four hypotheses.

*Figure 1 - Conceptual model of the effects on children's evaluative social identity in brand communities*





### **3. Method**

Three hundred and ninety four Australian children (age 6 to 14,  $M_{age} = 9.94$ ), who self-identified as being part of an offline brand community, completed an online questionnaire. Parental consent, and child assent, was obtained prior to participation. This research focuses on offline communities formed by child admirers of the brand, Minecraft, a contemporary brand with significant youth engagement (20% of players are under the age of 15, and 43% of players are between the ages of 15-21, Minecraft Seeds, 2015).

#### **3.1 Measures**

All measures were drawn from existing literature. Measures of social identity (two items, e.g., “My friends I talk about Minecraft with need me”;  $\alpha = .706$ ) and negative anticipated emotions (nine items, e.g., “If I can’t play Minecraft and talk to my friends about Minecraft I will feel: not sad - sad”;  $\alpha = .944$ ) were drawn from Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006). In some instances, items were altered to reflect the language ability of participants (e.g., ‘depressed’ was altered to state ‘sad’). Three items from Chan & Li (2010) were used to measure brand community commitment: “I would feel sad if Minecraft wasn’t around anymore”, “I care about the future of Minecraft” and “If I didn’t play Minecraft for a few days, I would try and play as soon as I could” ( $\alpha = .898$ ). Finally, the seven-item self-esteem measure employed by Harter (1982) was used. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate what type of child they related to the most, for example, ‘some kids feel they are a good person’ or ‘other kids do not feel they are a good person’. Following procedures employed by Harter (1982), responses to self-esteem items were tallied to create an overall score.

#### 4. Results and discussion

To test hypothesis 1 – 4 the PROCESS macro bootstrapping procedure ( $n = 10,000$ ) was employed, specifically Model 8 (Hayes, 2013). Table 1 provides a summary of all the relevant statistical results from the hypothesis tests. The direct effect of ESI on community commitment was found to be significant, supporting *H1*. Results show that a child's positive evaluation of their identity within a brand community, and their self-evaluated importance of being in the group are positively related to community commitment. This result is consistent with the previous findings of adult-oriented brand community research (e.g., Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). The interaction between ESI and self-esteem was found to have a significant effect on negative anticipated emotions, thus supporting *H3*. Specifically, results demonstrate that the effect of ESI on negative anticipated emotions was only significant for those with lower self-esteem. This is in line with predictions based on previous literature (Boulton & Smith, 1994) and shows that children with low self-esteem were more affected by negative emotions when temporarily blocked from participating in the brand community. The results could imply a stronger need to be part of the brand community for children with low self-esteem, compared to children with higher levels of self-esteem.

In support of *H4*, the interaction between ESI and self-esteem was also found to have a significant effect on community commitment. When a child with low self-esteem has an ESI with a brand community they will be more committed to the brand community, however, when a child has higher self-esteem, the effect of ESI weakens. As hypothesised, children with low self-esteem have a stronger level of commitment to the brand community, since they rely on the group more for support. For high self-esteem children the support of the community network is not as strong, and therefore, the relationship between ESI and community commitment is not as strong. These results

reflect arguments presented in the self-esteem literature whereby low self-esteem children cope better when they feel they have the support of a group (Boulton & Smith, 1994), whereas those children with high self-esteem do not need the support of the group.

When testing for moderated-mediation, as is the case for testing *H2*, the key indicator is the indirect effect of the interaction on the dependent variable through the mediator. Results show that the 95% bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect of the interaction (ESI x self-esteem) did not include zero (effect = .066, 95% CI = .003 to .150), supporting the existence of a significant indirect effect. These results support *H2*.

The effect of the interaction between ESI and self-esteem has an indirect effect on community commitment, via negative anticipated emotions. That is, negative anticipated emotions acts as the mechanism driving the effect of the interaction on community commitment. This result is in line with SGD theory, whereby children form strong in-group favouritism and a commitment to in-group norms. The results emphasise that children's commitment is mediated by anticipated negative emotions (fear of not upholding in-group norms) when they are temporarily blocked from the community. Children are committed to the group out of fear that if they don't uphold the in-group norms (and suffer negative emotions) they will be banished from the in-group.

Table 1 – Summary of results

Predictors	$\beta$	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Hypothesis
<b>Dependent variable: Negative anticipated emotions</b>				
<b>Evaluative Social Identity (X)</b>	.205	4.180	< .001	Supporting <i>H2</i>
<b>Self-Esteem (W)</b>	.093	.954	.340	
<b>X x W</b>	.233	2.301	.022	Supporting <i>H3</i>
<b>Dependent variable: ‘Minecraft’ Brand Community Commitment</b>				
<b>Negative Anticipated Emotions (M)</b>	.281	5.875	< .001	Supporting <i>H2</i>
<b>Evaluative Social Identity (X)</b>	.483	10.195	< .001	Supporting <i>H1</i>
<b>Self-Esteem (W)</b>	- .016	- .176	.861	
<b>X x W</b>	- .281	- 2.916	.004	Supporting <i>H4</i>

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, results revealed that ESI has an effect on brand community commitment for children aged 6-14. Specifically, the relationship between social identity and community commitment can be explained by negative anticipated emotions when blocked from the brand community. That is, those children with ESI were more likely to have negative anticipated emotions leading to stronger brand community commitment. Further, this relationship is dependent upon whether a child has low or high self-esteem, with the relationship not observed for children with higher self-esteem.

With limited research undertaken to examine children’s brand community commitment this research provides a unique contribution to brand community, social identity and subjective group dynamics literature. It is suggested that the findings of this research would be of interest to academics in the field of brand communities, and also to marketing

practitioners, specifically those that are involved with brand communities aimed at children. Specifically, this research highlights the importance of self-esteem, which could further be studied for an adult demographic to compare to the results of the current findings. Additionally, the research can be used as a starting point to research further the antecedents and consequences of children participating in brand communities.

## References

Refer to Appendix 9.5.5 for Conference Paper 1 Reference List

## 7.2 Conference Paper 2

Conference Paper 2 is entitled: “‘You’re like me.’ Children’s brand community participation.” This conference paper was prepared and presented on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017, by the candidate on at the Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference (ANZMAC), with guidance provided by the co-authors (Stacey Baxter and Alicia Kulczynski). The conference was held in Melbourne, Australia with the theme being: “Marketing for Impact”. The paper is closely related to the studies undertaken in *Paper Four: Similarity Attraction*.

