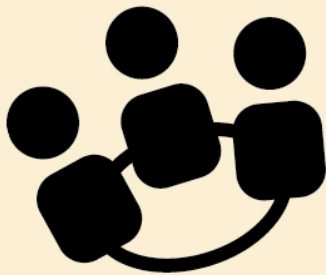
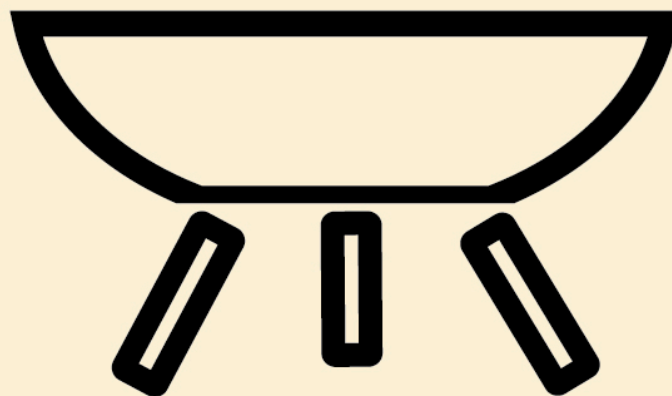


RELATIONS IN ONLINE COMMUNITIES



HOW WEBER CREATED A NATION OF GRILLERS



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Resumé

Dette speciale undersøger, hvordan onlinefællesskaber relaterer til brand værdier. For at finde frem til dette, har vi undersøgt de forskellige dynamikker i onlinefællesskaber samt, hvad der engagerer forbrugerne til at involvere sig i disse.

Netop dette emne er fundet interessant, da flere og flere brands har oprettet onlinefællesskaber for at skabe tættere relationer til deres forbrugere. Som en konsekvens af Internettets udvikling, har sociale medier vundet indpas hos forbrugerne, og er nu deres foretrukne platform for informationsindsamling og informationsdeling. Dette har medført, at medlemsaktiviteten fra virksomheders online brand fællesskaber har spredt sig ud over de sociale medie platforme.

Sammen med en litteraturgennemgang har vi inddraget Webers onlinefællesskab, Weberklubben, og lavet en kvalitativ empiriindsamling på dette. Vi har udført kvalitative interviews med syv Weberklubben interessenter og derudover udført en netnografisk analyse af onlinefællesskabet. For at få et nuværende billede af de forskellige trends inden for det digitale område, har vi udført et interview med en social medie ekspert.

Resultaterne af vores analyse viser, at virksomheder er nødsaget til at bruge ressourcer på at facilitere et onlinefællesskab, hvis de ønsker at drage nytte af den yderst værdifulde indsigt og konkurrencemæssige fordel, et sådan fællesskab kan tilbyde. Derudover kan et onlinefællesskab skabe stærke relationer til det pågældende brand. Disse relationer bliver forstærket af, at forbrugerne kan udforske den praksis som brandet omhandler sammen med andre forbrugere, der kan komme med gode råd og inspiration, lige såvel som virksomheden kan bidrage med tiltag. Det er dog vigtigt at notere sig, at forbrugere foretrækker at blive vejledt af andre forbrugere, og virksomhederne bør derfor lade disse onlinefællesskaber være på forbrugernes præmisser. Weber har rekrutteret medlemmer på frivillig basis til at interagere med andre medlemmer af Weberklubben for netop at opnå dette. I vores analyse var det tydeligt, at alle parter fik mest ud af denne rollefordeling. For at skabe aktivitet og stærke relationer til brandet i onlinefællesskabet, skal virksomheder observere, hvilke

værdier, der motiverer forbrugerne til at interagere, og derefter facilitere produktionen af disse værdier. I Weberklubben fandt vi frem til, at de største motivationsfaktorer, der skaber værdi for medlemmerne er: intellektuel værdi, social værdi, kulturel værdi og økonomisk værdi.

Afslutningsvis, fandt vi frem til, at for at et online fællesskab kan relatere til brand værdier, foreslår vi, at virksomheder faciliterer skræddersyede oplevelser baseret på de værdier, som motiverer medlemmer til at interagere. Derved styrkes relationen mellem medlemmer, virksomheden og virksomhedens brand.

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1

}} INTRODUCTION

Since the Internet technology was developed in 1969, a considerable amount has happened. The Internet and its 3 billion users, along with the globalization of the world's economies, have raised new opportunities as well as challenges for traditional marketing (Emarketer, 2014). The challenge is that consumers are no longer a group that can be advertised to; the consumers of today want to be advertised with, and the more tailored the consumption experience is, the more satisfied are the consumers. This challenge, however, also opens up new opportunities.

When companies work to understand the needs of their consumers, whole new ways creating relations to the brand arise. Consumers wish to participate in a customized consumption experience and thereby co-create value from which both consumers and companies gain (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 6). Co-creation of value is especially present in online communities. Traditionally, niche market brands such as Harley Davidson created online brand communities where consumers could develop relationships out of shared interests between consumers and with the company, but later fast-moving consumer goods such as Nutella and Coca-Cola created successful online brand communities on their own websites. Today, because of the developments in Web 2.0, most of that interaction has moved to social media. A platform where consumers in collaboration with other consumers are constantly modifying content, Web 2.0 is a perfect place for consumers to interact; it is easily accessible for them and transparent for companies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). It has been widely discussed whether all companies should create profiles on the various social media platforms to create relations with the consumers, and if they choose to, how it then should be managed (Haug, 2014).

As online communities are one of the most, if not the most, effective tool(s) to create word-of-mouth and strengthen relationships, companies invest a lot of time and effort in these. When exploring both online communities and social media, the social networking sites can support the development and creation of these online communities in which consumers can connect and thereby secure activity in the community. Several authors have in recent years studied online communities and, among other things, have looked into the power of consumers and the co-creation of value as well as the challenges and opportunities presented by these (Cova & Pace, 2006; Schau et al., 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). Some research has discussed

how to enhance relationships with customers through online communities, but in order to investigate how online communities can relate to brand, we argue that the topic should be investigated further (Adjei et al., 2012). We find the topic relevant for marketers and researchers as more insight will be valuable given that online communities, especially in social media, are becoming more prevalent and important (Laroche et al., 2012, p. 1755). With this thesis, marketers will gain insights into how they to relate brand values to their online communities. But how can marketers best facilitate ways in which consumers can co-create brand values in online communities? The research question of this thesis, therefore, is:

How online communities relate to brand values

In order to be able to answer our research question, we have developed the following operational research question:

What are the dynamics in online communities and what motivates consumers to engage in these?

Concepts and Definitions

In order to answer our research question, we find it necessary to describe the overall and abstract concepts that we will use in this thesis. We will provide definitions of the concepts we use in this thesis to clarify, which theoretical standpoints we have chosen to take on the concepts.

Online Communities

A main focus in this thesis is online communities and we will throughout the thesis be referring to communities, online communities and online brand communities. A community can be described as members of a group based on commonalities, which means they share a common interest or have something in common that they communicate about through physical gatherings. Our understanding of communities builds on views and definitions from McAlexander et al. (2002, p. 38) and Castells (2001, p. 52), who describe communities as members who gather because of a shared set of values or interests. Our view on online communities is based on the same idea as a community: people that gather online either on websites or social media network sites. As we apply a case study in the thesis concerning an online brand community, we will also refer to this term. We view online brand communities as similar to the concept of online communities, the only difference being that an online brand community is concentrated on a specific brand that serves the shared interest of members. In our research of the concept, we came across various terminologies, such as virtual communities, but in this thesis we will use the term online brand communities (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008, p. 258).

Brand values

In this thesis we refer to brand values as the various components that, put together, make up the brand. We view brand values as some that are created between the consumers and the company.

Co-creation

In this thesis, co-creation will refer to when consumers and companies collectively engage in activities and thus co-create values. Furthermore, co-creation is creating an

experience environment where consumers can have dialogs and create individual experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 8).

Consumers

We will be referring to consumers as a general term in the thesis. Here, consumers cover people who have the ability to purchase products and the potential to engage with companies. As we have not chosen to gather any quantitative data on consumers nor focus on demographics, we simply refer to consumers as a general mass. However, as the thesis focuses on Weber in Denmark, we refer to consumers as the consumers in Denmark.

Structure of Thesis

The structure of this thesis can be categorized into five chapters; Introduction, Methodology, Theoretical Framework, Analysis and Conclusion, which is illustrated in the figure below (Figure 1).

1	INTRODUCTION Problem Discussion and Research Question Case Introduction	}}
2	METHODOLOGY Social Constructivism Research Design	}}
3	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK Theoretical Discussion	}}
4	ANALYSIS Applying Empirical Material to Theory	}}
5	CONCLUSION Findings Further Research	}}

Figure 1: Thesis structure

The first chapter of the thesis is the introduction, which serves to provide the reader with a basic understanding of the focus of the thesis, present the research question and introduce the case study, Weberklubben. In chapter two, the methodological considerations will be presented, including our social constructivist approach and the research design with our considerations in choosing qualitative data as our main source of empirical data. In chapter three, the theoretical framework for our explorative study will be discussed and we will present our theoretical positions. In chapter four, our empirical findings will be applied to the theoretical framework in the analysis, in which we will discuss Weberklubben in relation to our research question. In chapter five, the major findings will be summarized in the conclusion and limitations and further research will be suggested.

Presenting the Case: Weber

We have in this thesis chosen to use a case in order to investigate our research question by applying our own empirical findings together with existing theoretical findings. In the following, we will introduce our case study, the online brand community Weberklubben, and provide the reader with an understanding of why we found the chosen case relevant to include in this thesis.

The history of Weber begins in 1952 in Palatine, Illinois, USA, where George Stephen invented the first Kettle Grill (webergrill.dk). George had a passion for grilling and his motivation for developing the kettle grill was simply to cook a better steak and to provide his friends and family with a better grill experience (webergrill.dk). Until 1952, grills had been open and flat and were therefore very hard to control in connection to health and windy weather. George thought to develop a grill with a lid to better control consistency in temperature and to keep food sanitary when grilling outside in changing weather conditions. George got his inspiration for the kettle grill with a lid from his job at Weber Brothers Metal Works, which was a Chicago-based marine buoys manufacturing company (weber.com). He cut a buoy in half, applied legs and made holes for ventilation, and the kettle grill was born. The Weber kettle grill subsequently developed into a national success. In 1991, Weber expanded geographically and also in their product line and began producing gas and electric grills (webergrill.dk). Today, Weber is present in more than 72 countries and is a symbol for the grill culture that it in part established and developed all over the world since its origin. Weber has come a long way since the first kettle grill was developed in 1952. Weber now offers a large variety of both gas and charcoal grills and has extended their product line even further with products such as grilling tools and cookbooks. The focus on quality grill products remains intact and to this day Weber enjoys a great deal of popularity among grill enthusiasts.

Weber Denmark

The Danish Weber affiliate, part of Weber-Stephen Nordic, will play a central role in this thesis, as we have chosen to concentrate our case study on the Danish market. This is partly because Denmark is an enthusiastic grill nation and Weber holds the majority of the market share; every second Danish household has a Weber grill and,

needless to say, Weber is popular in Denmark (Rewes, 2 August, 2012). From this point on, when we mention Weber, we will refer to Weber-Stephen Denmark as Weber, for the sake of readability.

Weber expanded from the American market in 1991, when it made its entrance to the Danish market, and quickly became a success (webergrill.dk). However, the success did not come right away and not without effort. In the beginning, Weber grills did not sell in Denmark because no one wanted a grill with a lid. However, Weber managed to turn this around in 2011 by changing their focus from selling products to creating an experience. This has been Weber's philosophy since 1952 and is stated on the Weber Danmark Facebook site: "We're not metal benders – we're in the entertainment business" (Weber Danmark Facebook) (Julin, 19 December, 2011). Weber has maintained this popularity and sense of enthusiasm for the Weber brand through marketing and communication activities since this turnaround.

Weber Offline and Online

Weber is present on several social media platforms as well as having established physical facilities where grill enthusiasts can experience the world of Weber and the BBQ culture the brand represents.

Weber has an official website, webergrill.dk, which serves several purposes for Danish consumers. Here, consumers can get the latest news, read the history of Weber and about their various grill products, get support, find recipes, join grill courses and experience the newly established universe called "come on over" that explores the grill cultures of different nationalities. The official website also serves as a direct entry point to Weber ID, which is a tailor-made toolbox for consumers and owners of Weber grills. As a member of Weber ID, you receive news, tips, recipes and information that are custom-made based on what kind of grill(s) you own. Weber is also present on social media platforms such as Twitter (@WeberGrills, @WeberNordic), Instagram (#WeberKlubben) and Facebook (Weberklubben.dk + Weber Danmark). However, we have chosen to focus solely on the Weber community, Weberklubben, which is present both on Weber's official site (hereafter cited as Weberklubben OS) and Facebook (hereafter cited as Weberklubben FB), as

these show the most interactivity between consumers. When referring to the community where the platform is irrelevant we will cite it as Weberklubben.

Weberklubben OS

In Weberklubben OS, you can become a member of the online Weber grill community; it was established in 2007 and allows members to enter a universe of grilling where they can talk to each other about everything concerning Weber and the experience of grilling. Weberklubben OS has 69,918 members in its online community (Weberklubben.dk). Aside from numerous recipes, members can find the latest Weber news, blog posts, debate posts and areas that concern specific Weber grills. Weberklubben OS is managed by two Weber employees: Pia Kromann, who is editor in chief, and Mark Jørgensen, who is responsible for the technical side of things. Additionally, and in close collaboration with Pia Kromann and Mark Jørgensen, Weberklubben OS is run by nine volunteer editors, who are responsible for a specific grill theme and post two to three monthly blog posts.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Weberklubben OS website. The header is red with the Weber Klubben logo on the left. To the right of the logo, it says "DET OFFICIELLE WEBER ONLINE COMMUNITY". Further right, there are links for "Log ind" and "Bliv medlem", and a badge that says "Nu med 69.930 medlemmer". Below the header is a navigation bar with links: NYHEDER, EVENTS, TIPS & TRICKS, OPSKRIFTER, DEBAT & BLOG, TEMASIDER, INFO, and GRILLKURSER. The main content area features several promotional banners and articles. On the left, there's a banner for "Grilleriet" and "GRILL ACADEMY". In the center, there's a section titled "Tæt på 70.000 medlemmer" with text about the Weber Camp program and "Come On Over" campaign. On the right, there's a red banner saying "Bliv medlem af klubben klik her!". Below these, there's a login section with fields for "Brugernavn" and "*****", a checkbox for "Husk Log ind | Glemte kodeord?", and a "Log ind" button. Further down, there's a section titled "Dét grilles lige nu! #WeberKlubben" with a grid of six images showing various grilled foods. Below this grid, there's a text prompt: "Vis os, hvad du griller lige nu ved at bruge #WeberKlubben i Instagram. Se flere #WeberKlubben-billeder." At the bottom, there are three more sections: "Seneste artikler på TEMASIDERNE" with a link to "INSPIRATION" and an article titled "Alene hjemme med knægten - T-bone steak"; "OPSKRIFTER" with "1100 opskrifter til grillen"; and a "Find us on Facebook" link with the "Weber Camp" logo.

Source: Weberklubben OS frontpage, 2015

Weber on Facebook

Weber has an official site on the social networking site, Facebook, where everyone with a Facebook profile can follow and like Weber's activities in Denmark. On the official Weber Danmark Facebook site, Weber employees post news, videos and adverts for their courses and events in order to inspire grill enthusiasts, keep followers up to date with everything going on in the grilling universe and encourage followers to share their "outstanding moments" when grilling (Facebook).

Apart from Weber Danmark's own official Facebook site, Weberklubben OS has also emerged on Facebook. Weberklubben FB was created in 2007 by a Weber enthusiast, Søren Aabenhus, for the purpose of sharing recipes among the attendees from the first Weber Camp (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015). As the community grew, Per Aastradsen became co-administrator; today, the two volunteers administrate Weberklubben FB, which consists of 21,448 members (Facebook). Weberklubben FB was, until a few months ago, run solely by consumers without any involvement from Weber. However, Weber has become involved in the community by adding Pia Kromann and Mark Jørgensen to the group of administrators and monitoring the content (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015).



Source: Weberklubben FB, 2015

Weber's Offline Activities

In addition to their online presence, Weber also creates experiences for community members and other grill enthusiasts outside of the Internet. They have a yearly get-together in Give called Weber Camp (Weberklubben.dk). Here, Weber enthusiasts come from all over the country to camp and grill for three days. Also, Weber established the Grill Academy in 2007 – with one academy located in Aalborg and one in Copenhagen. The Grill Academy offers grill courses, team-building events, survival trips, etcetera, for consumers and companies (webergrillacademy.dk). Weber is also the main sponsor of the Danish National BBQ Team (bbqvikings.com), the TV show *Grill Feber* (Weberklubben.dk) and the TV show *Master Chef* (Facebook).

2

}}} METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to our methodological considerations regarding theory of science and the research design of our thesis. Our methodological decisions frame the direction for the remainder of this thesis. As we have only concentrated on qualitative data, we have made use of the abductive approach. Bryman (2012) argues, “not only does much qualitative research not generate theory, but also theory is often used at the very least as a background to qualitative investigations” (p. 27). In this thesis we will use our qualitative research to make qualitative investigations. In the following paragraphs we will elaborate on our reflections regarding the theories of social science and present our approach to the research design and our data collection.