Both reviewers of the conference paper gave positive comments about the research, stating:

*“This is a substantial research paper. Its strength is the rigour in the procedures followed to produce the results. Based on a sound theoretical foundation, the researchers have carefully designed their study and produced some new and insightful outcomes.”*

and

*“The topic is interesting and perhaps important, given that similarity-attraction theory, per the authors, has not been looked at in a brand community context.”*

**‘You’re like me.’ Children’s brand community  
participation.**



**Abstract:**

Similarity-attraction theory is applied to examine the impact of high similarity between child brand community members (e.g. age, background, opinions) on their desire to participate in a brand community. Australian children (n = 466) aged 6 - 17 participated in one of three experimental studies to assess the impacts of member-similarity, respect, and member deviance on brand community participation desire. Results suggest a common brand interest is not sufficient for participation alone; with greater member similarity in respect to an individual's characteristics required for children to want to participate. Member similarity had a significant impact on participation desire through influencing respect towards the collective of members. In addition, when a community member was deviant (disloyal to the community), respect, and subsequently participation desire, declined. This study provides useful findings for practitioners, especially those developing child-oriented brand communities and contributes to the sparse literature on child-oriented brand communities.

**Keywords:** *Brand Communities, Children, Similarity*

## **Introduction**

*'Birds of a feather flock together'*, is a famous saying that typifies the psychological concept of similarity-attraction (Byrne, 1971). Similarity-attraction research has focused on the formation of, and interaction within interpersonal relationships (e.g. Montoya & Horton, 2004; Singh, Tay, & Sankaran, 2016). Marketers are yet to employ similarity-attraction to understand the interpersonal relationships formed around brand communities. Brand communities aimed at children are emerging, and there is an increasing need to better understand the drivers of participation for child participants (Flurry, Swimberghe, & Parker, 2014). This research seeks to examine the effect of similarity-attraction, member respect, and member deviance on children's desire to participate in a brand community. Beyond the common interest brand community members share towards the brand itself; member-similarity, (similarity between the members themselves (age, background, opinions, and culture)), is necessary for influencing a child's desire to participate in a brand community.

## **Background and Hypotheses**

Similarity-attraction theory suggests individuals interact with those that share similar characteristics to themselves (Gueguen, Martin, & Meineri, 2011). This situation occurs due to the 'effectance motive', which is the need for a predictable, certain, and meaningful interpretation of the world (Byrne & Clore, 1967; White, 1959). Through interacting with others who support and validate an individual's views (due to sharing characteristics), this 'effectance motive' is strengthened and nurtured (Byrne & Clore, 1967). A brand community is defined as a "specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a set of social relationships among admirers of a brand" (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p 412). Brand communities are, by definition, a set of social relationships, where members have

a common interest towards a brand (Cova & Pace, 2006). It is, therefore proposed that similarity-attraction theory can be used to explain participation. Specifically, when an individual perceives the brand community members to have similar characteristics as themselves (high member similarity) they will have a higher brand community participation desire (*H1*).

Respect, or admiration, towards an individual is a known influencer to similarity-attraction relationships (Lydon, Jamieson, & Zanna, 1988). Individuals assess the extent to which they respect others (termed ‘cognitive quality’) prior to commencing a relationship (Montoya & Horton, 2004). Individuals rank the characteristics they hold as being correct and superior (Montoya & Horton, 2004), and therefore when others portray similar characteristics as themselves; they will be more highly admired, or respected, in turn leading to a greater desire to establish a relationship (Singh, Chen, & Wegener, 2014). It is therefore hypothesized that respect mediates the relationship between member similarity and participation desire, whereby an increase in respect will result in an increase in participation desire (*H2*).

Subjective group dynamics theory proposes that children strive to sustain a positive social identity within a group (Abrams, Rutland, Cameron, & Marques, 2003). Sustaining a positive social identity is impacted by whether group norms are upheld (Abrams, Rutland, Ferrell, & Pelletier, 2008). In the context of brand communities, loyalty to the community is one such norm (Hook, Baxter, & Kulczynski, 2016), where a deviant member is a threat to the group and its norms (Abrams & Rutland, 2008). Drawing from Abrams, Rutland, Pelletier, & Ferrell (2009), it is argued that member deviance will moderate the relationship between member similarity and respect (*H3*). Specifically, when a characteristically similar member of a brand community presents deviant behaviours, respect is reduced due to a misalignment of values and attitudes held by the group.

## Methodology

Australian child participants aged 6 to 17 (252 male, 214 female;  $M_{Age} = 11.78$ ,  $SD_{Age} = 3.66$ ) were recruited through a research panel company to participate in one of three experimental studies (Study 1,  $n = 142$ ; Study 2,  $n = 143$ ; Study 3,  $n = 181$ ). Study 1 and Study 2 participants were allocated to one of two experimental conditions: low or high member similarity. A 2 (member similarity: low, high) x 2 (member deviance: absent, present) factorial design was conducted for Study 3. Member similarity and member deviance were manipulated using procedures employed by Hung (2014) and Abrams, Rutland, Palmer, & Purewal (2014) respectively. Each study used a fictitious brand community, based on a real-world low involvement brand (Study 1 – *Tip Top*, Study 2 – *Kleenex*, Study 3 – *Kraft*). Measures were adapted from prior literature: brand community participation desire (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004), and respect (Singh et al., 2014).

## Results

All manipulations were successful and no confound effects were found. To test H1 (Study 1) an ANOVA model was estimated. Results confirmed that member similarity has a significant effect on brand community participation desire ( $p = .011$ ). Specifically, those who were informed that brand community members were like themselves reported a greater participation desire ( $M_{\text{highsimilarity}} = 4.09$ ;  $M_{\text{lowsimilarity}} = 3.34$ ), supporting H1. Next, to examine the mediating role of respect (H2, Study 2) the PROCESS macro bootstrapping procedure was employed ( $n = 10,000$ , Model 4). Results demonstrated that respect mediated the relationship between member similarity and participation desire ( $\beta = .404$ , 95% CI = .066 to .742,  $p = .020$ ), supporting H2. Lastly, Study 3 aimed to examine the moderating effect of member deviance. To test H3, the PROCESS macro bootstrapping procedure ( $n = 10,000$ , Model 7) was used. Significant results were found

across the models; the interaction (member similarity x member deviance) predicted respect ( $\beta = .659$ ,  $p = .032$ ), and respect predicted participation desire ( $\beta = .938$ ,  $p = <.001$ ). As expected, a moderated mediation effect was observed; the mediating effect of respect was found to attenuate when member deviance was present ( $\beta = -.497$ , 95% CI =  $-.409$  to  $.449$ ), supporting H3.

### **Discussion and implications for theory and practice**

Despite children engaging in brand communities, limited research has been conducted to understand this phenomenon. This research introduced similarity-attraction as a factor influencing children's brand community participation desire. Results suggest that a common brand interest is not sufficient; children will have a stronger desire to participate in a brand community when they believe the members are similar to themselves (e.g. age), with this effect driven by member respect. Results of this research suggest that marketers should emphasize member similarity when promoting brand communities to children (e.g., "come talk to kids just like you!"). Further, results indicate that member deviance has a negative effect on participation desire. It is suggested that marketers should monitor member interactions with the goal of identifying and eliminating deviant behavior. Future research should be undertaken to determine how deviant members can be identified, and to manage deviant behaviour. In addition, future research should investigate whether member-similarity impacts other factors in child-oriented brand communities, other than participation desire.

## References

Refer to Appendix 9.5.6 for Conference Paper 2 Reference List

## 8. References

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## 9. Appendices

### 9.1 Human Ethics Approval

#### 9.1.1 Approval for Studies 2 and 3 (Papers Two and Three)

#### HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



#### Notification of Expedited Approval

To Chief Investigator or Project Supervisor:	<b>Doctor Stacey Baxter</b>
Cc Co-investigators / Research Students:	<b>Miss Margurite Hook Doctor Alicia Kulczynski</b>
Re Protocol:	<b>Understanding Children's Behaviour in Brand Communities</b>
Date:	<b>22-Jul-2015</b>
Reference No:	<b>H-2015-0211</b>
Date of Initial Approval:	<b>22-Jul-2015</b>

Thank you for your **Response to Conditional Approval (minor amendments)** submission to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) seeking approval in relation to the above protocol.

Your submission was considered under **Expedited** review by the Ethics Administrator.

I am pleased to advise that the decision on your submission is **Approved** effective **22-Jul-2015**.

In approving this protocol, the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is of the opinion that the project complies with the provisions contained in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007, and the requirements within this University relating to human research.

Approval will remain valid subject to the submission, and satisfactory assessment, of annual progress reports. *If the approval of an External HREC has been "noted" the approval period is as determined by that HREC.*

The full Committee will be asked to ratify this decision at its next scheduled meeting. A formal *Certificate of Approval* will be available upon request. Your approval number is **H-2015-0211**.

**If the research requires the use of an Information Statement, ensure this number is inserted at the relevant point in the Complaints paragraph prior to distribution to potential participants** You may then proceed with the research.

### 9.1.2 Approval for Studies 4, 5 and 6 (Paper Four)

## HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



### Notification of Expedited Approval

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To Chief Investigator or Project Supervisor:	Doctor Stacey Baxter
Cc Co-investigators / Research Students:	Doctor Alicia Kulczynski Miss Margurite Hook
Re Protocol:	Brand Community Member Similarity and the Moderating Roles of Participation Type and Member Deviance
Date:	16-May-2017
Reference No:	H-2017-0066
Date of Initial Approval:	16-May-2017

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Thank you for your **Response to Conditional Approval (minor amendments)** submission to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) seeking approval in relation to the above protocol.

Your submission was considered under **Expedited** review by the Ethics Administrator.

I am pleased to advise that the decision on your submission is **Approved** effective **16-May-2017**.

In approving this protocol, the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is of the opinion that the project complies with the provisions contained in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007, and the requirements within this University relating to human research.

Approval will remain valid subject to the submission, and satisfactory assessment, of annual progress reports. *If the approval of an External HREC has been "noted" the approval period is as determined by that HREC.*

The full Committee will be asked to ratify this decision at its next scheduled meeting. A formal *Certificate of Approval* will be available upon request. Your approval number is H-2017-0066.

**If the research requires the use of an Information Statement, ensure this number is inserted at the relevant point in the Complaints paragraph prior to distribution to potential participants. You may then proceed with the research.**

## 9.2 Participant Information Sheets

### 9.2.1 Paper Two and Paper Three: Participant Information Sheet

**FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND LAW**



**THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEWCASTLE**  
AUSTRALIA

Faculty of Business and Law  
Newcastle Business School  
The University of Newcastle  
University Drive  
Callaghan, NSW 2308

For further information:  
Dr. Stacey Baxter  
Tel: 4921 6279  
Fax: 4921 6911  
Email: [stacey.baxter@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:stacey.baxter@newcastle.edu.au)

#### **UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR IN BRAND COMMUNITIES**

Version: 2  
Date: 15 May 2015  
Researcher: Stacey Baxter

#### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT**

Your child is invited to take part in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Margurite Hook (University of Newcastle) as part of her PhD, under the supervision of Stacey Baxter (University of Newcastle) and Alicia Kulczynski (University of Newcastle).

##### *Why is the research being done?*

The purpose of the research is to examine how children interact in brand communities. This research will provide further insights into children participation and behaviour in brand communities.

##### *Who can participate in the research?*

We are seeking children aged 6 to 14 years of age to participate in this research.

##### *What choice do you and your child have?*

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your child will only be included in the research if you provide your informed consent and your child agrees to complete the online questionnaire. Whether or not you, or your child, decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you or your child. If you do decide to participate, you, or your child may withdraw from the project at any time until the submission of your questionnaire, without giving a reason.

##### *What would you be asked to do?*

If you and your child agree to participate, your child will be asked to complete an online questionnaire (distributed by Research Now). If your child can not yet read independently, please complete the questionnaire with your child. You will be asked to read all questions to your child and report your child's answers. The questionnaire will ask your child about their participation with the game 'Minecraft'. The questionnaire will take no more than 15 minutes to complete.



*What are the risks and benefits of participating?*

None of the information sought is of a sensitive nature, as a result there are no apparent risks associated with participating in this research. Further, you will receive the allocated amount as set by the Research Now's incentive program by participating in this research. Results of this research will provide further insight into children behaviour in brand communities. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the project please contact the researcher from February 2016.