Social Constructivism

In the following we will introduce our considerations concerning the choice of theory of science. We will not present the entire history and on-going discussions of social constructivism, as we do not find it relevant for this thesis. Rather, we want to give the reader an insight into how we comply with our domain of the thesis. Social constructivism does not have one fountainhead, as it depends on which social science branch employs it (Esmark et al., 2005, p. 15). We will not go into depth with the different branches of social constructivism, but will instead explain the concept to clarify our standpoint in social science. The main focus of social constructivism is that both epistemology and ontology must be seen in the specific social context wherein they occur (Jacobsen, 2013). Furthermore, epistemology and ontology are not static, but only achieve meaning in the context they are in and the definitions they are tied to (Jacobsen, 2013). In the next paragraph, we walk the reader through our perspective of social constructivism for this thesis and explain our research design and data collection for the analysis.

The Social Reality

Our thesis investigates the notion of online communities and why consumers co-create with companies and are active in online communities. Social constructivism is ideal for looking into this. As Wenneberg (2002, p. 72) argues, social constructivism is interested in looking at a phenomenon that seems natural, but actually is socially

constructed. Furthermore, Wenneberg (2002, p. 73) argues that the basis of social constructivism is to reveal what, on the surface, seems a natural phenomenon, but in fact is not. Social constructivism is based on the belief that reality is a socially-constructed phenomenon (Esmark et al. 2005, p. 16). What we see as natural and common sense is not taken for granted, but is explored by social constructivism, which questions everything we know and find real (Wenneberg, 2002, p. 17). To become a human with thoughts presumes that we have a language that structures what we see and experience (Wenneberg, 2002, p. 16). Furthermore, it is argued that we only understand the notion of different items because we have been told what they are and what they are called (Wenneberg, 2002, p. 16). Human cognition is, from a social constructivist point of view, socially constructed because we understand through linguistic terms. This language requires at least two people and an interaction between these (Wenneberg, 2002, p. 37). Wenneberg (2002, p. 16) further argues that language is something humans have created together. This means that language is socially constructed, which indicates that our understanding of the world and cognition is also socially constructed. As we will introduce the notion of practices later in the thesis, the social constructivism perspective is important to understand, as practices are socially constructed and developed. Esmark et al. (2005, p. 17) further argue that social reality is not made up of objects or subjects separately, but that the meaning of these two always comes as the result of relations. Objects and subjects standing alone have no meaning; it is relations that create meaning (Esmark et al., 2005, p. 17). If we consider practices and the development of these, Shove and Pantzar's (2005, p. 57) argument that products alone have no value; they only do so when integrated into practice. Practices and the development of meaning of these are socially constructed as people together create the use of a product.

In this thesis we are aware that an online community is a socially-constructed phenomenon and that the understanding of this phenomenon depends on context and culture. Furthermore, as social knowledge is based on collective negotiation of meaning and social interaction, the study of online communities cannot be viewed outside of a social constructivist framework.

Induction and Deduction

As this thesis sets out to acquire new knowledge through empirical data, we have used an abductive approach in our methodology, as we combined inductive and deductive approaches. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) state, “as we have seen, especially in the case of grounded theory, qualitative research is frequently characterized as inductive, as researchers often approach their subject matter without too many preconceived ideas to test...” (p. 224). This view corresponds to the explorative approach of this thesis and the fact that this thesis does not attempt to test existing theory (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 227). However, the thesis as a whole would be characterized as deductive as it contains a methodological and a theoretical chapter. Thus, it can be argued that we have applied a more general strategy that is referred to as abductive in Brinkmann and Kvale’s (2015) terminology. We decided to include a case study in order to test the theory and in the following we will elaborate on this choice.

Case Study Design

In order to collect, present and analyze our collected data, we have designed a case study. As Yin (2014) explains, “the distinctive need for case study arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (p. 4). This goes hand-in-hand with our perception of online communities as a social construction. In this thesis we seek to understand how online communities relate to brand values; to find the answer to this, we will use the case of Weberklubben to understand the social phenomena in practice. Using a case study allows us as researchers to “focus on a ‘case’ and retain a holistic and real-world-perspective” (Yin, 2014, p. 4).

Yin (2014, p. 50) presents four different case study research designs, and in this thesis we have chosen the *single holistic case study*. We have chosen to include only one case study as we wanted to delve deeper into the online community of Weberklubben and investigate the specific values within that specific community through both qualitative interviews and netnographic research. The purpose of the thesis is not to create a comparative analysis and, given our research question, we judged a single case sufficient for the purposes of analysis. However, had more time and resources

been available, it would have been interesting to extend the investigation to several online communities to analyze their similarities and differences. The case of Weberklubben was relevant for the theory underpinning our research question. Yin (2014) advises that single-case designs “require careful investigation of the potential case, to minimize the chances of misinterpretation and to maximize the access needed to collect the case study evidence.” (p. 53). We did not commit to the case of Weberklubben until we carefully investigated its relevance. Weber is known to be a strong brand in Denmark and to have a massive member base on Weberklubben; for exploring how online communities relate to brand values, we believed it would be sufficient to focus on a single significant community. Yin (2014, pp. 51-52) suggests five single case rationales and we argue that our rational basis for choosing a single case study falls under the category of the so-called *critical case*. We believe our case study represents a contribution to knowledge and theory building by “confirming, challenging, or extending the theory” (Yin, 2014, p. 51).

Limitations

Yin (2014, p. 55) identifies a typical problem with the single holistic case study design, which is that the case study might be conducted on an abstract level, lacking clear measures or data. As the field of branding is, to some extent, difficult to measure, we have collected qualitative data on behalf of our chosen case and argue that our data is not too abstract or lacking; it is simply qualitative and not quantitative and therefore more difficult to measure. In this thesis we are not searching to measure in numbers, but in value. We considered including more cases as Yin (2014, p. 56) argues that doing so can make the study more robust. However, this also requires extensive time and resources. We chose to focus on one case, not only because of time and resources, but also because Yin (2014, p. 57) argues that the category of rationale, the critical case, is likely to involve only single cases. Furthermore, we argue that the one case we have chosen provided enough empirical data to answer our research question.

Qualitative Approach

To collect our empirical data, we focused only on qualitative data by conducting netnographical research and doing semi-structured interviews. We have chosen these qualitative research methods as this thesis investigates social relations, for which the qualitative research methods has specific relevance, and as these research methods correspond with our social constructivist view (Flick. 2014, p. 11). Using qualitative research methods allows us as researchers to become a part of the communication process, permitting us to construct knowledge together with the interviewees. As Flick (2012) states, “qualitative methods take the researcher’s communication with the field and its members as an explicit part of knowledge production” (p. 6). This view complies with our social constructivist approach, as “researchers’ reflections of their actions and observations in the field, their impressions, irritations, feelings and so on, become data in their own right, forming part of the interpretation” (Flick, 2012, p. 6). In the following we will explain our netnographic method and thereafter present how we conducted qualitative interviews.

Netnography

To further investigate how online communities can increase brand values through co-creation, we wanted to immerse ourselves in the culture and behavior of the online community itself to understand the culture, language, meanings, rituals and practices of the phenomena of online communities and consumer tribes (Kozinets, 2006, p. 279). As seen in Kozinets’ studies (2006, p. 281), we made use of the method netnography, which adapts the open-ended practice of ethnography to the scope of online communities. It is “a qualitative, interpretive research methodology that adapts the traditional, in-person ethnographic research techniques of anthropology to the study of the online cultures and communities formed through computer-mediated communications” (Kozinets, 2006, p. 281). Kozinets’ studies are especially relevant, as he “seeks to demonstrate the level of cultural nuance required for quality netnographic interpretation” (Kozinets, 2006, p. 279). Furthermore, Kozinets (2010, p. 74) argues that netnography is a participative approach rather than just gathering and coding qualitative online data. This method is relevant for this thesis as it provides a deeper and more intimate understanding and creates a more representative picture of the consumers’ reality. Furthermore, netnography can help to identify

various segments and provide insights on brand perception and consumer preferences, which can help identify brand values and thereby assist in answering the research question (Kozinets, 2006, p. 282).

Kozinets (2010, p. 61) presents six steps to be followed to conduct a netnographic research of an online community. In the following paragraphs we will go through the six steps as suggested by Kozinets.

Planning

As suggested by Kozinets (2002, p. 63), we initiated our netnographic approach by looking at several relevant online communities so as to identify the particular online community relevant to our research question. Before choosing an online community to research further, we looked into the members, language, interests and practices of the communities and researched to see if they had been “tapped out” by other researchers already (Kozinets, 2010, p. 79). We chose Weberklubben as our case study, which is present both on Facebook as Weberklubben and on the official Weber-created community website Weberklubben. Kozinets (2010, pp. 85-86) defines several types of communities and we argue that Weberklubben is actually two different types of community as it is operated on two different platforms. The corporate website community Weberklubben OS falls under the category *bulletin board*, whereas Weberklubben FB falls under the category *Social Networking site* (Kozinets, 2010, p. 87). Kozinets (2010, p. 87) argues that as the Internet is expanding rapidly and many researchers have explored bulletin boards in their research, these should not necessarily be researched further. We have therefore chosen to focus our netnographic study on Weberklubben FB. Our choice is based on the fact that Weberklubben OS is no longer as active and interactive as it once was. However, Weberklubben FB fulfills all six good reasons for a well-chosen community: relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous and data-rich (Kozinets, p. 89).

Entree and Data Collection

When using netnography, Kozinets (2002, p. 65) recommends four ethical research procedures. In step one, Kozinets (2002, p. 65) argues that we as researchers should make our presence and intentions known to the Weberklubben members. At first, we

as researchers could not decide on whether we saw Weberklubben as a public or private space, but as Kozinets (2010) states, “the fact that people know that their postings are public does not automatically lead to the conclusion that academics and other types of researchers can use the data in any way they please” (p. 137). Given this, we decided that even though it seems public, Weberklubben is still private to some extent and we made our presence known as stated above. As Kozinets (2010, p. 147) further elaborates regarding ethics in the online community space, it is clear that this topic is a grey zone for researchers. However, we chose not to make ourselves known as researchers in Weberklubben. We chose not to make ourselves known as Weberklubben is on two platforms; in this social media age, it would not be of great value, and we therefore only chose to participate. We applied for membership in Weberklubben on both platforms and conducted interviews both with a volunteer administrator of Weberklubben FB and the two Weberklubben OS managers from Weber, whom we informed about our presence in the online community. To access Weberklubben FB, we asked one of the volunteer administrators, Per Aastradsen, for permission to join the online community. He granted us access to join Weberklubben FB; in Kozinets’s (2010) terms, Per Aastradsen would be called a *gatekeeper* of the community – the one that watches over the community and new entrants. We created user profiles on Weberklubben OS, and on this site the two Weber managers are the gatekeepers. In step two, it is advised that we as researchers ensure confidentiality and anonymity for community members (Kozinets, 2002, p. 65). Therefore, we have anonymized the identity of the community members’ posts that we have included in this thesis. We have included our entire netnographic data set on an USB, but decided not to anonymize the names on all our 112 posts in the appendix part 2 due to time. In step three, it is advised that we as researchers seek and incorporate feedback from community members (Kozinets, 2002, p. 63). We have ensured feedback by conducting qualitative interviews with five members of Weberklubben. In step four, it is suggested that we as researchers contact community members to get permission for using their postings; however, as we keep community members’ identities anonymous, we have chosen not to contact them for permission (Kozinets, 2002, p. 65). As mentioned earlier, netnography is about participating in the community, and Kozinets (2010) further explains that it is important in the netnographic investigation to “experience social interaction in the way that your participants are experiencing it” (p. 87). This means following their leads to other forums, blogs, etcetera, which is

why we also visited communities like grillguruen.dk, looked into websites such as funktionsdesign.dk and started following the Danish National BBQ Team on Facebook. These were all sites that community members referred to.

Data Analysis

To conduct the analysis, we looked through the computer-mediated communications of the online community members as suggested by Kozinets (2002, p. 63). We observed Weberklubben OS and FB for three months to get an overview of themes discussed in the community. In total, we collected 112 posts (comments are not included in the number) for thorough analysis. The netnographic data is collated on the attached USB and we will refer to the netnographic data through the thesis by writing FB(number), when referring to Weberklubben FB posts and OS(number) when referring to Weberklubben OS posts. As Kozinets (2010) argues, “netnography involves an inductive approach to the analysis of qualitative data” (p. 118). He further elaborates “induction is a form of logical reasoning in which individual observations are built up in order to make more general statements about a phenomenon” (p. 119). We will use this inductive data analysis approach to manipulate all the information we have gathered over the past three months. We chose to manually code the netnographic data, as this project is a smaller scale investigation of a community over a few months only. We investigated the opportunities to use Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS), but this had more cons than pros, especially as Richards (2005, as cited in Kozinets, 2010) mentions the *coding trap*, which means that “the researcher conducts ever-increasing amounts of coding and classification, without theory ever seeming to emerge from the data” (p. 129). Furthermore, Kozinets (2010) argues that these large sums of data can “be a barrier to thinking” (p. 129). To manually code the posts in the community, we printed out the 112 posts together with the respective comments. We coded the posts, discussed our findings and categorized the findings into different themes. This gave us an overview of the different statements in the posts and good insight into how the content of the posts were divided in the different themes (see the final categories in Appendix 1).

Representation and Evaluation

All texts are historically, politically, culturally and socially situated and therefore discussed how to prove it valid, authentic and certain (Kozinets, 2010, p. 163). Kozinets (2010, p. 173) presents ten criteria to help the researcher evaluate the netnographic data and we will introduce a selection of these to secure the validity of the data. In this thesis we find it relevant to discuss groundedness, verisimilitude and reflexivity (Kozinets, 2010, p. 169). Groundedness refers to researchers' ability to show the reader that the netnographic data are the ground for the research and theoretical representation (Kozinets, 2010, p. 166). We believe that we gained an understanding of the members through Weberklubben and the analysis clearly shows the link between data and theory where we use examples from our data collection to illustrate this. Verisimilitude is the text's ability to reproduce the "real" so the reader almost feels as he/she was the one who contacted the culture, community and members (Kozinets, 2010, p. 168). Kozinets (2010, p. 169) further elaborates that verisimilitude can be achieved by conducting interviews. We have conducted interviews with members, editors and administrators of Weberklubben and argue that through the entire assignment we have created a narrative to make the findings in Weberklubben "real" to the reader. Reflexivity is last criterion from Kozinets' toolbox that we find relevant to include. It means that the researcher is a part of the community one is trying to understand and portray, and as we have been members of Weberklubben OS as well as Weberklubben FB, we have experienced the culture, setting and context (Kozinets, 2010, p. 169). We have been honest in our netnographic research presentations and even though Kozinets argued that we should make ourselves known in the community, we chose not to and have also elaborated on that choice transparently.

Limitations

As netnography is an observational study of written online interaction, some qualities from face-to-face communication are lacking. These are qualities such as tonal shifts, pauses, cracked voices, eye movements, body language, movements toward and away from, etcetera, which can result in losing vital information (Kozinets, 2006, p. 282). However, we did conduct interviews over the phone where tonal shifts, pauses and cracked voices were present. We did not have the opportunity to meet and engage

with the users of the communities who we interviewed in person due to long distances. Finally, it could have been interesting to follow and participate in the community for a longer period of time to gain better insight as well as deeper and more thorough analysis; it may also have been valuable to follow the community to the offline events they participate in.

Semi-structured Interviews

Based on our research question, we found it relevant to not only apply netnographic research, but also semi-structured interviews in order to gather our empirical data. This method provides us with “the respondents’ less tangible precursors of behavior such as attitudes, feelings and motives” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 93). With this semi-structured interview approach, we believe that we are more likely to get more nuanced and insightful empirical material on the subject of online communities than we would in a standardized interview or with a questionnaire, as we aim to “understand the subject and not to measure it” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 93). We chose a semi-structured interview format as it provided flexibility in the interviews and allowed us to understand “both cognitive and emotional aspects from the respondent” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 93). This was relevant for the thesis as our purpose was to go into depth with an issue and investigate the individual respondents’ perceptions and understanding rather than generalize about an entire population (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 94).

In this thesis we followed the seven stages as suggested by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 128) in order to ensure that the overall vision and purpose of the interviews were clear throughout of the interview process. The seven stages were: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 128). Before we go through the seven steps, we will introduce the eight interviewees.

Name / Pseudonym	Position	Affiliation	Interview guide
Sjanten	Member	Weberklubben	Appendix 5
Skæeknejte	Member	Weberklubben	Appendix 5
Ole	Member	Weberklubben	Appendix 5
Hisselholm	Editor	Weberklubben OS	Appendix 6
HeidiV	Editor	Weberklubben OS	Appendix 6
Per Aastradsen	Administrator	Weberklubben FB	Appendix 7
Pia Kromann & Marc Jørgensen	Chief Editor & Technical Responsible at Weberklubben and Weber Danmark	Weber	Appendix 8
Gus Murray	Chief Digital Strategy Officer	Propeople	Appendix 9

As seen in the above we conducted interviews with several stakeholders and the reason for choosing them is stated below.

The three members were found through observation at Weberklubben OS. We looked for some of the most engaged members, who had posted recipes and had been active in the debate forum (Appendix 2). We contacted 16 people and five of them gave a positive reply, from whom we choose to speak with three (See e-mail in Appendix 3). These three were: Sjanten, Skæeknejte and Ole. These are their usernames; we never asked for their real names since we did not find it necessary, as we prefer that they remain anonymous. We wanted to talk to the members to gain insight into Weberklubben OS as well as FB from the members' perspective, as these are co-creating with Weber when they interact in the community.