*How will your privacy be protected?*

Raw, de-identified, data will be collected by *Research Now*. Once collected the researcher will download the de-identified data from a secure link (via Qualtrics). The researchers will not contact you, and you will not be identifiable. Access to the research data will be limited to the researchers expect as required by law. The raw data will be retained for at least five years on password protected computers. *Research Now* is a member of ESOMAR, therefore adhering to the ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice, which can be found here: [http://www.esomar.org/uploads/public/knowledge-andstandards/codes-and-guidelines/ESOMAR\\_ICC-ESOMAR\\_Code\\_English.pdf](http://www.esomar.org/uploads/public/knowledge-andstandards/codes-and-guidelines/ESOMAR_ICC-ESOMAR_Code_English.pdf).

*How will the information collected be used?*

It is important to note that data is being collected in the context of marketing. The data collected will be reported and presented as part of a PhD thesis and also used in an academic journal submission and/or conference proceedings. As such, the findings will be available within the public domain and may have the potential to influence advertising practice. In particular, marketers creating a new child-oriented brand community may use this information to inform the features of the brand community. The data collected will not be sold for commercial purposes. No individual participants will be identified in any reports arising from the project.

*What do you need to do to participate?*

Please read this information statement and be sure you and your child understand its contents before you consent for your child to participate. If you choose for your child to participate, please follow instructions provided by *Research Now*. At the start of the questionnaire there will be a consent form, which you will be required to complete. Completion of the online questionnaire will be taken as your informed consent for your child. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the researcher.

*Thank you for considering this invitation.*

*Further information*

For additional information regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact:

Dr. Stacey Baxter  
Newcastle Business School  
The University of Newcastle  
(02) 4921 6279  
[stacey.baxter@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:stacey.baxter@newcastle.edu.au)

Dr Alicia Kulczynski  
Newcastle Business School  
The University of Newcastle  
(02) 4921 6805  
[alicia.kulczynski@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:alicia.kulczynski@newcastle.edu.au)

Margurite Hook  
Newcastle Business School  
The University of Newcastle  
0431 908 676  
[c3129742@uon.edu.au](mailto:c3129742@uon.edu.au)

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2015-0211. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the:

Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office The Chancellor, The University of Newcastle,  
University Drive, Callaghan NSW, 2308  
Telephone: (02) 49216333; Email: [Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au)

### 9.2.2 Paper Four: Participant Information Sheet

#### FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND LAW



Faculty of Business and Law  
Newcastle Business School  
The University of Newcastle  
University Drive  
Callaghan, NSW 2308

For further information:  
Associate Professor Stacey Baxter  
Tel: 4921 6279  
Fax: 4921 6911  
Email: [stacey.baxter@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:stacey.baxter@newcastle.edu.au)

#### BRAND COMMUNITY MEMBER SIMILARITY AND THE MODERATING ROLES OF PARTICIPATION TYPE AND MEMBER DEVIANCE

Version: 2  
Date: 11 May 2017  
Researcher: Stacey Baxter

#### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

You child is invited to take part in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Margurite Hook (University of Newcastle) as part of her PhD, under the supervision of Stacey Baxter (University of Newcastle) and Alicia Kulczynski (University of Newcastle).

##### *Why is the research being done?*

The purpose of the research is to examine how children and adults interact in brand communities. A brand community is a group of individuals formed based on a shared interest on a brand or product. This research will provide further insights into participation and behaviour in brand communities.

##### *Who can participate in the research?*

We are seeking children aged 6 to 14 years of age and adults aged older than 18 to participate in this research.

##### *What choice do you and your child have?*

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your child will only be included in the research if you provide your informed consent and your child agrees to complete the online questionnaire. Whether or not you, or your child, decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you or your child. If you do decide to participate, you, or your child may withdraw from the project at any time until the submission of your questionnaire, without giving a reason.

##### *What would you and your child be asked to do?*

If you and your child agree to participate, your child will be asked to complete an online questionnaire (distributed by Research Now). If your child can not yet read independently, please complete the questionnaire with your child. You will be asked to read all questions to your child and report your child's answers. The questionnaire will ask your child about brand communities. The questionnaire will take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

*What are the risks and benefits of participating?*

None of the information sought is of a sensitive nature, as a result there are no apparent risks associated with participating in this research. Further, there are no direct benefits to participating in this research. Results of this research will provide further insight into children behaviour in brand communities. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the project please contact the researcher from May 2018.

*How will your privacy be protected?*

Raw, de-identified, data will be collected by *Research Now*. Once collected the researcher will download the de-identified data from a secure link (via Qualtrics). The researchers will not contact you, and you will not be identifiable. Access to the research data will be limited to the researchers except as required by law. The raw data will be retained for at least five years on the researcher's University password protected computers, *Research Now* will not have access to the data. *Research Now* is a member of ESOMAR, therefore adhering to the ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice, which can be found here: [https://www.esomar.org/uploads/public/knowledge-and-standards/codes-and-guidelines/ICCESOMAR\\_Code\\_English\\_.pdf](https://www.esomar.org/uploads/public/knowledge-and-standards/codes-and-guidelines/ICCESOMAR_Code_English_.pdf)

*How will the information collected be used?*

It is important to note that data is being collected in the context of marketing. The data collected will be reported and presented as part of a PhD thesis and also used in an academic journal submission and/or conference proceedings. As such, the findings will be available within the public domain and may have the potential to influence advertising practice. In particular, marketers creating a new brand community may use this information to inform the features of the brand community. The data collected will not be sold for commercial purposes. No individual participants will be identified in any reports arising from the project.

*What do you need to do to participate?*

Please read this information statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If you choose to participate, please follow instructions provided by *Research Now*. Completion of the online questionnaire will be taken as your informed consent. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the researcher.

*Thank you for considering this invitation.*

*Further information*

For additional information regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact:

Dr. Stacey Baxter  
Newcastle Business School  
The University of Newcastle  
(02) 4921 6279  
[stacey.baxter@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:stacey.baxter@newcastle.edu.au)

Dr Alicia Kulczynski  
Newcastle Business School  
The University of Newcastle  
(02) 4921 6805  
[alicia.kulczynski@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:alicia.kulczynski@newcastle.edu.au)

Margurite Hook  
Newcastle Business School  
The University of Newcastle  
0431 908 676  
[c3129742@uon.edu.au](mailto:c3129742@uon.edu.au)

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2017-0066. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Services, NIER Precinct, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 4921 6333, email [Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au).

## 9.3 Questionnaires Employed

### 9.3.1 Paper Two: Replication and Extension

#### 9.3.1.1 Version 1 (Minecraft Brand Community).

Note: Questionnaire was formatted by Research Now

### **UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR IN BRAND COMMUNITIES**

Your child has been invited to participate in a research project that attempts to understand why children participate in brand communities (a community based on relationships surrounding a brand) and the marketing-oriented consequences of their involvement. Whilst it is unlikely that results will be used by marketers, the results of this research will be published, and as a result, others (including marketers/advertisers/brand managers) will be free to use the research conclusions. Before consenting to your child's participation please discuss the project with your child and confirm the following by checking the box next to each statement:

- I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement; a copy of which I have saved;
- I understand that due to the anonymous nature of the research, my child's data cannot be withdrawn once the completed questionnaire has been submitted;
- I understand that the results of the research will be published;
- If my child cannot read independently I agree to read each question to my child;
- I understand this is not a test, and agree to report my child's responses accurately;
- I understand that the questionnaire contains forty-six questions and will take approximately 15 minutes for my child to complete;
- I understand that my child can stop completing the questionnaire at any time prior to submission, and does not have to give any reason for stopping;
- My child is happy to complete this questionnaire;
  
- I understand that by checking the above statements, I am providing my informed consent for my child to participate in this research.

*[If all checked move to Q1]*

1. My:

☐ Son

☐ Daughter

will be completing the questionnaire;

2. My son/daughter [*linked from Q1*] who will be completing this questionnaire is \_\_\_\_\_ years of age and is in \_\_\_\_\_ year at school.

Please read all parts of the questionnaire to your child. Please remember this is not a test, and to ensure the accuracy of findings please enter your son/daughter's [*linked from Q1*] response for each question.

3. Do you play Minecraft?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Do you play Minecraft online with other people?

☐ Yes

☐ No

*(if yes then continue with this survey version, if no then get directed to "non-branded community" version survey)*

5. I think playing Minecraft and talking to people on Minecraft:

Is Silly	1	2	3	4	5	Is Smart
Will Hurt Me	1	2	3	4	5	Is good for me
Is Bad	1	2	3	4	5	Is Good
Will make bad things happen	1	2	3	4	5	Will make good things happen

6. If I play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft, I will feel:

	Not at all				A Lot
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Happy	1	2	3	4	5
Great	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5
Brave	1	2	3	4	5
Comfortable	1	2	3	4	5

7. If I can't play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft, I will feel:

	Not at all				A Lot
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Like I have done something bad	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5
Annoyed	1	2	3	4	5
Sad	1	2	3	4	5
Worried	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5

8. Please express how Mum, Dad, your brother/s, your sister/s and your friends feel about you playing Minecraft and talking to people on Minecraft.

My Mum, Dad, brother/s, sister/s and friends think I:

Should not play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft	1	2	3	4	5	Should play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft
Think its not ok that I play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft	1	2	3	4	5	Think its ok that I play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft

9. How much are you allowed to play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft?

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Whenever I want
-------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------------

10. To play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft is:

Easy	1	2	3	4	5	Hard
------	---	---	---	---	---	------

11. When playing Minecraft, I act the same as other people I play Minecraft with:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

12. I think I am the same as the people I play Minecraft with:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

13. How much do you like the people you play Minecraft with?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

14. I feel I fit in with the people I play Minecraft with:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

15. The people that I play Minecraft with, need me:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

16. I am the leader of the people I play Minecraft with:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	Very Much
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

17. I need to play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft

No, I don't	1	2	Maybe 3	4	5	Yes, I do
-------------	---	---	------------	---	---	-----------

18. How much do you need to play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft:

I don't need to at all	1	2	3	4	5	I need to a lot
------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------------

19. I want to play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft in the next couple of days:

I don't want to at all	1	2	3	4	5	I want to very much
------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	------------------------

20. I will plan to play Minecraft and talk to people on Minecraft in the next couple of days:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

21. The people I play and talk to on Minecraft plan to play and talk in the next couple of days:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

22. If Minecraft was a person, do you think that you would be the same type of person?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	Very Much
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

23. How many times do you think you will play Minecraft and talk with your friends about Minecraft in the next couple of days? Please click on only one box.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-3 times
- ☐ 4-6 times
- ☐ 7-9 times
- ☐ 10 times or more

24. How many times do you want to play Minecraft and talk with your friends about Minecraft in the next couple of days? Please click on only one box.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-3 times
- ☐ 4-6 times
- ☐ 7-9 times
- ☐ 10 times or more

25. How many Minecraft toys do you have? Please click on only one box.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-3 toys
- ☐ 4-6 toys
- ☐ 7-9 toys
- ☐ 10 toys or more



26. How many Minecraft books do you have? Please click on only one box.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-3 books
- ☐ 4-6 books
- ☐ 7-9 books
- ☐ 10 books or more

27. Ask an adult how much money they spent on Minecraft toys and books for you this year. Please click on only one box.

- ☐ \$0
- ☐ \$1 - \$49
- ☐ \$50 - \$99
- ☐ \$100 - \$149
- ☐ \$150 or more

28. How often do you look at Minecraft toys and Minecraft books at the shops? Please click on only one box.

I don't look at it in the shops				I look at it every time in the shops
1	2	3	4	5

29. I am a:

- ☐ Girl
- ☐ Boy

30. I am        years old

#### 9.2.1.2 Version 2 (Non-Branded Community)

Note: Questionnaire was formatted by Research Now

### UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR IN BRAND COMMUNITIES

Your child has been invited to participate in a research project that attempts to understand why children participate in brand communities (a community based on relationships surrounding a brand) and the marketing-oriented consequences of their involvement. Whilst it is unlikely that results will be used by marketers, the results of this research will be published, and as a result, others (including marketers/advertisers/brand managers) will be free to use the research conclusions. Before consenting to your child's participation please discuss the project with your child and confirm the following by checking the box next to each statement:

- I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement; a copy of which I have saved;
- I understand that due to the anonymous nature of the research, my child's data cannot be withdrawn once the completed questionnaire has been submitted;
- I understand that the results of the research will be published;
- If my child cannot read independently I agree to read each question to my child;
- I understand this is not a test, and agree to report my child's responses accurately;
- I understand that the questionnaire contains forty-six questions and will take approximately 15 minutes for my child to complete;
- I understand that my child can stop completing the questionnaire at any time prior to submission, and does not have to give any reason for stopping;
- My child is happy to complete this questionnaire;
  
- I understand that by checking the above statements, I am providing my informed consent for my child to participate in this research.