On Weberklubben OS nine editors are presented (Klubbens redaktører, 2015). These editors work as volunteers for Weberklubben OS and their tasks are to upload recipes, make activities for the community members and reply on the debate site. We contacted three editors as we hoped to speak with at least one. Two of them responded positively and the last one never replied. Those two were: Hisselholm and HeidiV. These names are their pseudonyms on the site, as we do not have their permission to use their real names. The interviews were relevant, as we wanted to talk the people who actively co-create with Weber.

Weberklubben FB was initially started by a Weberklubben OS community member, Søren Aabenhus. As activity increased, Per Aastradsen entered the community as administrator to help out. Per Aastradsen is furthermore a member of the Danish National BBQ team, which is sponsored by Weber. We conducted an interview with Per Aastradsen as he is actively co-creating with Weber, and we were interested in knowing more about the Facebook community and its development. He is especially interesting as we assume that he is a role model to many people in the community with his many years on the Danish National BBQ team and as editor before he became administrator for Weberklubben FB.

To gain insight to Weber's plans and thoughts on Weberklubben, we conducted an interview with two Weber representatives. These two were: Pia Kromann, Chief Editor at Weberklubben OS, and Marc Jørgensen, Web Technician for Weberklubben OS and social media. Both are also administrators at Weberklubben FB. We contacted Pia Kromann by email (see Appendix 4), and then discussed over the phone when to have the interview. The interview gave us the opportunity to ask Weber for their perspective on the co-creative relationship they maintain with community members and how they think the community creates brand values.

To get a current perspective on online communities and the various online platforms, we conducted an interview with a social media expert, Gus Murray, who works as Chief Digital Strategy Officer at ProPeople, a digital agency that specializes in digital solutions that create added value for our customers. He gave us insight into the current trends of social media, and especially on what motivates and engages users to co-create with companies.

As we have now introduced the eight interviewees, we will now move into a consideration of the seven stages.

Thematizing

An important part of the interview takes place before the recording begins. Based on what we learned from the theory thus far, we developed themes that we wanted to investigate through the interviews. "Thematizing refers to the formulation of a

research question and a theoretical clarification of the theme investigated” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 131). Before planning the interview guide, it was key to answer the thematic questions that Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) identify as “why,” “what” and “how” (p. 131). Answering “why” clarified the purpose of the study, which in this case was to obtain empirical knowledge about our themes of investigation and thus had a descriptive purpose (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 133). To answer “what” requires a conceptual and theoretical understanding of the themes of investigation to understand where new knowledge can be added (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 133). We did this through extensive reading of theoretical material about the themes prior to the data collection process. Then we moved on to answering “how,” which is the more technical aspect of techniques of interviewing and analyzing that will provide the intended knowledge, which will be elaborated in the steps below (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 131).

Interview Design

In this thesis we based the interviews on semi-structured interview guides (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 6). This allowed us to go deeper into relevant aspects that could appear spontaneously in the interviews as well as cover themes we decided were relevant prior to the interviews. A low level of standardization and structure has the advantage of increased flexibility and opportunity for adjustments during the interview (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 88). As mentioned, we created some overall themes that we wanted to talk to the interviewees about. These themes were based on what we had learned from the theory and their purpose was to guide the structure of the interview and inspire the conversation. In that sense, we did maintain some level of structure; however, we did not insist on covering the themes in any specific order, as we wanted to secure flow and leave room for unexpected but relevant turns in the dialogues.

The Interview

As researchers, we are aware that we cannot avoid influencing our empirical data to some extent. However, we have been cautious not to influence our data to such a degree as to make statements untrue or twisted or divert from the reality of the interviewee. Before beginning the interviews, we wanted to create a relaxed

atmosphere to make the interviewee feel comfortable. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2009, p. 128) describe, the first minutes between the interviewer and interviewee are important, as the interviewee will need a sense of trust and openness from the interviewer in order to open up in the interview. We started the interviews by briefing the interviewees about the purpose of the interviews, informing them that our conversation was being recorded and giving them the opportunity to ask questions before beginning the interview. We were also aware that we could easily be perceived as representatives from Weber, which could hinder the interviewees in stating critical opinions. We were therefore explicit that we neither worked for Weber nor were writing this thesis for Weber in order to separate us from the company and generate more honest answers. Likewise, we ended every interview with a debriefing, asking if the interviewee had anything more to add or if they had any questions in order to provide the interviewee with the opportunity to address things they might have concerns about or they thought of during the interview. As stated above, we conducted interviews with three Weberklubben members, two editors of Weberklubben OS, a Weberklubben FB administrator, two representatives from Weber and a social media expert. The interviews with the members, editors and administrator were conducted over the phone, as they were all located in Jutland and it would have been too time-consuming and expensive to travel to each of their locations. We recorded the phone interviews using an app called “Call Recorder,” which we bought and downloaded to our iPhones from the App Store. The interview with Weber was conducted over Skype. The Skype interview was recorded through QuickTime Player on the computer. The expert interview was carried out face-to-face in Copenhagen. The interview was recorded by using the app “Memo” on an iPhone. We recorded all interviews as we wanted to be present in the conversations and not worry about remembering good quotes or pausing to take notes. We would have preferred to make all the interviews face-to-face as we did with our expert interview.

Transcribing the Interviews

As researchers, we chose to transcribe the interviews ourselves, as listening to the interviews again would reawaken the thoughts and feelings experienced during the interviews and start our analysis of the content of the interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 180). As both of us transcribed the interviews, we agreed to a

procedure beforehand to ensure all interviews were transcribed the same way. We choose to transcribe the interviews using a more formal written style. We decided to exclude pauses, “mh,” “ehm,” etcetera; we thought emotional indications in writing were irrelevant as the main purpose of the transcribed interviews is to see whether the claims in the theory comply with the thoughts of the subjects in online communities (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 181). We have therefore chosen to transcribe what is clear and distinct and to use a more coherent written style (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 184).

Analyzing

Analyzing qualitative data can be difficult as it is mostly exhaustive amounts of unstructured textual material. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 223) suggest several strategies for analyzing qualitative interviews, including analyses focusing on meaning and analyses focusing on language and general analysis. To analyze our data from the interviews, we used a bricolage approach, which is a general technique of interview analysis (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2012, p. 267). The bricolage technique enabled us to move freely between analytic techniques and concepts and read through the interviews to get an overview and to revisit relevant passages (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 267). The bricolage analysis technique matched our inductive method of collecting data. We decided to use the inductive approach as we collected qualitative data because we did not predefine our ideas for testing prior to collecting our data, rather wanting to let our empirical findings decide what should be investigated (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 224). As mentioned in Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), we used open coding to analyze our data. Open coding refers to “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 227), which we applied as we wanted to present our findings in a qualitative “analysis of relations to other codes and to context and action consequences” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 227). Also, the process of open coding matched our aim for the qualitative data analysis, as we wanted to induce new knowledge with regard to how online communities can relate to brand values. This approach corresponds with the grounded theory approach, which was developed by Glaser and Strauss (as quoted in Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) and aims “to inductively develop an empirical theory through observations and interviews” (p. 133). In the

coding process, we underlined words in the transcripts that corresponded to the themes in our interview guide. Additionally, we underlined words that showed new themes. We then gathered the underlined words in groups, which made up categories that “capture[d] the fullness of the experiences and actions studies” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 227). The data-driven categories we identified through our coding were:

- Weberklubben
- Weber the brand
- Co-creation
- Creation of self-identity
- Motivational factors

These categories helped us to compare and find synergies between our theoretical findings and empirical findings, which will be discussed in the analysis.

Verifying

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) state that verification of knowledge production is discussed in context with the concepts of reliability, validity and generalization, which they see as interdependent and describe as “the interdependence of philosophical understandings of objectivity and truth, social science concepts of validity, and the practical issues of verifying interview knowledge” (p. 277). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) connect the concepts of reliability, validity and generalization in a context that is relevant for interview research and argue that verification in general does not apply for one specific part of the process, but is relevant during the entire process (p. 83). We strove to ensure a high level of reliability in our findings by avoiding leading questions, although some level of subjectivity will always be present in the formulation of questions as a natural reaction in a dialogue. Furthermore, we divided the respondents’ answers into categories, as described in step 5. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 282) express concern that coding the interviews separately, and thus maintaining high reliability, can defeat creative innovations and variability. However, we conducted the open coding separately to minimize influencing each other and decrease the risk of being biased (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 282).

Validity also concerns each of the seven stages of the interview process. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 283) describe validity as a reflective assessment for approaching the seven stages of the data collection process. Also, it refers to whether a “method investigates what it is intended to investigate...” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 282). We have, in our approach to this, reflected upon the validity of our research and remained critical in our choices, approach and findings throughout all of the seven stages, which have been elaborated in the above. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 295) state that generalization regarding qualitative research is often treated in relation to case studies, which is also the case in this thesis. They define three forms of generalization in relation to qualitative research: naturalistic generalization, statistical generalization and analytical generalization. Stake (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) argues that in contrast to traditional scientific demands for generalizability, “the intrinsic case study is worthwhile in [its] own right.” As this thesis investigates an intrinsic, also referred to as critical, case, it can be argued that the findings presented in the analysis can stand on their own with no need for generalization. However, if one wanted generalize the findings for this particular thesis, it could be done using the analytical generalization form as it “involves a reasoned judgment about the extent to which the findings of one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in other situations” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 297).

Reporting

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 301) refer to reporting as a social construct where the choice and expression of our communication in this thesis provides a specific view of the interviewees’ life world. With reporting, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 305) emphasize the importance of transparency for the reader, so they are left with a clear understanding of which method(s) were used and how these were applied. In this thesis, we have striven to follow Brinkmann and Kvale’s (2015) advice on visualizing the finished report from the beginning, and thus constantly having the story we wish to convey in this thesis at top of our minds and the reader in the center.

Limitations

As mentioned in the limitations of netnography, the qualitative interviews lack some of the qualities from face-to-face interaction, but we as we conducted most of the

interviews over the phone tonal shifts, pauses and cracked voices were present. We did not have the opportunity to meet with the interviewees, due to distances. However it could have been interesting to meet with them in person as well as it might have been interesting to interview members that are only active and present in Weberklubben FB as our interviewees are found in Weberklubben OS and are present on both platforms.

3

»»» THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From Traditional Marketing to Online Communities

“A new communication system, increasingly speaking a universal, digital language, is both integrating globally the production and distribution of words, sounds and images of our culture, and customizing them to the tastes of the identities and moods of individuals. Interactive computer networks are growing exponentially, creating new forms and channels of communication, shaping life and being shaped by life at the same time” (Castells, 2000, p. 2).

Since the 1980s, a global transition has happened, a transition that, since Castells wrote the above quote, has been even further developed, explored and exploited. At the time, he characterized the transition from an industrial society to a network society as “made up of networks of production, power and experience, which constructs a culture of virtuality in the global flows that transcend time and place” (Castells, as quoted in Flew, 2014, p. 48). We argue that his points are still valid; they have simply been enhanced and have greater influence in today’s network society. This transition has also carried considerable impact for marketers, as these networks brought new opportunities as well as threats to traditional marketing. The network society is based on opportunities of the Internet, which has opened up platforms where consumers as well as companies globally have various options to share information and communicate despite different physical locations and time zones. The way consumers and companies are interacting with each other and engaging in social relations and networks has changed radically as the various communication platforms have opened up new opportunities to interact. Web 2.0 has been the root of these new interaction opportunities and, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), is defined as “a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion” (p. 61). Along with Web 2.0 came new Internet-based applications with which users could generate and share content; today we know these under the term social media. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are examples of social media platforms and, as we have observed that the majority of well-known brands have a Facebook community where consumers share various content and comment on a daily basis, we found this central for our thesis. Facebook is, furthermore, a communication platform, with more than 1.44 billion monthly active users; the

relationship element dominates, as members have access to other members' profiles as well as communities and can interact directly with both ("Number of," 2015, 16 May) (Vernuccio, 2014, p. 51). Social media largely promotes the co-creation of innovation and value. It is furthermore a great opportunity for companies to interact directly with the consumer and increase user involvement and engagement at a relatively low cost; it can also be used to conduct more efficient marketing than traditional communication tools allow (Schiavone et al., 2014, p. 274). Furthermore, Schiavone et al. (2014) elaborate on social media: "social media brings about a collective, democratic process of co-development of innovation and value. All the subscribers of a social network can participate very easily and affect the final outcome of the co-creation process" (p. 274).

Social media has created opportunities for companies, but also challenges. It is increasingly difficult for companies to control what information is spread about the company, brands and products, and some of this information can be very damaging. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) investigate the challenges and opportunities of social media; they make it clear that trying to manage social media is not easy and takes social media management resources. Additionally, when co-creating with consumers in social media, Hatch and Schultz (2010, p. 591) imply that companies give control over the brand to stakeholders, and this could be an issue of brand governance.

If we take a step back and look at how marketing has changed, already in 1994 Grönroos (1994, p. 4) argued that a paradigm shift had happened in marketing; marketers went from focusing on the marketing mix to relationship marketing. Furthermore, Grönroos' (1994) viewpoint on traditional marketing models, such as Michael Porter's model of the 4 P's, illustrates that twenty-one years ago he was already arguing that the model was outdated; he stated that marketing is a social phenomenon and not a constrained model: "the simplicity of the model seduces teachers to toolbox thinking instead of constantly reminding them of the fact that marketing is a social process with far more facets than that" (p. 14). In a more recent study, Vargo and Lusch (2004, p. 1) state that the focus has moved from the exchange of goods to a new form of dominant logic for marketing, where the focus is on the co-creation of value and relationships. Consumer co-creation involves collaborative activities where the consumer can participate in the design and the development of

new products, but co-creating with consumers is also a practice for branding (Schiavone et al., 2014, p. 273). In this thesis we focus on the practice for branding, as we are investigating how online communities can relate to brand values, and argue that co-creation is an important factor. We argue that relationship marketing is continually important in a present marketing perspective and suits the needs and wants of today's consumers. This is based on the fact that today's consumers become continuously more informed through the Internet and social networks, and therefore marketers experience the necessity of radically changing their strategies.

Previously, marketers did not take consumers' opinions into consideration, but today the monologue has changed to an active dialog between consumers and companies as consumers have the opportunity, and do feel the urge, to affect the value chain (Dholakia et al., 1999, p. 26). Before Web 2.0, this dialog was not considered important, but today marketers are continuously gaining social benefits by interacting and recognizing consumers, which can contribute to a strengthened relationship. However, since all marketers have realized that dialog is the most effective way to get consumers' attention, some consumers are overwhelmed as marketers try to engage them in relationship marketing strategies at all times (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008, p. 255). The relationship must therefore arise from a consumer and not only from the marketers and corporations. Marketers have therefore developed alternative strategies that include building online brand communities where the consumer actively chooses to interact (Cova & Pace, as quoted in Sicilia & Palazón, 2008, p. 255). The consumer creates his/her own customized consumption experience by interacting with the company and other consumers in an online community and thereby becoming a participant in customizing the experience and can thereby co-create value for both parties (Firat et al., 1994, p. 50). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) further explain the phenomenon of consumers and companies creating experiences and thereby value together: "consumers now seek to exercise their influence in every part of the business system. Armed with new tools and dissatisfied with available choices, consumers want to interact with firms and thereby 'co-create' value" (p. 6). Furthermore, Lusch and Vargo (2006) argue that companies will collaborate with consumers in order to create the marketing strategy. This builds on the idea of open-source innovation, of which there are several examples, especially in the IT industry

where programs such as Linux and Mozilla are developed as an effect of co-creating with consumers.

The Concept of Online Communities

A community can be defined as the following:

A community is made up of its member entities and the relationships among them.

Communities tend to be identified on the basis of commonality or identification among their members, whether a neighborhood, an occupation, a leisure pursuit, or devotion to a brand (McAlexander et al., 2002, p. 38).

Communities exist as spaces, whether physical or online, where people can share cognitive, emotional or material resources. Castells (2001, p. 52) argues that the virtual communitarian culture is based on how social forms and processes are shaped and how habits and social patterns have emerged from the practice of online communities. McAlexander et al. (2002, p. 38) agree, as they found the creation and negotiation of meaning to always be shared within communities. The notion of online communities has brought up many reflections on what the term “communities” means. There is an ideological conflict between those nostalgic for the old, spatially-bounded community and supporters of the online communities where people are gathered by interest and choice (Castells, 2001). From a sociological perspective, communities are based on the sharing of values and networks are built by the choices and strategies of social actors (Castells, 2001, p. 127). In addition to this, sociologists thought that the discourse of communities was primarily political, religious, scholarly and popular and thereby about “a community’s condition and fate in the wake of modernity, market capitalism and consumer culture” (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 412). The loss of the old understanding of a community has partly resulted from a growing centrality on the individual consumer and materialistic desires (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2002, p. 413). Despite the fact that communities have since then been widely accepted in the context of consumption, Muniz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 412) saw the need for addressing communities in consumer culture and therefore conducted a study on brand communities.

Looking at contemporary society, McAlexander et al. (2002, p. 38) identify several communities that are based on brands or consumption activities and where the meaning of these is negotiated through the symbolism of the environment or marketplace. We argue that online communities that discuss consumption experiences but are not centered on specific brands are also important in the creation of brand values for companies. In these online communities, consumers discuss different products and brands that concern the point of interest; however, we argue that online brand communities have a stronger basis for strengthening the relationship between the individual consumer and the focal company, as consumers that are members of specific online brand communities are consumers that are more loyal to the brand. We therefore find online brand communities specifically central to strengthening the relationship not only between consumers but also between consumers and companies. We have therefore chosen to include an online brand community as the case study in this thesis. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) define an online brand community as below:

A brand community is a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand. It is specialized because at its center is a branded good or service. Like other communities, it is marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (p. 412).