*[If all checked move to Q1]*

1. My:

- ☐ Son
- ☐ Daughter

will be completing the questionnaire;

2. My son/daughter *[linked from Q1]* who will be completing this questionnaire is \_\_\_\_\_ years of age and is in \_\_\_\_\_ year at school.

Please read all parts of the questionnaire to your child. Please remember this is not a test, and to ensure the accuracy of findings please enter your son/daughter's [linked from Q1] response for each question.

3. Do you play computer games?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Do you play computer games online with other people?

☐ Yes

☐ No

*(if no then finish questionnaire)*

5. I think playing computer games and talking to my friends about computer games:

Is Silly	1	2	3	4	5	Is Smart
Will Hurt Me	1	2	3	4	5	Is good for me
Is Bad	1	2	3	4	5	Is Good
Will make bad things happen	1	2	3	4	5	Will make good things happen

6. If I play computer games and talk to my friends about computer games I will feel:

	Not at all				A Lot
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Happy	1	2	3	4	5
Great	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5
Brave	1	2	3	4	5
Comfortable	1	2	3	4	5

7. If I can't play computer games and talk to my friends about computer games I will feel:

	Not at all				A Lot
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Like I have done something bad	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5
Annoyed	1	2	3	4	5
Sad	1	2	3	4	5
Worried	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5

8. Please express how Mum, Dad, your brother/s, your sister/s and your friends feel about you playing computer games and talking to your friends about computer games.

My Mum, Dad, brother/s, sister/s and friends think I:

Should not play computer games and talk to my friends about computer games	1	2	3	4	5	Should play computer games and talk to my friends about computer games
Think its not ok that I play computer games and talk to my friends about computer games	1	2	3	4	5	Think its ok that I play computer games and talk to my friends about computer games

9. How much are you allowed to play computer games and talk to your friends about computer games?

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Whenever I want
-------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------------

10. To play computer games and talk with my friends about computer games is:

Easy	1	2	3	4	5	Hard
------	---	---	---	---	---	------

11. When playing computer games, I act the same as my friends I talk to computer games about:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

12. I think I am the same as my friends I talk to computer games about:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

13. How much do you like your friends that you talk to computer games about?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

14. How much do you feel a part of your group of friends that you talk to computer games about?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

15. The friends I talk about computer games to, need me:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

16. I am the leader of the friends I talk about computer games with:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	Very Much
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

17. I need to play computer games and talk to my friends about computer games

No, I don't	1	2	Maybe 3	4	5	Yes, I do
-------------	---	---	------------	---	---	-----------

18. How much do you need to play computer games and talk to your friends about computer games:

I don't need to at all	1	2	3	4	5	I need to a lot
---------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------------

19. I want to play computer games and talk to my friends about computer games in the next couple of days:

I don't want to at all	1	2	3	4	5	I want to very much
------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------------

20. I will plan to play computer games and talk to my friends about computer games in the next couple of days

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

21. My group of friends plan to talk about computer games together in the next couple of days

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

22. If computer games was a person, do you think that you would be the same type of person?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	Very Much
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

23. How many times do you think you will play computer games and talk with your friends about computer games in the next couple of days? Please click on only one box.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-3 times
- ☐ 4-6 times
- ☐ 7-9 times
- ☐ 10 times or more

24. How many times do you **want** to play computer games and talk with your friends about computer games in the next couple of days? Please click on only one box.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-3 times
- ☐ 4-6 times
- ☐ 7-9 times
- ☐ 10 times or more

25. How many computer games toys do you have? Please click on only one box.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-3 toys
- ☐ 4-6 toys
- ☐ 7-9 toys
- ☐ 10 toys or more

26. How many computer games books do you have? Please click on only one box.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-3 books
- ☐ 4-6 books
- ☐ 7-9 books
- ☐ 10 books or more

27. Ask an adult how much money they spent on computer games toys and books for you this year. Please click on only one box.

- ☐ \$0
- ☐ \$1 - \$49
- ☐ \$50 - \$99
- ☐ \$100 - \$149
- ☐ \$150 or more

28. How often do you look at computer games toys and computer games books at the shops? Please click on only one box.

I don't look at it in the shops				I look at it every time in the shops
1	2	3	4	5

29. I am a:

- ☐ Girl
- ☐ Boy

30. I am          years old

### 9.3.2 Paper Three: New Model

Note: Questionnaire was formatted by Research Now

#### **UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR IN BRAND COMMUNITIES**

Your child has been invited to participate in a research project that attempts to understand why children participate in brand communities (a community based on relationships surrounding a brand) and the marketing-oriented consequences of their involvement. Whilst it is unlikely that results will be used by marketers, the results of this research will be published, and as a result, others (including marketers/advertisers/brand managers) will be free to use the research conclusions. Before consenting to your child's participation please discuss the project with your child and confirm the following by checking the box next to each statement:

- I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement; a copy of which I have saved;
- I understand that due to the anonymous nature of the research, my child's data cannot be withdrawn once the completed questionnaire has been submitted;
- I understand that the results of the research will be published;
- If my child cannot read independently I agree to read each question to my child;
- I understand this is not a test, and agree to report my child's responses accurately;
- I understand that the questionnaire contains forty-six questions and will take approximately 15 minutes for my child to complete;
- I understand that my child can stop completing the questionnaire at any time prior to submission, and does not have to give any reason for stopping;
- My child is happy to complete this questionnaire;
- I understand that by checking the above statements, I am providing my informed consent for my child to participate in this research.

*[If all checked move to Q1]*

1. My:  
☐ Son  
☐ Daughter  
will be completing the questionnaire;
2. My son/daughter *[linked from Q1]* who will be completing this questionnaire is \_\_\_\_\_ years of age and is in \_\_\_\_\_ year at school.



Please read all parts of the questionnaire to your child. Please remember this is not a test, and to ensure the accuracy of findings please enter your son/daughter's [linked from Q1] response for each question.

3. Do you play Minecraft?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Do you play Minecraft online with other people?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. The friends I talk about Minecraft to, need me:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

6. I am the leader of the friends I talk about Minecraft with:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	Very Much
------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

7. If I talk to my friends about Minecraft, I will feel:

	Not at all				A Lot
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Happy	1	2	3	4	5
Great	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5
Brave	1	2	3	4	5
Comfortable	1	2	3	4	5

8. If I can't talk to my friends about Minecraft, I will feel:

	Not at all				A Lot
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Like I have done something bad	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5
Annoyed	1	2	3	4	5
Sad	1	2	3	4	5
Worried	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5

9. I would feel sad if Minecraft wasn't around anymore:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------

10. If I didn't play Minecraft for a few days, I would try and play Minecraft as soon as I could:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------

11. I care about the future of Minecraft:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------

12. I always want to tell people that Minecraft is awesome

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------

13. If my friends or family are looking for a game to play, I would tell them to play Minecraft

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------

14. To talk with my friends about Minecraft is:

Easy	1	2	3	4	5	Hard
------	---	---	---	---	---	------

15. Click the box that you feel sounds like you, for each different situation. Choose two boxes per line, one box on the left and one on the right.

Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are happy the way they are but	other kids are not happy the way they are	Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>
Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are feel good but	Other kids do not feel good	Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>
Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are sure they are doing the right thing but	Other kids are sure they are not doing the right thing	Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>
Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids feel they are a good person but	Other kids do not feel they are a good person	Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>
Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids want to stay the same but	Other kids do not want to stay the same	Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>
Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids do things fine but	Other kids do not do things fine	Really true for me <input type="checkbox"/>	Sort of true for me <input type="checkbox"/>

16. I am a:

- ☐ Girl  
☐ Boy

17. I am        years old

### 9.3.3 Paper Four: Similarity Attraction

Note: Questionnaire was formatted by Research Now

## STUDY ONE

### BRAND COMMUNITY MEMBER SIMILARITY AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF MEMBER DEVIANCE

Your child has been invited to participant in a research project that attempts to understand why children participate in brand communities (a community based on relationships surrounding a brand) and the marketing-oriented consequences of their involvement. The results of this research will be published, and as a result, others (including marketers/advertisers/brand managers) will be free to use the research conclusions. Before consenting to your child's participation please discuss the project with your child and confirm the following by checking the box next to each statement:

- I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement; a copy of which I have saved;
- I understand that due to the anonymous nature of the research, my child's data cannot be withdrawn once the completed questionnaire has been submitted;
- I understand that the results of the research will be published;
- If my child cannot read independently I agree to read each question to my child;
- I understand this is not a test, and agree to report my child's responses accurately;
- I understand that the questionnaire contains nine questions and will take approximately 10 minutes for my child to complete;
- I understand that my child can stop completing the questionnaire at any time prior to submission, and does not have to give any reason for stopping;
- My child is willing to complete this questionnaire;
  
- I understand that by checking the above statements, I am providing my informed consent for my child to participate in this research.

*[If all checked move to Q1]*

1. My:

- ☐ Son
- ☐ Daughter

will be completing the questionnaire;

2. My son/daughter [linked from Q1] who will be completing this questionnaire is \_\_\_\_\_ years of age and is in \_\_\_\_\_ year at school.

Please read all parts of the questionnaire to your child. Please remember this is not a test, and to ensure the accuracy of findings please enter your son/daughter's [linked from Q1] response for each question.

3. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

My attitude towards the bread brand 'Tip Top' is:

Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
Dislike very much	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Like very much
Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unpleasant
Unfavourable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Favourable
Poor Quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	High Quality

The rest of the questionnaire will relate to the bread brand 'Tip Top', please remember this brand for the rest of the questionnaire.

Imagine you thinking of joining the 'Tip Top' community. There are lots of other members in the 'Tip Top' community. The other members of this community are the same (*different*) age as you, are the same (*different*) culture, have the same (*different*) opinions and have the same (*different*) background as you.

4. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

I desire to interact with the 'Tip Top' community sometime during the next 2 weeks:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

5. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

My desire for interacting with the 'Tip Top' community can be described as:

Very Weak Desire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Strong Desire
------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--------------------

6. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

I want to interact together with the 'Tip Top' community during the next 2 weeks:

Does not describe me at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Describes me very much
-----------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------------------

7. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of personality:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

8. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of age:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

9. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of values:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

10. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of background:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

## STUDY TWO

### BRAND COMMUNITY MEMBER SIMILARITY AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF MEMBER DEVIANCE

Your child has been invited to participate in a research project that attempts to understand why children participate in brand communities (a community based on relationships surrounding a brand) and the marketing-oriented consequences of their involvement. The results of this research will be published, and as a result, others (including marketers/advertisers/brand managers) will be free to use the research conclusions. Before consenting to your child's participation please discuss the project with your child and confirm the following by checking the box next to each statement:

- I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement; a copy of which I have saved;
- I understand that due to the anonymous nature of the research, my child's data cannot be withdrawn once the completed questionnaire has been submitted;
- I understand that the results of the research will be published;
- If my child cannot read independently I agree to read each question to my child;
- I understand this is not a test, and agree to report my child's responses accurately;
- I understand that the questionnaire contains fourteen questions and will take approximately 15 minutes for my child to complete;
- I understand that my child can stop completing the questionnaire at any time prior to submission, and does not have to give any reason for stopping;
- My child is willing to complete this questionnaire;
  
- I understand that by checking the above statements, I am providing my informed consent for my child to participate in this research.

*[If all checked move to Q1]*

1. My:

☐ Son

☐ Daughter

will be completing the questionnaire;

2. My son/daughter [linked from Q1] who will be completing this questionnaire is \_\_\_\_\_ years of age and is in \_\_\_\_\_ year at school.

Please read all parts of the questionnaire to your child. Please remember this is not a test, and to ensure the accuracy of findings please enter your son/daughter's [linked from Q1] response for each question.

3. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

My attitude towards the tissue brand 'Kleenex' is:

Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
Dislike very much	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Like very much
Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unpleasant
Unfavourable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Favourable
Poor Quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	High Quality

The rest of the questionnaire will relate to the tissue brand 'Kleenex', please remember this brand for the rest of the questionnaire.