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) argue that three constructs identify the distinguishing features of online brand communities. First is consciousness of kind, which refers to the sense of belonging to a group and a shared sense of consciousness (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 413). Second, there are rituals and traditions, which cover the social practices that celebrate behavioral norms and values as well as covering shared history, culture and consciousness in the community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 413). Third is moral responsibility, which is felt as obligations and duties of the members to the community; in times of threat towards the community it produces collective action (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 413). In more recent research, Schau et al. (2009, p. 32) have developed four thematic categories, which take root in the same tribal mindset as the research of Muniz and O'Guinn; however, Schau et al. (2009) have, through nine case studies, identified a common set of practices that create value for the consumers in an online brand community. In our analysis we will make use of

these practices, through “which consumers realize value beyond that which the firm creates or anticipates” (Schau et al., 2009, p. 30), to identify where value creation is present for the consumer.

As Muniz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 415) argue that the online brand community is a legitimate form of community, we will also apply online community theory and not only online brand community theory in the thesis. Furthermore, we also find it relevant to include theory concerning communities that are not necessarily online to look into the behaviors of people that gather in communities. Even though we include theory from the turn of the millennium and the Internet has opened up many opportunities to create online brand communities since then, we argue that the theories we have chosen to include are still valid, as we have observed there are similarities in the factors and values that are important for the consumer as well as the marketer in today’s online brand community.

Relationships in Online Communities

We argue that relationship marketing can be conducted through online communities, as these open up a dialog between consumers and companies and can facilitate relationship strengthening as well as the co-creation of value. The activity in these online communities stems from people’s needs to gather in tribes, and such tribes can influence people’s behavior more than marketing institutions or cultural authorities (Cova & Cova, 2002, p. 596). Traditionally, it was only niche market brands that invested resources in online communities — called online brand communities as it revolves around a brand — but today we found examples of active online brand communities revolving around fast-moving consumer goods such as Nutella and Coca-Cola (Cova & Pace, 2006; Sicilia & Palazón, 2008). Online brand communities do not only open up a relationship between the consumers and the companies. McAlexander et al. (2002, p. 39) built on the customer-customer-brand triad model formed by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 428) and added two important relationships. On the basis of that, we argue that there are optimally four essential relationships in online brand communities, all of which center the consumer as seen in the model below. McAlexander et al. have chosen the term customer in this model; however, in this thesis, we chose to refer to the end customer as consumer. These four

relationships are therefore: consumer-consumer, consumer-brand, consumer-marketer and consumer-product.

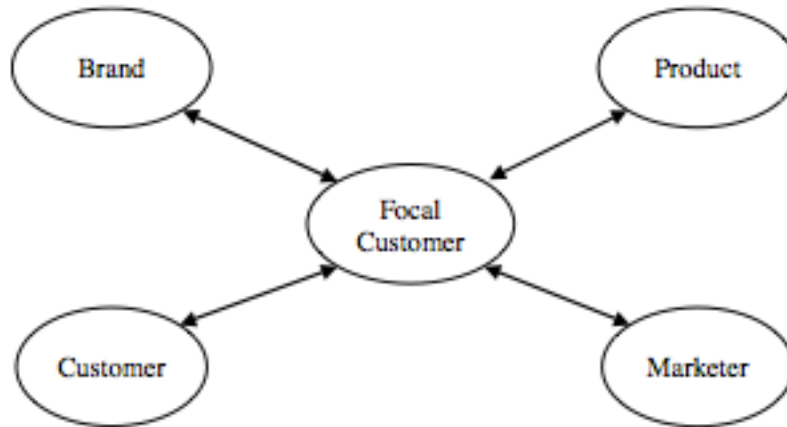


Figure 2: Customer Centric Model (McAlexander et al., 2002, p. 39)

With this model, McAlexander et al. (2002, p. 39) state that brand communities are centered on consumers and explain that the existence and meaningfulness of online brand communities is based on the consumer experience rather than the brand itself. The members are vital in an online brand community for it to be successful and, even though it is important that members are devoted to the brand, it is even more essential that the members have strong bonds with each other (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008, p. 256). Moreover, building on the thoughts of the customer-centric model, we argue that members of online brand communities can develop a strong corporate feeling towards companies as it enhances consumer identification with the brand (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008, p. 256). The various relationships in the customer-centric model will be discussed in the analysis to investigate how the different relationships are present in our case study and thereby find traces of co-creation of value.

Members can develop strong bonds with each other and a strong corporate feeling; even though this mainly contributes to stronger relationships and an increase of word-of-mouth, it eventually can also tarnish the reputation and the brand, and marketers must therefore be aware of facets that can cause problems in online brand communities when managing these. According to Cova and Pace (2006, p. 1089),

these facets include: oppositional brand loyalty, marketplace legitimacy, desired marginality, the polit-brand, the abandoned tribe and ownership of the brand. These are all facets that are out of the hands of the marketers, but that they have to be cautious of as community members can, in several ways, destroy an online brand community. Community members can even hijack the brand, which happens when “a consumer takes a brand away from its marketing professionals to enhance its evolution” (Wipperfurth, as quoted in Cova & Pace, 2002, p. 1090). Hijacking seems to happen frequently in online brand communities today as the consumer wants to be included, wants influence and, most importantly, wants to be an influential participant in the construction of experiences.

Online Communities and Practices

In this thesis we are interested with how a practice can be shared between consumers and thereby enhance it when online communities are used as a constituting element in the marketing strategy (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, p. 61). We are not focusing on innovation in practice as we argue that well-established companies that choose to use online brand communities as an element in their marketing strategy already have products as an element in an established practice, but we argue online communities have the ability to enhance these practices. In online communities, we further state that the focus of the companies should be on the consumers’ experience of/with the product and identification with the brand more than pushing sales of the actual product. The experience of the product derives from taking the product into use; this is the practice. Typically, consumers gather because they have a passion for the practice; in an online community they have the ability to share experiences and tips and be recognized for their knowledge and skills within the practice. The product in itself has no value; value is only present when it is integrated into practice, meaning that focus today is more on consumption than production (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, p. 57). Consumers have desired outcomes when buying products, as they buy a product to exercise a practice; this could, for example, be buying a stove to be able to cook or a football to play soccer. Schau et al. (2009) found that “The emergence of the practice reveals the desire. The evolution of the practice reveals information on how to satisfy that need” (p. 42). The challenge in making a practice successful is not creating a product, but developing the activity, which the consumer must be interested

in. An example could be a football: in order to sell footballs, the interest of playing the game has to be developed (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, p. 52). There are different views to how the term *practice* is best described, and authors with roots in social theory such as Bordieu, de Certau and Giddens (as quoted in Shove & Pantzar, 2005) describe practices “as recognizable entities, are made by and through their routine reproduction” (p. 44). However, as Reckwitz (2002) takes material products into account when he describes a practice, we chose to work with his viewpoint, in which he describes a practice as “Carrying out a practice very often means using particular things in a certain way” (p. 252). Reckwitz’s (2001) views also comply with our social constructivist perspective as we argue that people together through language decide and express how different things should be taken into use. An example in which people in collaboration decide and express how things should or can be taken into use is in online communities, in which consumers often discuss and advice on various practices. Schau et al. (2009) investigated practices in online brand communities and found that practices had the ability to “endow participants with cultural capital” (p. 38) and “generate consumption opportunities” (p. 39) as well as “evince brand community vitality” (p. 39). In the study of Shove and Pantzar (2005), the product is walking sticks and the practice is speed walking, i.e., exercising. In their study they investigated how Nordic Walking created innovation in practice, as they had to change consumers’ associations with walking sticks (Shove & Pantzar, 2005).

The challenge of creating a successful product is developing the activity where the product is in use, and for such practice to endure and exist, those who do it must continually reproduce it (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, p. 49). That is why we argue that online communities have the ability to create practices, as consumers with other consumers as well as companies together have the opportunity to create a dialog concerning the practice and thereby enhance it. Consumers want to be included in the value creation process present in online communities; Shove and Pantzar (2005) further suggest that marketers should see consumers “not as users but as active and creative practitioners” (p. 45) in order to create a practice with the product in use. Schau et al. (2009, p. 41) suggest that to keep an online brand community “healthy,” the companies must foster social networking practices to inspire further co-creation as well as to build and sustain the community. Therefore, it is important “who does it,

where, when and with what consequence for the positioning and subsequent trajectory of the activity as a whole” (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, p. 59). This also implies the importance of the consumer-consumer relationship, because consumers inspire each other to new practices. Furthermore, individuals as role models both assist in creating brand perception for other consumers as well as inspiring other consumers to look up to them. We therefore argue that the success of a practice is due to the co-creation process, as both consumers and companies are involved in reproducing and constituting practices (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, p. 62).

Consumer Values and Brand Values

In the previous section, we established that there have been shifts in the way companies are suggested to go about their marketing strategies and focus on creating practice around the product and brand in order to engage online community members. In this section, we will look into what values are created for companies when generating or engaging in online brand communities and when they manage to do this strategically to relate them with brand values.

The Perception of Value has Changed

Consistent with Castells’ view on network society introduced earlier, Arvidsson (2011, p. 262) states that companies have grown to rely on networked public opinion and its viral opportunities to generate corporate reputation and brand values. Arvidsson (2011, p. 262) argues that today, value derives from social cooperation that involves the consumer and where social production and collaborative consumption are the motivations rather than monetary gain. Zwick et al. (2008) further argue that companies can gain from these consumer and state activities: “it is a form of government of consumers that gives birth to an active consumer whose independent, creative, and voluntary activities can now effectively be channeled into raw material for the firm’s commodity production” (p. 177). Looking at social production, Arvidsson (2008) argues that monetary motivation is no longer the main motivation and introduces another value system, an *ethical economy*, “where socially recognized self-expression is the main motivation and community contribution is the main measure of value” (p. 326). What Arvidsson suggests is that ethics can create value by

ensuring that the network, which in this case is an online community, operates according to the shared principles of the company, and by installing a set of shared values within the online community to maintain motivation among the volunteer producers or members (Arvidsson, 2011, p. 269). Arvidsson (2011, p. 264) further discusses how value for companies has primarily been economic (profit); it can be argued that this is still to some extent the case. However, economic gain is no longer the only value, as a strong brand can prove even more valuable. Arvidsson's views on social production are consistent with the views of Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p. 5), who state, regarding the creation of value, that marketers have had product and firm at the center of attention for decades, but today the focus has shifted to creating personalized consumer experiences as the consumer is at the center. It is the experience of co-creation that can create value for the consumer, and ultimately the company as well, rather than what was previously considered as traditional economics, where the value was in the exchange of products or services between companies and the consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 10). In order to create value through an online brand community, it is therefore vital to create and facilitate positive consumer experiences and practices.

Interaction in Online Communities

In the last decade, companies have increased their interest in online communities “as traditional advertising is losing its impact, both advertisers and the media owners who are dependent upon them are desperately seeking alternative ways to reach consumers and alternative ways to earn revenues by doing so” (Clemons, 2009, p. 46). The increased involvement from companies in online brand communities can be explained not only by the decline of traditional marketing tactics, but also by the overwhelming amount of consumer-to-consumer information that can be very useful for companies. The network-based online brand communities enable companies to communicate with their main consumers; this not only provides them with market intelligence, but also allows companies to strengthen the relationship with their loyal consumers as well as influence current and potential consumers (Laroche et al., 2012, p. 1756). This market intelligence, which serves as an intellectual value, can be produced in an online community and can prove valuable, not only for members within the online community, but for any brand or industry in which such an online community exists.

As Seraj (2012) points out, “this co-created commercial information is valuable for consumers to share experiences and make buying decisions, it is an irreplaceable source for companies to get feedback for product or service improvements” (p. 21). In such dialogs between consumers, where feedback on product and services is discussed in the online communities, electronic word-of-mouth takes place, which can give companies and/or competitors valuable market insight that companies usually have to pay for (Seraj, 2012, p. 214). The positive feeling that interactions can give consumers has a great impact on word-of-mouth. Consumers often have a need and want to tell others about their experiences, and electronic word-of-mouth can thus arise in online brand communities from the desire to share experiences, to help other consumers in their buying process or save them from a negative consumption experience, which can help companies (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 42). Additionally, online brand communities can carry out other important tasks on behalf of the brand; for example, they can support sharing information, perpetuating the history and culture of the brand, and provide assistance to consumers (Laroche et al., 2012, p. 1756). Although this thesis focuses on online brand communities and the activities and practices that occur in the online environment, it is important to mention that participation in physical events can increase feelings of integration and relations to the online brand community and enhance positive feelings about the brand and products for online brand community members (Laroche et al., 2012, p. 1757).

By creating an online brand community in which consumers can interact with each other as well as with the company, value is co-created through the interactivity. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) emphasize the importance of companies’ ability to co-create and facilitate practices for consumers as they argue that “high-quality interactions that enable an individual customer to co-create unique experiences with the company are the key to unlocking new sources of competitive advantage” (p. 7). To underline this point, Cova and Dalli (2009, p. 7) state, “when consumers are engaged in the ‘production’ of the service that they wish to purchase, the perceived value of that service increases.” These quotes underline our view that the involvement of consumers and the co-creation between companies and consumers are key to creating value for companies and that it is the creation of a positive experience and involvement of the consumer that ultimately can increase brand values for companies. However, Schiavone et al. (2014) underline that it is important to understand that “co-

creation is not outsourcing of some production or innovation phases to the customer or customization of products or services” (p. 274), which some companies misunderstand. They argue that co-creation is about the interaction between the consumer and the company (Schiavone et al., 2014, p. 274). So the more involved consumers feel, the greater the perceived value and satisfaction towards the company and the brand will be. However, Bendapudi and Leone (2003, p. 26) found in their study that individuals often overstate their own role and are more likely to claim ownership in success, whereas in failure they blame the other partner, in this case the company; this can prove to be critical for the company as it can create negative word-of-mouth and have a negative impact on reputation. Therefore, we believe it is important that companies begin by inviting loyal consumers to co-create, as they are less likely to be subjects of a self-serving bias (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003, p. 26).

Co-creation Relates to Brand Values

As stated in the above paragraph, successful co-creation between consumers and companies are what can potentially create value for both parties. To dive deeper into how companies can build a system for successful co-creation in their online brand communities, the DART model by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p. 9) is included in the thesis. The model consists of four building blocks of interactions that together form the co-creation of value, and it functions as an infrastructure of communication between and with consumers (Schiavone et al., 2014, p. 272). The four building blocks are *dialog*, *access*, *risk-benefits* and *transparency* (DART) and are the basis for interaction between the company and the consumer (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 9) (illustrated in the model below). Schiavone et al. (2014, p. 272) build on the four building blocks by adding an extra element, technology, as they find that Prahalad and Ramaswamy’s model is not suited for social media in the digital environment. As we focus on online communities, we found it relevant to include this fifth element; even though Schiavone et al. (2014) have their main focus on co-creation in innovation, we agree with his point that social media has achieved great influence in co-creation of value since 2004.

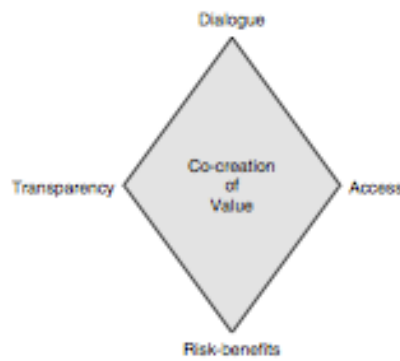


Figure 3: Building blocks of interactions for co-creation of value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 9)

Dialog happens constantly between consumers and companies and it implies interactivity, engagement and the ability and willingness to act from both sides. What is defined as vital is that the two partners must become equal in order to have an active dialog of shared solutions and become joint problem solvers and thus actually create value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 9). The conversation must be in both parties' interest and have clear rules of engagement.

To be able to have a good dialog, consumers must also have access to companies' information. Today, consumers have access to considerable information, and through communities consumers can access even more information from other consumers as well as from companies that are actively interacting with consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 9). According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), dialog, access and transparency lead to a clearer assessment of the risk-benefits for the consumer in terms of actions and decisions (p. 9). However, as dialog, transparency and access require an infrastructure to be of the most value, we emphasize that technology is a crucial element to consider. Companies that choose to follow the DART model, including technology, to form the co-creation of value by personalizing consumption experience for consumers significantly better their opportunity for enhancing brand values (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 10; Schiavone et al., 2014). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) further elaborate that "a personalized co-creation experience reflects how the individual chooses to interact with the experience environment that the firm facilitates" (p. 10). This emphasizes the importance of the active involvement from the company in order to create a positive experience for the consumer. And as such environments today are typically online, we argue that

companies' brands can be affected positively when co-creating successfully with consumers.