Imagine you thinking of joining the 'Kleenex' community. There are lots of other members in the 'Kleenex' community. The other members of this community are the same (different) age as you, are the same (different) culture, have the same (different) opinions and have the same (different) background as you.

4. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The members of the 'Kleenex' community would make good leaders:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

5. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The members of the 'Kleenex' community will achieve all of their goals:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------



6. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The members of the 'Kleenex' community are probably good at everything they do:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

7. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The members of the 'Kleenex' community will probably be successful in life:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

8. Please show how much you agree with the following statements from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

I desire to interact with the 'Kleenex' community sometime during the next 2 weeks:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

9. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

My desire for interacting with the 'Kleenex' community can be described as:

Very Weak Desire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Strong Desire
------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--------------------

10. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

I want to interact together with the 'Kleenex' community during the next 2 weeks:

Does not describe me at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Describes me very much
-----------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------------------

11. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of personality:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

12. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of age:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

13. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of values:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

14. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of background:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

## STUDY THREE

### BRAND COMMUNITY MEMBER SIMILARITY AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF MEMBER DEVIANCE

Your child has been invited to participate in a research project that attempts to understand why children participate in brand communities (a community based on relationships surrounding a brand) and the marketing-oriented consequences of their involvement. The results of this research will be published, and as a result, others (including marketers/advertisers/brand managers) will be free to use the research conclusions. Before consenting to your child's participation please discuss the project with your child and confirm the following by checking the box next to each statement:

- I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement; a copy of which I have saved;
- I understand that due to the anonymous nature of the research, my child's data cannot be withdrawn once the completed questionnaire has been submitted;
- I understand that the results of the research will be published;
- If my child cannot read independently I agree to read each question to my child;
- I understand this is not a test, and agree to report my child's responses accurately;
- I understand that the questionnaire contains fifteen questions and will take approximately 15 minutes for my child to complete;
- I understand that my child can stop completing the questionnaire at any time prior to submission, and does not have to give any reason for stopping;
- My child is willing to complete this questionnaire;
  
- I understand that by checking the above statements, I am providing my informed consent for my child to participate in this research.

*[If all checked move to Q1]*

1. My:
- ☐ Son
  - ☐ Daughter
- will be completing the questionnaire;

2. My son/daughter [linked from Q1] who will be completing this questionnaire is \_\_\_\_\_ years of age and is in \_\_\_\_\_ year at school.

Please read all parts of the questionnaire to your child. Please remember this is not a test, and to ensure the accuracy of findings please enter your son/daughter's [linked from Q1] response for each question.

3. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

My attitude towards the food brand 'Kraft' is:

Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
Dislike very much	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Like very much
Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unpleasant
Unfavourable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Favourable
Poor Quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	High Quality

The rest of the questionnaire will relate to the food brand 'Kraft', please remember this brand for the rest of the questionnaire.

Imagine you thinking of joining the 'Kraft' community. There are lots of other members in the 'Kraft' community. The other members of this community are the same (different) age as you, are the same (different) culture, have the same (different) opinions and have the same (different) background as you.

Alex is one member of the 'Kraft' community that you are a member of, but thinks that another community is better and has heaps of fun things to do there. They want to leave the 'Kraft' community and join another brand community. (Alex is a member of the 'Kraft' community, and thinks that this community is good and has heaps of fun things to do. They want to stay a member of the 'Kraft' community.)

4. Please show how much you agree with the following statements from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

I desire to interact with the 'Kraft' community sometime during the next 2 weeks:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

5. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

My desire for interacting with the 'Kraft' community can be described as:

Very Weak Desire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Strong Desire
------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--------------------

6. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

I want to interact together with the 'Kraft' community during the next 2 weeks:

Does not describe me at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Describes me very much
-----------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------------------

7. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The members of the 'Kraft' community would make good leaders:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

8. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The members of the 'Kraft' community will achieve all of their goals:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

9. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The members of the 'Kraft' community are probably good at everything they do:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

10. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The members of the 'Kraft' community will probably be successful in life:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

11. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of personality:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

12. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of age:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

13. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of values:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

14. Please show how much you agree with the following statement from 1 to 7, by clicking on one number.

The other members of the brand community are similar to me in terms of background:

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A Lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

## 9.4 Third Party Copyright Permission Communications

### 9.4.1 Paper One

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## 9.6 ABDC Ranking Explanation

The Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) represents 39 business schools across universities in Australia, aiming to make these schools better (ABDC, 2018a). One method this is achieved is through providing a journal quality ranking to guide academics.

“The ABDC Journal Quality list is divided into four categories of quality, A\*, A, B, C as described below:

- A\*: this is the highest quality category, and indicatively represents approximately the top 5-7% of the journals assigned to the given primary for panel.
- A: this is the second highest quality category, and indicatively represents approximately the next 15-25% of the journals assigned to the given primary for panel.
- B: this is the third highest quality category, and indicatively represents approximately the next 35-40% of the journals assigned to the given primary for group.
- C: this is the fourth highest quality category, and represents the remaining recognised quality journals assigned to the given primary for panel.” (ABDC, 2018b, para. 1)

## 9.7 H-index Explanation

The Hirsch index, or h-index as its commonly referred to, is a single number criterion to measure the scientific input of a journal or an individual (Bornmann & Daniel, 2007). The h-index is calculated using the following logic: “A scientist has index  $h$  if  $h$  of his or her  $Np$  papers have at least  $h$  citations each and the other  $(Np - h)$  papers have fewer than  $\leq h$  citations each” (Hirsch, 2005, p. 16569). This same formula can be applied to a journal. The higher the h-index, the more impact the journal has had in the field (Mingers, Macri, & Petrovici, 2012). An h-index of 0 indicates that the individual or journal has, at best, published articles that have had no impact in the field (Bornmann & Daniel, 2007).

Compared to other indexes, the h-index has been widely praised (e.g. Batista, Campitelli, Kinouchi, & Martinez, 2005; Bornmann & Daniel, 2007; Costas & Bordons, 2007). A reason for this is that the h-index has the advantage of measuring research impact of a researcher’s or journal’s entire contribution over their lifetime (Hirsch, 2005), and it’s easy to calculate (Harzing & Van Der Wal, 2009). The h-index favours citations across many papers, rather than a single highly cited paper and many non-cited papers.