Working Consumers

There is a risk that consumers feel exploited by the companies when participating in a co-creation experience as it is an ethical discussion whether the consumers are in fact working for the company or merely engaging out of self-interest. When discussing exploitation, it is worth mentioning that the very concept of exploitation is a social construct and exploitation is not a fact, but a feeling (Cova & Dallı, 2009, p. 31). There is no general law as to when exploitation occurs, but it is likely to occur when symbolic and social rewards are no longer enough to justify the consumers' commitment. The working consumer phenomenon can be described as "consumers who, by the means of immaterial labour, add cultural and effective elements to market offerings" (Cova & Dallı, 2009, p. 24). Terranova (2000) argues that labor processes have shifted from factories to society, and through the Internet labor is "voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited" (p. 33). The labor processes in society, which has carried new ways to make the consumers work, mean that web sites and online communities relies on consumers to produce content (Terranova, 2000, p. 52). We argue that free labor is present, especially in the co-creation process in online brand communities, in which consumers share experiences and counsel other consumers about products of the company and thereby create input. The companies rely on the consumers/users of the online brand community to provide cultural labor by providing real life stories with the brand, thereby attributing meaning to the brand (Terranova, 2000, p. 52; Cova & Pace, 2006, p. 1099). This generates eWOM, which is especially the case on Facebook as this medium makes users' comments in an online brand community visible to all 'friends', including those who are not members of the community. Furthermore, consumers keep the communities "alive through their labor, the cumulative hours of accessing the site (thus generating advertising), writing messages, participating in conversations and sometimes make the jump to collaborators" (Terranova, 2000, p. 49). This "free" labor is valuable for companies, as consumers share information and answer questions and basically perform a job that would demand a massive amount of time and resources for companies. Sometimes consumers voluntarily take on different roles in the community to make sure it is

active and maintained. Seraj (2012, p. 219) identifies seven different roles that produce online brand community value. The seven different roles are: *seekers, challengers, governors, appraisers, players, innovators* and *educators* (Seraj, 2012, p. 219). These roles and the efforts provided by the consumers create interaction and content quality and contribute to the overall cultural value of the online brand community.

Companies can gain a competitive advantage by having online brand communities: “The more we are able to form intelligent communities, as open-minded, cognitive subjects capable of initiative, imagination, and rapid response, the more we will be able to ensure our success in a highly competitive environment” (Levy, as quoted in Terranova, 2000, p. 43). Through their involvement in online brand communities, consumers have the ability to increase the market value of products and services, and companies must therefore pay attention to how their online brand community members are feeling in order to meet their needs and ensure they do not feel exploited. Companies receive the total revenue derived from the market, and from a co-creation perspective it might seem advantageous to start including the consumer in the monetary benefit; however, in Cook’s research (as quoted in Cova & Dall’i, 2009), it was discovered that “payment can destroy participation by undermining a sense of collaboration and trust” (p. 19). The consumer will feel exploited instead of recognized by the company by getting paid for participating; it is recognition and trust, among other factors, that motivate consumers to co-create. Summarizing the entire concept of free labor, Terranova (2000) states that “Free labor is a desire of labor immanent to late capitalism, and late capitalism is the field that both sustains free labor and exhausts it” (p. 51).

Governance in Online Communities

When companies spend resources on facilitating and guarding an online community, they have the ability to make a co-creation experience for the consumer and create value with the consumer. It is a challenge as it involves individual consumers acting on their terms; this is a very difficult process for the companies, though it also significantly contributes to bringing life to the brand (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004,

p. 10). Hatch and Schultz (2010) found that:

companies are beginning to understand that ownership of the channels through which they engage with stakeholders is not only unnecessary, it is also undesirable because it limits the use and usefulness of these channels for gathering information, and for cementing relationships and the loyalty that comes with them (p. 603).

From the quote above, we find that in online brand communities companies should let the consumers interact with each other without interference from the focal company, as this only limits relationship building and loyalty. Hatch and Schultz (2010, p. 603) further explain that “This means that stakeholders both are given and take control of brand meaning and ultimately the value(s) it brings to the organization” (p. 603). It is implied that the company should not interfere in the community and that control over the community as well as the brand should be given to the consumers, and if not given it is taken, which we previously discussed as brand hijacking (Wipperfurth, as quoted in Cova & Pace, 2002, p. 1090). This is a difficult situation for marketers, as giving control of the brand to consumers means a lack of control for the company; brand perception might move in an undesired direction.

A community is based on real situations: real people taking real pictures of their real lives with the brand and thereby attributing a relatively specific meaning to the brand and to their experiences with the product (Cova & Pace, 2006, p. 1099). The companies must be good at innovating robust experience environments as no one can predict the experience a consumer will have; the better companies are at facilitating these, the better possibilities for a good consumer experience (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 10). It is, however, important to note that no matter how well the companies facilitate co-creation experiences, they can never control how the consumer goes about constructing their experience. Some online brand communities are so well managed that it is the consumers that create most of the activity and content on the sites, which only enhances the effect of bringing life to the brand. Co-creation is furthermore important to make use of and understand; it makes companies able to co-shape experiences and expectations together with the consumer and thus be able to understand consumers and their needs and sell more products in the end, as mentioned earlier in relation to having a dialog. What makes co-creation most

valuable, however, is that “The firm and the consumer are both collaborators and competitors – collaborators in co-creating value and competitors for the extraction of economic value” (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 11). To summarize, “Suppliers do not deliver value to customers; they support customers’ value creation in value-generating processes of these customers” (Grönroos, as quoted in Cova & Dallı, 2009, p. 10). The companies support customers’ value creation.

When companies start to use communities, by having an understanding of the practices they can acquire great brand loyalty and devotion from the members. Companies have the ability to foster and develop skills in the community that are of great value for the marketer (Schau et al., 2009, p. 38). This happens as communities often foster a competitive spirit, which makes the members compete on brand devotion, knowledge and history. Schau et al. (2009, p. 38) argue that competition actually enables the community members to distinguish themselves and create a social hierarchy. Clearly this has a very positive effect on the company’s brand as the consumers compete to be the most loyal community member. The brand community practices can also foster new consumption opportunities as consumption follows from practice (Schau et al., 2009, p. 39). For example, when one person performs or modifies something with a product and shares it in the community, they invite other members to do the same. The members therefore consume more than they necessarily would because they are encouraged by other users to buy new items to perform or modify. Moreover, the communities can also be used to exploit possibilities for new products, as this requires two things: information on consumer desires and information on how to satisfy them best (Schau et al., 2009, p. 42). The community gives the company direct insight into what their consumers are talking about, both in terms of improving products and creating new ones. The practices give the companies the opportunity to not simply exploit customer competences but also the ability to build better co-creative partners. Conclusively, Hatch and Schultz (2010, p. 603) suggest a list of questions on which companies should internally take a stand before engaging on online activities with consumers. These are questions concerning internal knowledge sharing of consumer dialogue data, transparency and openness to consumers, risk management, secrecy, intellectual property rights and, finally but most importantly for this thesis, how the company should deal with consumers who feel exploited by co-creation (Hatch & Scuhltz, 2010, p. 603).

Online Communities Create Values for Consumers

“Informed, connected, empowered, and active consumers are increasingly learning that they too can extract value at the traditional point of exchange. Consumers are now subjecting the industry’s value creation process to scrutiny, analysis, and evaluation. Consumer-to-consumer communication and dialogue provides consumers an alternative source of information and perspective.”

(Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 6)

In the above section, we discussed how companies can benefit from co-creating and engaging in online communities. Building on the quote above, we delve into how consumers can extract value from participating and engaging in online brand communities. As we argue that it is the ability of brands to create experiences, dialog and practices connected to the product, which are what create value for the consumer, rather than the product itself, it is relevant to look at how value is created for consumers who engage in branded online communities, which we will do in the below section.

Identity-creation Online

The Internet has affected the consumer in many ways, but along with social media especially came the need to create one’s visual identity online. Firat and Dholakia (as quoted in Cova & Dalli, 2009, p. 4) argue that consumers are on a never-ending quest to define the meaning of their lives and therefore interact with the market to produce an identity and, more specifically, self-images. Castells (2001, p. 130) found that the Internet contributes to a pattern of sociability based on individualism. The development towards individualism has happened in a time in which mobile phones, for example, enable the individual to interact and participate in social networks whenever one wants in whatever setting one pleases (Castells, 2001, p. 132). Concerning the development of individualism in the society, Elliot (2014) elaborates: “A whole new kind of selfhood was required for an intensively global age, with refined reflexive capabilities, and an engaged sense of active self-making and remaking” (p. 164). The concept of individualism can seem misleading, however, as

Castells (2001, p. 131) states it is not individualism as a collection of isolated individuals, but as a social pattern since individuals build networks offline and online based on their values, interests, projects, etcetera. To better understand this viewpoint, the following quote is crucial: “the making of identities today is an innovative institutionalized process, not an outcrop of inner desires or forces of socialization” (Elliot, 2014, p. 166). What Castells and Elliot are implying is that a societal change has occurred, affecting the way in which consumers interact with each other and represent themselves due to the Internet and the social platforms that have developed as a consequence of this. This opens up the opportunity for consumers to create a self-identity by connecting with brands they feel represent the values they want to express or brand themselves through social network platforms. This is an important aspect of consumer engagement in online brand communities as there is a link between the values of the brand and the values the consumers want to express towards the surroundings that they identify themselves with; it is not only the possessions that we consume today that reflect of our identities, but also the behavior in connection to the products and possessions that construct an extended self (Belk, 1988, p. 139). Firat and Dholakia (as quoted in Cova & Dalli, 2009, p. 4) similarly argue that the reason consumers interact with the market is because they are on a never-ending quest to produce an identity and, more specifically, self-images, and thus define the meaning of their lives. From these theoretical views on the development of individualism and the desire to create an extension the self among the consumers of today, we argue that social platforms, like online brand communities, can facilitate the interaction and exposure through which consumers exhibit their desired self; we argue this is an important aspect of consumers’ engagement and interaction in online brand communities.

Despite increasing interaction in online social networks, critics of the network society argue that the Internet is leading to social isolation: a breakdown of social communication and family life as no face-to-face or real life interactions are current in the online conversations (Castells, 2001, p. 116). However, the network society and virtual communities have proven to actually enhance and maintain social ties and social involvements, both at a distance and in the local community (Castells, 2001, p. 123). In connection with the creation of the extended self, Cova and Cova (2002, p. 596) voice a concern that the constant work of creating and building a self might

indicate a new process of narcissism, which is induced by the widespread use of computers and social media in our daily life. They further argue that this narcissistic era, caused by technology, creates extreme physical isolation and individualism while allowing being in virtual touch with the world (Cova & Cova, 2002, p. 596). While the idea of the individualistic and narcissistic societal tendencies is well founded, we do not quite share Cova and Cova's beliefs about the creation of extreme physical isolation for consumers. We will in this thesis lean on the thoughts discussed by Belk (1988) and Schau et al. (2009), who argue that consumers identify themselves with brands and possessions to create an extended self. Castells (2001) furthermore adds that online interaction can strengthen existing ties that people already have in their offline lives as "social interaction on the Internet does not seem to have a direct effect on the patterning of everyday life, generally speaking, except for adding online interaction to existing social relationships" (p. 119). It is, however, also possible to expand one's social network, as the virtual communities bring people together because of shared interests and values and may create social ties and even lead to face-to-face interactions.

Consumers Gather Online

Schatzki (as quoted in Schau et al., 2009, p. 30) highlights that communities can create both collective identity and individuality; this is an incentive for joining communities. Consumers both want to create a self-identity as well as belong to communities that help them identify who they are to themselves and others. Therefore, consumers might also feel a need to belong to several groups at the same time in order to create aspects of a personality (Cova & Cova, 2002, p. 602). The power of the connection between individuals, which builds relationships and a sense of belonging to communities in order to create a self-identity, is defined as the *linking value* by Cova and Cova (2002, p. 603). The linking value is the "glue" that connects the consumers in online brand communities and makes them return to and stay in the community and develop a sense of loyalty towards the members in the community (Cova & Cova, 2002, p. 602). The linking value corresponds to the notion of tribal marketing, which focuses less on the product and services for a specific market or segment of consumers than on the ability of products and services to bring people together in a group that can create a sense of tribal belonging (Cova & Cova, 2002, p.

603). In an online brand community, consumers gather around a brand that they all feel they can identify with; they therefore also feel they have something in common and belong to the same tribe. The sense of belonging that is created in a tribe corresponds to the idea of consciousness of kind, previously introduced by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), and that signifies to which online community the tribe belongs or, more importantly, from what the tribe distinguishes itself (p. 413). It is in these tribes that communal feelings can arise, which can create various values for the consumer.

Sharing Knowledge in Online Communities

Apart from the common interest of a brand, the linking value is further tied to the ability of the product or service to create and strengthen bonds between individuals within the online brand community, or sometimes through physical gatherings. According to Cova and Cova (2002), it is these strong ties and member-to-community loyalty that create social relations between the members in an online community (p. 603). Seraj (2012) presents a different view, though not an opposing one, as she states that the members' motivation for engaging with a high level of interaction is based on a want to connect with each other rather than with the products, the brand or the site itself (p. 215). She explains that when members interact, the relations among them grow stronger and that it is this strengthening of relations between members that spurs interactivity and thus creates what she defines as intellectual, social and cultural value (Seraj, 2012, p. 215). The mutual focus on content among members creates a sharing of knowledge that increases the interactivity and loyalty towards the online community and the members within it. Seraj (2012) describes intellectual value as the co-creation of knowledge and the quality of this, which is generated by the participation of members with various levels of experience, such as industry professionals or enthusiasts who have gained extensive knowledge on the shared focus (Seraj, 2012, p. 219). It is these empowered members who create meaning, content and experiences in the communities that consumers would not find elsewhere; thus the online community becomes a source of condensed information (Seraj, 2012, p. 213). Halliday and Astafyeva (2014) also define self-development/self-actualization as a motivator for the consumers, which includes the desire for "individual education, the development of interests and knowledge, as well as an ability to contribute to a greater whole" (p. 126). Seraj (2012) stresses, "It is the

quality as well as the process of co-creation of content that adds value to the online community as well as attracting and retaining more members” (p. 213). With this quote, Seraj implies that consumers can gain and create intellectual value from the online community as a simultaneous production and consumption of content is taking place, therefore making consumers part of a co-production of knowledge (Seraj, 2012, p. 213).

Members Create the Culture

Seraj (2012) argues that the more interaction and production of knowledge there exists within an online community, the more the social value increases for consumers (p. 215). She explains this by arguing that interactivity ultimately increases the social value for consumers and states that the “Formation of strong ties increases the commitment levels of participants facilitating an actual online community culture to emerge” (p. 216). The level of information that community members hold on each other may also vary greatly from community to community. Some community members have extensive knowledge about other members such as age, gender occupation, etcetera, and in other communities members go by pseudo-identities and thus know nothing or very little about each other except for shared topic knowledge (Granitz & Ward, as quoted in McAlexander et al., 2002, p. 40). Seraj (2012) found that social value and the extended self can be enforced in online communities when members take on different roles that contribute to creating a stronger sense of belonging to the community and a community culture as the consumers actively involve themselves in different behavioral ways (p. 219). This view corresponds to the motive of social interaction and belonging identified by Halliday and Astafyeva (2014), as they identify feeling of belonging, desire for recognition and social interaction as central motivational drivers for consumers within an online community (p. 126). The views of the sociological observer, Goffman (as quoted in Elliot, 2014), is relevant to draw on here, as he states:

Identity might be construed through the adoption of, and adherence to, social roles and their validation by social institutions, but the individual is the creative and

reflective agent who decides – and in doing so constitutes a self-identity – on how to carry out such roles as well as the staging of role performances (p. 38).

These different roles that members of an online community can take on support our argument of the value members gain from being part of an online community; this can further be of various kinds and can differ depending on what role the members play in the community. Seraj (2012, p. 216+217) refers to cultural value as the cultural norms that are created within an online community through co-creation, interaction and strengthening of social ties between members. In an online brand community, the emergence of traditions and rituals from the culture is developed is typically centered on consumption experiences with the brand (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 421). According to Seraj (2012), traditions and rituals are “acts, gestures, and habits that are specific to the community and its members and are a part of communal gatherings, encounters or communication” (p. 217). The notion of cultural value corresponds with the three community categorizations earlier introduced by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001), who mention that these characteristics not only identify an online community, but also create the foundation for an online community culture that is similar to a country, a nation or any other group that forms a specific culture of its own with its own language, norms, rituals, traditions and policies and that is practiced through cultural exchange (p. 413). An important part of community culture is members’ ability to self-govern, as this enhances the trustworthiness of the content (Seraj, 2012, p. 214). Furthermore, Seraj (2012) explains that “Volunteering moderators and the Community Crew are a significant part of this group, but all committed members take on this role whenever necessary” (p. 219). She emphasizes the importance of self-governance for cultural value creation by concluding:

a community without policy and moderation is like a country without a legal system. It is improbable to maintain a culture without its participants comprehending its philosophy and boundaries. Thus, it is critical for an online community culture to delineate its policies and cultural norms clearly for reference and self-governing purposes. The trust this creates within social interactions increases the chance for the members to stay loyal to their communities and receive any kind of cultural value from it (Seraj, 2012, p. 220).

Collins (as quoted in Seraj 2012, p. 215) proposes that these collective rituals occur through group assembly, barriers to outsiders, mutual focus of attention and emotional entertainment. Even though Collins (as quoted in Seraj, 2012, p. 215) further insists on physical interaction for these collective rituals to occur, the findings from Seraj's studies (2012, p. 215) illustrate how online communities similarly create the same collective rituals, which are key to achieving the interactivity and community loyalty that we argue are vital in social value production.

Entertainment Creates Value

Gummerus et al. (2012) add another dimension of value, entertainment value, which can be co-created by members through social interaction and cultural exchange within an online community. Entertainment value refers to the relaxation and fun in an online community, which helps reinforce social interaction and thereby social value (Gummerus et al., 2012, p. 861). Entertainment value is created when community members post pictures or videos or make comments that are funny; this creates a fun and relaxed atmosphere in the community. In regards to the level of entertainment value that consumers can co-create in an online community, Dholakia et al. (2004, p. 257) found that entertainment value is higher in small, group-based communities than in network-based communities. Dholakia et al. (2004) further clarify that a small, group-based community is "a virtual community, constituted by individuals with a dense web of relationships, interacting together online as a group, in order to accomplish a wider range of jointly conceived and held goals, and to maintain existing relationships" (p. 48). Dholakia et al. (2004) describe the network-based community as "a specialized, geographically dispersed community based on a structured, relatively sparse, and dynamic network of relationships among participants sharing a common focus" (p. 48). They argue that members in small, group-based communities feel more comfortable making jokes and humorous input in the community than what they observed in network-based communities. However, we argue that entertainment value has a high impact on social interaction in network-based communities as well.

Members Like to be Recognized

Another view on social value creation for members of an online community that separates from Seraj's idea that social value is created through increased loyalty is the idea that social value can be created for members through social enhancement (Gummerus et al., 2012, p. 861). Gummerus et al. argue social enhancement also can be a motivator for members to engage in interactivity in the online community, as some members can feel a "need to feel useful, recognized and needed in the community" (p. 861). Halliday and Astafyeva (2014) also describe social enhancement, or prestige, as they call it, as a motivator for the consumer, as it creates the possibility of belonging to or participating in activities with a brand with a good reputation that results in adding to the personal status of the consumer (p. 126). However, in contrast to the above thoughts from Seraj and Halliday and Astafyeva, Gummerus et al. (2012, p. 870) argue that the desire for social interaction might not exist in all online communities, as some members primarily use the online community as a source of information rather than a social interaction or self-promotion site. This view implies that it is not necessarily just the interaction between members that motivates them socially to engage in the community. It might be the feeling of possessing great knowledge about a subject. Another perspective is presented by Cova and Dalli (2009), who state that consumers might simply enjoy creating for the sake of creation and then, seeing the following effects, might end up changing hearts and minds and influence people (Berthon et al., as quoted in Cova & Dalli, 2009, p. 17).

Economic Benefits Drive Engagement

We have, in the above paragraph, introduced economic value, which in that context covered the term *profit* from a company perspective. However, as we are looking at values in online communities, the term economic value has a different meaning, as it concerns economic value creation for members. The economic value in online communities is visible when people are joining these in order to take part in raffles or competitions, gain discounts and save time (Gummerus et al., 2012, p. 861). Members can share discounts and offers they become aware of with each other by discussing vendors and sales, which have a direct influence on the purchasing decisions as the exchange of meaning towards products and vendors can be discussed vividly. We

argue that the subject of savings and sales, which we refer to as economic value, can be a source of value to consumers as it can increase interactivity within the online community. Economic value is often present in relationships between the consumer and the company, as seen in the following: “The economic benefits customers may receive for engaging in relational exchanges, both monetary and in the form of time savings, are consistent with what scholars have argued is the primary motivation for developing relationships with businesses” (Peterson; Sheth & Parvatiyar, as quoted in Gwinner et al., 1998, p. 104). However, in the findings of Gummerus et al. (2012, p. 870), it was discovered that in the long run it might not be efficient to attract new members by making use of economic benefits, as those members attracted by competitions and lotteries might not be loyal to the community.

In this thesis, we acknowledge that members’ motivation for engaging might not be solely for social interaction, social enhancement or to gain information or save time or money. Rather, we believe that is a mix between these motivators, driven by the varying desired outcomes, that creates intellectual, social, cultural and economic value for members in online communities and that these motivators, whatever their form, are the main creators of value for members in online brand communities. Halliday and Astafyeva (2014) articulate this in the following way:

However, the needs that brand communities can satisfy are not just about gaining status or trying on a new identity through brand affiliation. People participate in communities for a wide variety of reasons, such as emotional support, to cultivate interest and skills, encouragement, and so on (p. 125).

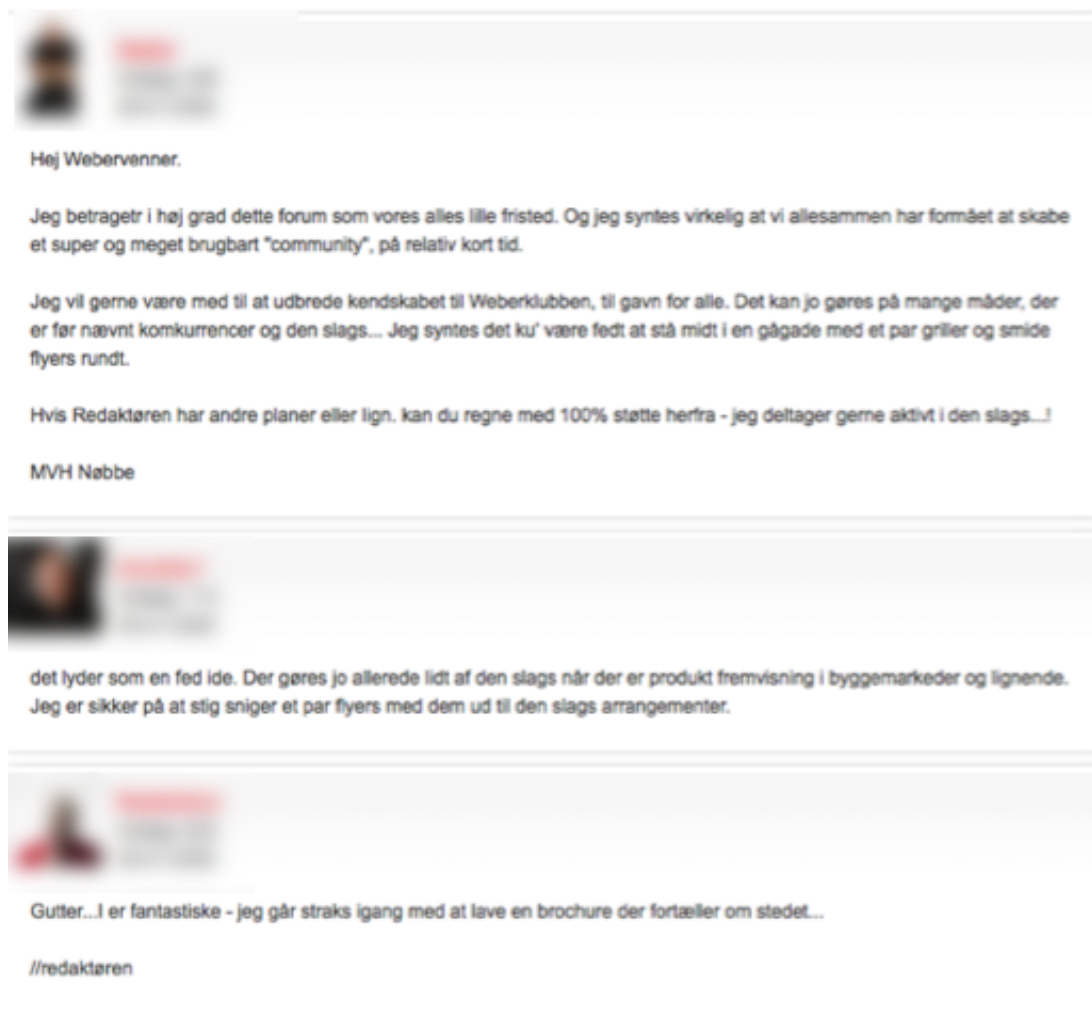
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»» ANALYSIS

We have chosen to apply Weberklubben as our case study in order to answer our research question. First, we will first look into Weberklubben, how it started and what it has developed into. After that, we will look into the practice of grilling in order to investigate how Weber became successful in Denmark and how a steel product can create value for consumers through Weberklubben. We will then analyze the different relationships between the consumer and Weber, Weber marketers, Weber products and other consumers in order to investigate the dynamics and the engagement in the community. Finally, we will identify and analyze the motivational factors which makes members want to co-create values.

Weberklubben's Success as a Common Goal

In 2005, a group of grill enthusiasts started an online community called Weberguru; two years later, the group changed its name to Grillguru, and a new online brand community called Weberklubben arose (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015). It separated into two communities, as the interests of the Weberguru members were mixed; some wanted to talk about grilling indifferent to the brand of grill used, whereas others were strong supporters of Weber and only wanted to discuss how to grill on Weber grills (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015). Weber facilitated Weberklubben OS, and the Chief Editor at the time and Founder of the community, Stig Pedersen – who is also the Marketing Director at Weber Denmark – was very visible and present in the community from the beginning of its existence. He made sure to maintain an open and transparent dialog with the few members they had in the beginning, creating a shared goal among Weber and members to make Weberklubben OS successful and attract new members (OS 26). Dholakia et al. (1999, p. 26) explain that a shift happened in the way marketers interacted with consumers; Weber seemed to understand that their consumers were looking for a dialog with them and with other consumers. By engaging members in Weberklubben OS, Weber conducted relationship marketing, which made consumers feel included in the experience of creating a community as well as opening up the opportunity for them to help and inspire other fellow grillers (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008, p. 255). One of the members even started a thread where he wrote that the success of Weberklubben OS was a common goal and, as seen below, if there was anything that he could do to help, Stig Pedersen should just say the word.



Source: OS 26 (Appendix part 2)

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p. 7) state that by facilitating a unique experience for the consumer, competitive advantages are unlocked. This is an example of how consumers wanted to influence and interact with the brand in the co-creation exchange of value, which gave Weber a competitive advantage as consumers participated in marketing activities. The member even came up with the idea that he and other members could grill in the main streets of the bigger cities while giving out flyers to make people aware of Weberklubben OS (OS 26). Stig Pedersen, of course, approved this initiative and quickly made sure brochures were printed; many members volunteered to distribute them all over the country (OS 26). According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p. 9), it is vital in a co-creation experience that the consumers and companies become equal partners; in this case, Weberklubben OS's

members and Weber had an active dialog about how to get more members and were joint problem solvers as the members assisted by helping handing out flyers. Furthermore, this interaction between members and Weber gave individual consumers unique experiences and made them feel acknowledged by the company. The success of Weberklubben OS is based on this ability to co-create with the consumers. As the community, according to Weber, is one of the main reasons for Weber's success in Denmark, we argue in this thesis that it indeed created a competitive advantage (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). As mentioned previously, Weber have eight volunteering editors, each of whom manages a topic or a specific grill area to maintain activity in the community as well as to keep a continuous flow of inspiration in the community. Today, Weberklubben OS has reached more than 70,000 members; however, because of changes in technology, the community has another function than that originally intended.

Social Media Happened

Entering the network society has given consumers the ability to talk to other consumers across borders and time zones; this has caused interactive networks to grow exponentially (Castells, 2000, p. 2). This was the starting point of Weberklubben OS in 2007, but the ongoing development of the Internet has become an obstacle for Weberklubben OS as people today prefer to communicate on social media platforms. People gather in communities in several different media today, which among other things results from the growth in social media platforms; however, official online brand communities on company websites have experienced difficulties as a consequence. This is not caused by a decrease in the consumer's interest for interaction; it is merely a result of these new social media platforms, which make it easier for people to interact. As consumers today are on a constant quest to define the meaning of their lives, they interact on the Internet in order to produce an identity, and their self-images and social media platforms are the perfect tools to perform this (Firat & Dholakia, as quoted in Cova & Dallı, 2009, p. 4). We argue that the reason consumers are more willing to interact in communities on social media platforms in preference to communities on official websites is that on social media platforms their interactions are visible to others and thereby help the individual to create a self that can actively show to which communities one belongs and, more

importantly, according to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 413), from which communities one distinguishes oneself. Pia Kromann, Chief Editor at Weberklubben OS and Administrator of Weberklubben FB, says that since Facebook really started to get peoples' attention in 2008, the communication in Weberklubben OS has gradually moved to Weberklubben FB; today, almost all questions and debates are started in posts on Weberklubben FB, not in Weberklubben OS (Interview, Weber, 16 April). Gus Murray, Social Media Expert, further elaborates on this trend:

Everyone is still using Facebook even though Facebook is just said as dead five times the last two years or whatever, but it is still the default place to get information on what is going on in your friends' lives, the brands that you like and the news around the world. And I think, if you only have a certain amount of time during the day, it is easy to use Facebook as the default and then you can just switch between the groups or whatever, rather than go into another community, which is designed by a brand on a different platform. (Interview, Gus, 30 April, 2015)

Gus Murray underlines Pia Kromann's statement that the traffic on Weberklubben OS has moved to Weberklubben FB and he argues that consumers typically use Facebook as it is easier for them to have one platform where all the information they need is collated. We asked our three member interviewees on their take on the development. Ole elaborates on the matter in the following:

Jamen jeg tror, det er gået den vej, fordi der er så mange, der har Facebook og bruger det, og så er det noget nemmere at bruge. Det er ret kompliceret at lave blogindlæg på Weberklubben, der er også mange, der ikke kan finde ud af det. Og jeg har jo små hundrede indlæg, og der kan jo være nogen, der spørger om noget i et gammelt indlæg, og det får jeg ikke besked om, så nogen gange så opdager jeg det ikke, hvorimod når det er inde på Facebook, så kommer der jo en med det samme, der er en, der har spurgt eller kommenteret et eller andet
(Interview, Ole, 13 April, 2015).

Ole mentions that he thinks the traffic has moved to Facebook as so many people use it and it is easier, which underpins Gus Murray's argument. Furthermore, according to Ole, Facebook is also easier to use, as Ole gets notifications when someone has

commented on one of his posts. Schiavone et al. (2014) argue that “Social media brings about a collective, democratic process of co-development of innovation and value. All the subscribers of a social network can participate very easily and affect the final outcome of the co-creation process” (p. 274). As Schiavone et al. express, social media is easy to participate in; consumers like Ole can collectively co-develop value, which affects the co-creation process. Ole further says that when he uploads something on Facebook, he quickly achieves both likes and comments, and this acknowledgement gives him a good feeling and makes him want to post even more (Interview, Ole, 13 April, 2015). This matches the argument of Hatch and Schultz (2010, p. 603), who argue that it is the interactions between consumers more than the relationship between members and Weberklubben that creates value for the consumer. Ole gains value by interacting in the community as he is happy and motivated to create more content after being acknowledged, a point we will look further into later in the analysis. In our netnographic research, we looked into the traffic on both platforms. Within the last month, 26 threads have been started in Weberklubben OS, and some of these threads are still unanswered by Weber, editors and other members. On Weberklubben FB, we counted 145 threads started within 24 hours, which would add up to 4,495 new threads in a month; this is 173 times as much activity compared to Weberklubben OS. This shows that consumers are ever interested in interacting with each other as well as with the brand. It also illustrates that members choose to interact on Weberklubben FB in preference to Weberklubben OS, which might simply be because they are already present on the Facebook platform as Gus Murray suggests and Ole stated. As “Suppliers do not deliver value to customers; they support customer’s value creation in value-generating processes of these customers” (Grönroos, as quoted in Cova & Dalli, 2009, p. 10), we argue that Weber is facilitating a community where members have the opportunity to participate in the value creation process and thereby gain different types of value. The significant difference in traffic on the two Weberklubben platforms clearly emphasizes the importance of technology management, as the co-creation between companies and consumers might not be successful if companies do not establish a technological channel that consumers want to use (Schiavone, 2014, p. 275). Weberklubben FB has, up until March 2015, been independently managed by two volunteering grill and Weber enthusiasts, Søren Aabenhus and Per Aastradsen. Søren Aabenhus created the group in 2008 after participating in the yearly offline event Weber Camp to connect

with some of the fellow grill enthusiasts he met at the camp. The intention of the group was to create a network for the people who had participated in Weber Camp 2008; they wanted a group to keep in touch, share recipes and get inspired (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015). After about five years, Weberklubben FB had begun to attract new followers on a daily basis, and Søren Aabenhus needed assistance to be able to manage the site, and as he already knew Per Aastradsen from The Danish BBQ National Team, he asked him to join him as administrator of the site (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015). As Weberklubben FB grew bigger, Weber started to show interest in the community and wanted to influence it and get insight into the content of the community (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015). We asked Per Aastradsen if Weber had any influence in Weberklubben FB in the eight years it was running before Weberklubben OS' management team, Pia Kromann and Marc Jørgensen, entered as administrators. He replied:

Nej, de skrev jo til os nogle gange ikke, og sådan som det voksede, så fik det jo en vis interesse, kan man sige. Så de skrev jo til os, at hvis der var noget og sådan. Jeg snakker jo flere gange om ugen med Stig for eksempel og også med Pia osv. Man kan sige, der hvor det går som det går her, der er det jo heldigt, at det er Søren og jeg, som ligesom har giftet os med Weber begge to. At det er os, der sidder med det.

(Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015)

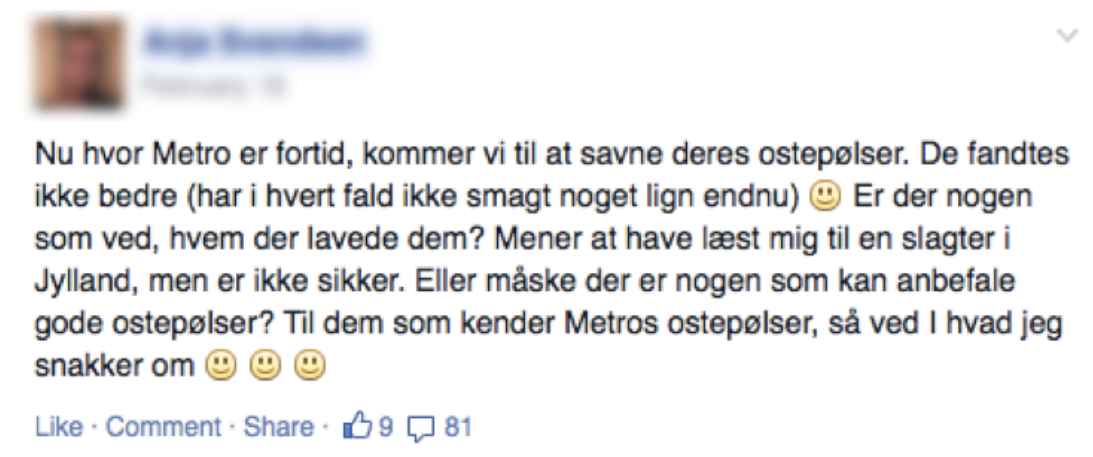
It was Stig Pedersen who started The Danish BBQ National Team; he is still the team leader, so he knows both Søren Aabenhus and Per Aastradsen well from the team, and both of them have also volunteered for Weber as editors previously. As Per Aastradsen says, Weber was “lucky” that they were already committed both to the people in Weber as well as the brand, because otherwise this case of brand hijacking could have been out of Weber’s hands and possibly could have ended up costing Weber money to gain insight into the group and buy them in as administrators. Wipperfurth (as quoted in Cova & Pace, 2002, p. 1090) defines brand hijacking as when a brand is taken from market professionals by the consumer; as Søren Aabenhus and Per Aastradsen have managed the community without involvement from Weber, they have actually hijacked the brand, but fortunately for Weber, they are two very loyal consumers.

Today, Weberklubben FB has more than 21,500 members and the management team of Weberklubben OS joined Weberklubben FB as administrators in March 2015 to be able to gain insight in the community. However, Weber still wants Weberklubben FB to be a community where members can interact without Weber commenting on the various discussions in the community (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). According to the recommendations of Hatch and Schultz (2010, p. 603), it is also the best choice for companies not to engage directly with consumers as this provides stronger bond creation between consumers as well as loyalty. Pia Kromann says that they are aware that Weberklubben OS will never be as it once was because the communication traffic has moved to Weberklubben FB, but they are in the process of deciding what the future Weberklubben OS platform should be like (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). She further argues that they have no intention of closing Weberklubben OS down as the community is valuable to Weber with its more than 70,000 members; the site also has a long list of recipes that are easy to search for, and the editors are continuously providing the site with new recipes for inspiration on the various Weber grills (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). Even though Weberklubben OS is not active in terms of interaction between members, Weber observes that many members still use the site for recipes; we have observed that from April – June 2015 more than 1000 new members have joined Weberklubben OS (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). This illustrates that consumers are still visiting Weberklubben OS, most likely to access recipes, tips and tricks for their grills; however, we see no activity on the debate sites, so it seems members are merely lurking.

Weberklubben as a Competitive Advantage

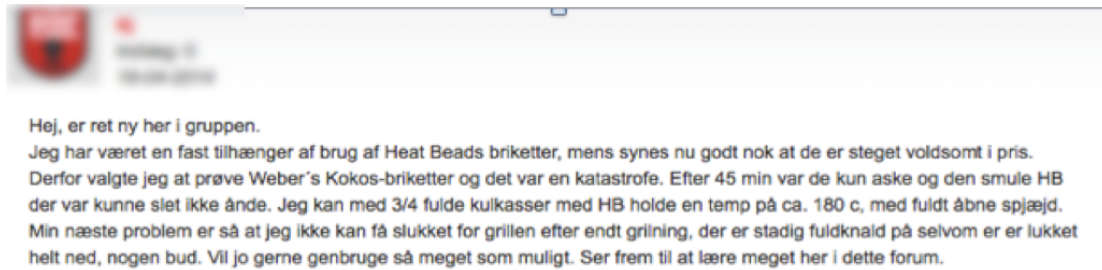
As Seraj (2012, p. 214) found in her study, we identified Weberklubben's content of marketing insight to Weber and its competitors. The members of Weberklubben discuss all the strengths and weaknesses of Weber's products, recommend events or courses, suggest how to optimize existing products and identify what they feel is lacking within Weber's product line. This is valuable insight for Weber, but as social media is highly transparent, competitors can also access this information. Members help each other in purchasing decisions (FB 38) and praise or criticize Weber products or products related to the act of grilling, such as coal and food, based on their own experience. This is seen below (FB 30), for example, where a member of

Weberklubben FB shares her frustration of the closing of the en gross supermarket Metro, where she used to buy her favorite cheese sausages, and in which she asks her fellow members if they can recommend any good cheese sausages. She receives 81 replies where different brands and suppliers of sausages are discussed. The interactivity created by the post on cheese sausages exemplifies how market intelligence can bring consumers closer and strengthen their relations, which is what Laroche et al. (2012) argue creates value for consumers (p. 1756).



Source: FB 30 (Appendix part 2)

Another example is illustrated below (OS 2), where a new member of Weberklubben asks for advice about which charcoal to use, as his preferred brand has increased in price and he now finds it too expensive. The members of Weberklubben discuss the price, liability and quality of different charcoal brands, which is very useful market intelligence; as Weber charcoal is often criticized, that feedback could be used to improve their product. Seraj (2012, p.215) points out that this consumer-to-consumer information is valuable for members as it can help them in their purchasing decisions; she underlines that it is especially in these evaluations of products that electronic word-of-mouth becomes valuable for both consumers and companies.



Source: OS 2 (Appendix part 2)

Despite the fact that electronic word-of-mouth is generated in Weberklubben, it is especially relevant for Weber in connection with Weberklubben FB as the content discussed on this platform potentially has a massive reach of electronic word-of-mouth that can increase brand awareness and add value to the brand. Weberklubben OS is more exclusive (despite the fact that it has four times the number of members than Weberklubben FB). It is exclusive as consumers have to know the Weber brand and visit Weber's official website in order to find their way to the community, or learn about it through Weberklubben FB, where it is occasionally mentioned. However, the members of Weberklubben OS come across as more loyal to the brand and are also generators of both physical and electronic word-of-mouth. The potential reach of word-of-mouth, both online and physically, corresponds to what is most important for Weber's marketing mix, as we see in the following statement. When asked which part of their marketing mix they thought most effective, Weber stated:

For mig der tror jeg, det er den her mund-til-mund, at vores loyale frobrugere siger til en anden forbruger at, det her, det er et godt produkt. Altså jeg tror det er dét, der giver aller-allermost. Igen, det skaber at der er nogle, der er entusiastiske omkring produktet, så bare det og hvis det så foregår online eller det foregår i en mund-til-mund virkelighed, så det bare er naboen, der fortæller det, så er slutværdien rigtig god. Så hver gang vi kan gøre én kunde gladere eller mere entusiastisk omkring vores produkt, så er vi med til ligesom at skabe den her effekt.

(Interview, Weber, 16 April 2015)

Sub-conclusion

Weberklubben was created as Weber enthusiastic consumers wanted a place to discuss and get inspiration to grilling on their Weber grills. The community quickly

became a success as Weber managed to co-create with members and made it a common goal between them to attract more members. The development in social media caused the activity to move from Weberklubben OS to Weberklubben FB. Social media, and especially Facebook is the default place for consumers to find information but more importantly for them, to construct a self-identity. Shortly after Weberklubben was started Weber presented Weber Camp where community members could meet. This has not only strengthened ties between members but also given inspiration to members and thereby opened up for new consumption opportunities. Weberklubben creates a competitive advantage as Weber gains insight in what the consumers are talking about and can access inspiration for new products or product modifications. We have established that co-creation is present in Weberklubben as customized experiences are facilitated for the consumers who interact. This creates value for both consumers and companies, but we will delve much more into that later in the analysis.

Weber Inspires Danes to Grill

Når man kigger på den her runde kuglegrill, så er det jo to stykker stål, der er sat sammen, og det er andre grill jo også. Så egentlig er det bare et stålprodukt. Det er ikke produktet som sådan - for os er det her med, at man får meget mere, når man køber en Weber. Vi rammer forbrugerne, der hvor de er, når de står med en grill, de aner ikke, hvordan de skal tage i brug. Det er sådan meget med, at de bliver holdt i hånden. når de køber den her grill. (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015)

As previously introduced, using Nordic Walking as an example, products alone have no value; it is only when they are integrated into practice that they have value (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, p. 57). Weber's focal product, the grill, has no value alone, as Pia Kromann states in the above quote; it is merely a steel product. She explains that they have tried to enhance the practice of grilling by helping the consumer understand how to use the grill right after the purchase has been made. Gus Murray further argues, "of course you recognize the brand and logo but it is the value it creates that helps us achieve the desired outcome that is the more interesting part" (Interview, Gus Murray, 30 April, 2015). According to Gus Murray, "the desired outcome" is what we describe as practice, i.e., what the consumer wants to use the grill for when purchasing it. The desired outcome of buying a Weber grill is the ability to grill food, and the better Weber can facilitate the consumers' possibilities for becoming better at grilling, the more they are achieving the desired outcome for the consumer, which creates brand values.

Consumers cannot only go to Weberklubben; they can also register for a Weber ID and receive tailored inspiration for the exact model grill that they have purchased. Furthermore, Weber has created several offline activities to teach their consumers how to become more qualified grillers. When attending the annual Weber Camp, consumers have the opportunity to get inspired, attend courses, meet fellow grillers as well Weber employees and talk about grilling. At the two Grill Academies, called Grilleriet, in Aalborg and Copenhagen, consumers can buy attendance to various courses in order to improve their grill skills and get inspiration. Pia Kromann says that "det skaber en wow følelse" and it has a great effect, as by attending the courses,

consumers are able to experience what they are actually capable of doing on a Weber grill (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). As Grilleriet only have two locations at each end of the country, Weber sought to meet the demand of consumers in the rest of country who expressed their wish for a Grill Academy closer to them. Because of this demand, Grill Academy on Tour began (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). Grill Academy on Tour consists of Weber employees who are very experienced at grilling; they visit more than 50 Weber dealers in Denmark to invite consumers in for three hours of inspiration and tips. The aim of Grill Academy on Tour and Grilleriet is to show people that they can grill other varieties of food than sausages on their grill and show that it can be done all year round, no matter the weather, encouraging consumers to grill more often. In this way, Weber is creating a practice of grilling all sorts of food on the grill, from meat to desserts as well as breakfast, and demonstrating that bad weather should not stop consumers from grilling. Pia Kromann further elaborates on practice creation and the word of mouth it can ultimately create:

Hver gang vi uddanner én til at blive bedre at grille, får en bedre oplevelse, for en glæde fordi de laver den her mad – det er også hele seancen i, at man skaber det her mad på grillen – så hver gang vi uddanner én, så har han også mere vilje til at anbefale det til sine venner, fordi han ligesom har fundet ud af at bruge grillen, og han har fundet ud af, hvad man kan bruge, hvis det er en kuglegrill på 57 cm, hvad kan jeg lave med den, så føler man ikke at man har fået noget ekstra for pengene, når man køber Weber. (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015)

Pia says that by educating consumers, Weber make sure that they have a good experience when grilling on a Weber grill; this makes consumers recommend Weber to other consumers to do the same. Pia Kromann further argues that word of mouth is the most efficient form of marketing, as loyal consumers encourage other consumers to buy Weber products; this is much stronger than any other marketing element (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). Laroche et al. (2012) support Pia Kromann's argument, stating that "Online communities foster impressionable facts about the brand through word-of-mouth communications and by sharing personal experiences" (p. 1759). Weber has made sure that their marketing activities fit together as constituting elements with their online as well as offline channels (Shove & Pantzar,

2005, p. 61). However, Weber's marketing activities could not alone create a practice, as consumers are the essential brick, as expressed by Shove and Pantzar (2009): "For a practice to endure and exist as an identifiable if mutable entity, it must be continually reproduced by those who do it" (p. 49). Shove and Pantzar (2005) further argue "who does it, where, when and with what consequence for the positioning and subsequent trajectory of the activity as a whole" (p. 59). Members on Weberklubben OS have, since its beginning, encouraged members to try new recipes, and experienced members have been role models for showing how to grill new inspiring food as well as grilling all year round. We asked Per Aastradsen if he is a "role model" as member of The Danish BBQ National Team, a previous Weberklubben OS editor and current administrator of FB, or feels that people in the grill community know who he is, to which he responded:

Ja, det kan jeg godt mærke. Jeg kan jo fandme ikke gå ude i et byggemarked ude i Viborg, vel. Der kommer utroligt mange opringninger, forespørgsler og mails og personlige beskeder om alt muligt – hvordan gør du det, og hvad tænker du om det.

(Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015)

People seem to look up to Per Aastradsen, as they greet him in random places such as the building market offline, and online they contact him for advice and inspiration, making him a role model in the community. He also uploads pictures of delicious food and recipes to inspire the community, and as people in the community seem to respect and admire him, he gets many likes and comments (FB 77+78). Weberklubben is based on these real situations — real people taking real pictures of their real lives with the brand and thereby attributing a relatively specific meaning to the brand and to their experiences with the product (Cova & Pace, 2006, p. 1099). Gus Murray further elaborates on this:

I think that the images that people want to share are from the real world – it is not like photo shopped products with white backgrounds put on display or something fake. It is real BBQ stuff, real recipes or pictures of the steak or the salad they have created. It is just a natural, a more human, I mean we want to share stuff with our friends, we want to show off and other people will understand where we are and what we are doing, whom we are with. (Interview, Gus Murray, 30 April, 2015)

Gus Murray's view agrees with Cova and Pace that people add meaning to the brand but also use it as a link in identity creation by showing off cooking skills and who they are with. At Weberklubben FB, members also inspire with pictures and videos, and the offline events Weber Camp, Grilleriet and Grill Academy on Tour are discussed; people also share photos from the events, thereby encouraging and creating a wish for other members to join them. We argue that when consumers share these unique experiences and encourage other members to attend the courses, a new source of competitive advantage is unlocked as Cova and Dallı (2009, p. 7) argue. We can see from the positive posts concerning courses at Grilleriet that joining these inspires members who attended; in addition, we observe that grilling becomes more than just making dinner — it becomes a hobby. As HeidiV says, to her grilling is relaxing; she even calls it a “zen experience” after a long day at work (Interview, HeidiV, 04 May, 2015). Furthermore, Æ Skæknejde says that he always has a good time when he is grilling, no matter what the weather is (Interview, Æ Skæknejde, 09 April, 2015). Weber states that they want to make everyone a “backyard hero,” where consumers can have success no matter the level (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). Pia Kromann explains how consumers can become backyard heroes by engaging with Weber's online and offline offerings, which further encourages consumption:

Alle steder der prøver vi bare at komme i kontakt. Så vi prøver, at skabe sådan en hel palette, der bare understøtter, at du bliver en helt hjemme i baghaven fordi, jo bedre du bliver til at grille, jo flere produkter køber du, jo mere inspireret er du til at få flere ting og Weber tilbehør og så videre for at sætte niveauet højere.

(Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015)

As Pia Kromann states in the above quote, Weber is aware that when they enhance the practice of grilling and make consumers explore the practice, they sell more grills and accessories.

Societal Factors Matter

We further argue that the success of Weber in creating a practice is not entirely because of Weber's marketing activities — other factors in the society have played big roles as well. Pia Kromann mentions, for example, that their success in Denmark

started in 2008 during the Global Financial Crisis, and elaborates further that the Danes did not have money to travel and thus had to get the best out of their summer holidays in Denmark (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). People then had a good time together when they were out in the garden grilling in nice summer weather (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). It was at this point in time that Weberklubben OS was created in order to help people get inspired, try new recipes on their grills, meet fellow grillers and exchange experiences. Weberklubben OS quickly attracted members, and Weber saw the value in these relationships and wanted member-member bonds to be strengthened as well as show how to use the grill in practice. This is how the first Weber Camp came to life. As Marc Jørgensen, Web Technician at Weberklubben OS and Administrator at Weberklubben FB, explains:

Altså Weber camp er lidt lavet som mulighed for alle Weberklub medlemmer for at komme ned og mødes og kende hinanden, lad os tage ud af det her. Så man ikke kun har hinanden at sidde at skrive til, så man ligesom mødes rigtig, det giver noget mere
(Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015).

When the Weberklubben members meet in person, social value is enhanced and the bonds between consumers are strengthened, which creates increased activity in the community. Seraj (2012) underlines this point: “Formation of strong ties increases the commitment levels of participants facilitating an actual online community culture to emerge” (p. 216). Pia Kromann says that much of Weber’s success is because of these two initiatives, Weberklubben and Weber Camp, where consumers had the ability to meet and greet, share advice and get inspired during their summer holidays in Denmark (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). Most importantly, none of the initiatives focused on sales, instead focusing on inspiration, having a good time with the grill and improving grilling skills (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). We argue that both Weberklubben and Weber Camp have been essential constitutive elements in creating a successful practice of grilling while co-creating brand values with the consumer.

Consumers are Affected by Trends

Another societal factor that had influence on the success of making people grill is the trend of food and cooking that has been present for the last few years. In 2013, a total of 166 food TV shows were shown on Danish TV within a week, which indicates that food and cooking are increasingly popular (Larsen, 2013). As previously mentioned, Weber sponsor two of these shows, Grillfeber and Masterchef, where their products are seen in use and the brand logo is visible several times during the show. As an element in self-creation people share an endless number of pictures of food, as it is a trend to cook homemade meals and eat nice-looking food on social media. The new technologies have brought new opportunities for self-creation and sharing pictures of food is an example of this (Elliot, 2014, p. 163). The focus has been on organic food as well as healthy food in general; however, in Weberklubben it is somewhat the opposite. Members post pictures of bacon and other meats stuffed with cheese. Vegetables are rarely seen on members' photos and when one does post a picture of vegetables, we saw in our netnographic observations that comments such as "Well, at least the meat looks nice" are written. Nonetheless, the point is the same, even though it is "greasy" food that is the focus in Weberklubben. The members of Weberklubben post pictures of their food as part of creating their self-identity, showing affiliation towards the values in the community as well as what they like or dislike in order to distinguish oneself from others. Most importantly, they are trying to show how good they are at grilling in order to place themselves in the social hierarchy of the group. Pia Kromann agrees with this, saying:

Der er mange, der gerne vil ses og høres derinde, det er der helt sikkert. De vil gerne iscenesætte sig selv. Men de vil gerne ses og høres for det, de laver, fordi de inspirerer på grillen, det vil de rigtig gerne, så derfor er den (i.e. Weberklubben FB) også god til det, fordi du kan vise dig selv, og du kan vise dine billeder
(Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015).

Gus Murray further emphasizes Pia Kromann's quote by saying, "we want to share stuff with our friends, we want show off and other people will understand where we are and what we are doing, whom we are with" (Interview, Gus, 30 April, 2015). Elliot (as quoted in Cova & Cova, 2002, p. 596) argues that individuals today produce

their biographies by creating and showing their own existence and their differences. We therefore argue that when members make themselves known in the community, it is as an element in creating a biography, a self-identity. Just as lifestyle products show what social hierarchy we belong to and what values and positions we stand for, so do food products (Linddal, 2006). Food is no longer just food; consumers choose it on the basis of brand, fat percentage, organic, packaging, etcetera, and all elements have signal value (Linddal, 2006). In Weberklubben, the focus seems to be on size and quantity of the meat and the price that the member paid for it rather than a concern with whether it is organic or healthy. Furthermore, the “greasier,” the better; the more cheese floating out of the burger and the more different sauces one shares pictures of, the more acknowledgement they receive from other members.

Sub-conclusion

The grill is merely a steel product with no value, but the practice of grilling has great value to consumers, and by becoming a member of Weberklubben they get the opportunity to interact with other members and get inspiration and tips for the grill. We found that by teaching consumers that they can grill all year round and grill all meals, then Weber sells more grills and accessories. We conclude that Weber has succeeded in creating a practice of grilling because of constitutive elements in their online and offline marketing and events where members have been invited to explore grilling on a Weber. However, the Global Financial Crisis and the food trend in society have also positively affected the practice of grilling. Furthermore, creating a successful practice foster impressionable facts about the brand, and Weberklubben thereby relate to brand values, as members continuously create life to the brand.

Consumers want Transparency and Trust

As previously mentioned, members are vital in an online brand community for it to be successful; even though it is important that they are devoted to the brand, it is even more essential that the members have strong bonds with each other (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008, p. 256). In this paragraph, we will discuss the relationships between the Weber brand, marketer, products and consumers as well as the relationship between consumers in order to determine how these relationships relate to brand values in Weberklubben. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p. 9), transparency is an essential building block in order to form the co-creation of value in today's network society. Hatch and Schultz (2010, p. 601) found that transparency is not only about risks for the company when consumers have access to much of the company's previously secret information; transparency today is also about reward as engagement brings stakeholder transparency with corporate transparency. This means that when the development has made sure consumers can gain increased knowledge about the company, it is a two way street, as the companies also gain insight into consumer behavior and are able to spot needs and desires.

We will include elements from the customer-centric model by McAlexander et al. (2002, p. 39). As Weberklubben is centered on the consumers and the existence and meaningfulness of the community is based on the consumer experience rather than the brand itself, this model is relevant to include when discussing brand values co-creation (McAlexander et al., 2002, p. 39). In the following paragraph, we find it relevant to discuss consumer-brand and consumer-marketer relationships. Thereafter, we will look into consumer-product relationships and finally the consumer-consumer relationship.

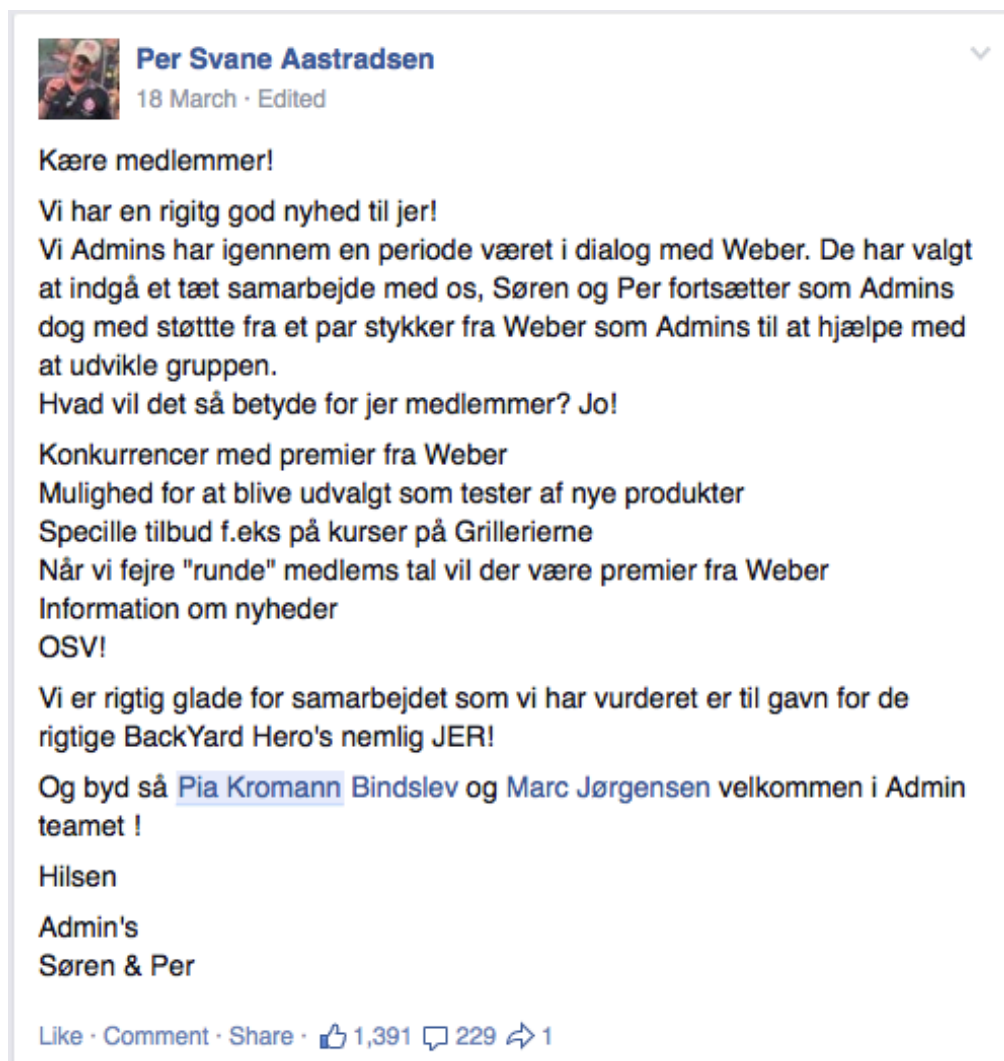
The Relationship Between Consumers, Brand and Marketers

Looking at the relationship between the brand and the consumers, Gus Murray elaborates on how companies should control their brand in social media: They should not. In the following, he talks about Maersk Line as an example of how to manage social media:

it [the brand] is very much controlled by the company, that's the belief, so it is very much like: We own the brand, we are going to control it, we will make sure that no one messes with our brand. And I think what we have seen with social media especially is that brand ownership has been taken by essentially the community and the consumers and the users of the brand or that are interactive with the brand at some level, and the challenge now for brands is that yesteryears it was like okay I give you this and it has our brand on it and it is the right color blue and its pantone and everything else and we control that and then you get to use it and then you give it back. (Interview, Gus, 30 April, 2015)

According to Gus Murray, companies should be prepared to let go of their control over the brand in order to follow developments in social media and avoid losing consumers' interest in the brand. He further argues that because of social media, it is impossible to control how consumers use and interact with the brand, because consumers have the ability to do whatever they want with it (Interview, Gus, 30 April, 2015). Hatch and Schultz (2010, p. 591) also recommend that companies should ultimately give up control over the brand to the community members, but they also flag up the fact that the issue of brand governance can arise. In our netnographic research, we observed examples of members leaving Weberklubben as a consequence of Weber's interference in various discussions concerning the rule set (See rule sets in Appendix 10+11). Many companies seem to have a difficult time letting go of this control (Interview, Gus, 30 April, 2015). Pia Kromann states that Weberklubben FB is entirely the consumers' community, saying, "det er brugernes platform" and "det skal køre på brugernes præmisser" (Weber, Interview, 16 April, 2015). Weber seems to understand that they should not interfere and try to control the brand on social media where Weberklubben FB is present. However, as two Weber employees have joined Weberklubben FB, it is not entirely the consumers' platform; Weber has not entirely given up the control over the brand in Weberklubben FB. However, it seems to be a level of control enforced by Weber that suits the community, as most members have responded positively the few times Weber has interfered. Gus Murray says that because the different social media platforms open up a massive information flow, the companies have to be transparent: "the transparency is increased because now it is hard not to be transparent" (Interview, Gus, 30 April, 2015). Web 2.0 has especially contributed to this development as it has opened up people's ability to modify content

in a participatory and collaborative fashion, which means the information flow has become increasingly fast and transparent (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). We argue that Weber made a good choice in joining Weberklubben FB as “invisible” administrators, as it gives them valuable insight in following the community. Their entrance was made clear and transparent to the community, and it was explained to the community members how Weber’s membership would positively affect them (FB 68). In the example below, Per Aastradsen explains to his fellow members that Weber is joining, the advantages of this and introduces the two Weber admins by name. The members’ reactions are extremely positive; the post received 1,391 likes and 229 comments. The comments were all made by positive and excited members who acknowledged Weber’s entrance. This is a strong example of the good relationship the Weber marketers have with members of the community.



Source: FB 68 (Appendix part 2)

In Weberklubben OS as well as Weberklubben FB, there is a set of rules made by Weber; in Weberklubben FB, the two volunteering administrators are the ones who spend a lot of time and energy managing these (Set of rules in Appendix 10+11) (FB 63+64). This indicates that Weber still maintains some level of control over the brand. However, it seems that they have to, as members keep writing negative comments that ruin the good atmosphere, and when it gets out of hand, Weber might take action and encourage the members to be nice to each other. Various companies are also continually trying to sell their products in the community, which is not allowed according to the rule set, which makes clear that the site should be about sharing good grill experiences, tips and recipes. The latest example is a post by a member who asks if everything from Funktionsdesign, a company selling grill accessories about which the members are very positive, will get deleted from the group because they are a company. Members react to this as Funktionsdesign previously was one of the companies allowed to show new products in the community, as they often produced accessories for grills that were not available in Weber's own assortment. This post got 55 comments from members, who argue that it is sad and wrong; the tone is generally negative. In the thread, the member who initially started the post about Funktionsdesign, which was deleted, said that it was not the administrators, but himself who deleted the thread as the comments were turning into a mud fight. This indicates that members are also helping the administrators in keeping the rules, as this member saw the need to delete his own post because other members were commenting negatively. Furthermore, this was a topic the members kept discussing; the two volunteering administrators could not seem to get members to understand the situation, even though they posted an explanation (FB 70). As this topic quickly took over the community's intended purpose — to share positive grill experiences, Marc Jørgensen, took action and wrote the following comment to implement some form of damage control over the situation:



Source: FB 69 (Appendix part 2)

Even though Pia Kromann said that Weber would not interfere in the community, they saw the need to do so, and we argue that it was the right choice based on Gus Murray's recommendations. It is an example of transparency, and after only a few hours 52 people liked the comment. Only a few other times did we observe Weber's presence in the community; for example, when rumors were discussed, such as a hyped fine-meshed basket, then Marc Jørgensen or Pia Kromann informed the community whether the rumor was true or not. It was said that it was withdrawn; however, as this was not the case, Weber quickly informed the community (FB72). The relationship between the marketers, brand and consumers does not necessarily have to be marketers trying to interact with the consumers, as consumers also seek to interact with companies (Cova et al., 2011, p. 11). For example, a member of the community asked if the administrators worked for Weber because he had issues with the regulators for his grill and wanted Weber to look into it (FB 56). Here the consumer tried to get help and assistance from Weber employees through the

community. Other examples show the same trend, especially when something breaks or they have ideas for new products.

The relationship between Weber marketers and community members seems to be strong and trustworthy; the Facebook post (FB 68) in which Per introduces the two new Weber administrators shows evidence of this through the positive comments. Gus Murray further states that consumers “are going to base it [the brand] on the value that is exchanged by interacting or engaging with their brand” (Interview, Gus, 30 April, 2015). We therefore argue that this positive relationship between Weber marketers and community members strengthens the relationship between the brand and the members, thereby creating a co-creation experience that produces brand values. We will discuss this co-creation process later in the analysis. Weberklubben opens up interaction with Weber marketers and the brand Weber, and when consumers then chose to interact in the community, value is exchanged.

The Relationship Between Consumers and Products

The members constantly interact with the product in Weberklubben FB. They speak of their new grills as their “babies” and “newborn” and proudly show pictures of the grills they have in their collection. In our netnography, we saw that members always refer to the model names of their grills every time they upload a picture, share inspiration and ask for advice. Weber has the following series with several sizes/models in their assortment: Kettle, Performer and Ranch, which are all charcoal grills, but also the following gas grills: Q, Spirit, Genesis and Summit (Weber.com). In Weberklubben FB, a member took the initiative to interact with a specific Weber grill and requested for permission to create a group only concerning Weber Summit, which is the largest and most expensive gas grill in the assortment (FB 71). As mentioned in the previous paragraph, it seems that the relationship between Weber and community members is good, and therefore the member reacted positively when Marc Jørgensen requested to be an admin of this new group. The member even seemed to be proud of Marc Jørgensen’s request, as he responded, “Du skal være velkommen og takker ☺” (FB 71). Other members reacted less positively to this new group, as comments such as “Skulle summit ejere være finere end vi almindelige weber ejere så skal vi til at have en klub for vær type weber gril har selv 5 forskellige

weber” and “Jeg syntes ikke rigtigt du svare på om vi er dårlige mennesker os der ikke har en Summit” show (FB 71). Clearly other members feel struck by the creation of a group for the most expensive grill, which they feel they cannot join because they do not own one; a member even expresses that he is seen as a bad person because he does not have one. After a few comments in this tone, a member uploads a picture, as seen below, where she makes a joke about these jealous members. There is a social hierarchy in Weberklubben FB and it seems to be determined by which Weber grills a member has. Conclusively, the members have a strong relationship with the product and they enjoy showing this to others in the community; however, members show jealousy through negative comments when people share pictures of expensive grills or when they have many grills (FB 71+FB 39). On the positive side, members also congratulate each other when others upload pictures of new grills that they are excited about.



Source: FB 71 (Appendix part 2)

The Relationship Between Consumers

Gus Murray elaborates on why consumers prefer to get advice from other consumers instead of from companies:

we know why, the companies are biased, companies want to sell their own products and just like the brand community they don't want to have any one even mentioning competitors or what you can buy from competitors. I'm pretty sure if they could they would actually like say okay no you can't buy our competitors' products, you know if they could do it. They really want only true fans. You always trust your friends over any brand. (Interview, Gus, 30 April, 2015)

According to Gus Murray, the validity of information is increased when it is provided by someone trusted, such as friends or family. Similarly, Seraj (2012) argues that information or knowledge shared between trustees, as is the case in Weberklubben, eliminates bias and untrustworthiness (p. 213). This is also why Weber is dependent on a strong consumer-consumer relationship in the community; they trust each other's advice and believe that they are not biased, but are merely sharing their personal experience. This can, however, be a grey area, as some members have voluntarily entered into a relationship with Weber as editors or Weberklubben FB administrators. It seems to be difficult for members to know whether the volunteers have secret agendas and are biased in favor of Weber. Per Aastradsen shared an example:

der var én en aften, som gik ind og svinede mig til og sagde, jeg gik også kun op i Weber, fordi jeg fik det og er ansat af Weber – det er jeg så ikke – bla bla bla og så tænkte jeg, at det gider jeg simpelthen ikke høre på det her, og så gik jeg ind og slettede ham. (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015)

As the example illustrates, a member doubted Per Aastradsen's motivation for volunteering and spending so much time on Weber; however, as Per Aastradsen explains, he does not see himself as an employee, but as a member. Once again, we argue that transparency is the keyword. The members in the community should know what the volunteers get out of their work for Weber in order to be able to decide whether they can be trusted. Both Per Aastradsen and Søren Aabenhus have started several posts where they explain that they are volunteers and that their work in Weberklubben is a hobby for them.

Through our interviews with the three members Sjanten, Æ Skæeknejde and Ole, we found that the relationship between the members is strong. Ole refers to the friends he has met through Weberklubben OS as "Weberfamilien" and has held several events for members at his house (Interview, Ole, 13 April, 2015). Æ Skæeknejde has also gained many new friendships through his membership and has met with several of them for social grill events offline; Sjanten explains how Weber Camp is a great event to meet up with all his grill friends from Weberklubben (Interview, Æ Skæeknejde, 09 April, 2015; Interview, Sjanten, 08 April, 2015). Schau et al. (2009, p. 34) also found that when community members start moving past brand boundaries and hosting

gatherings on their own initiative, then it typically leads to new friendships that expand outside the community. Æ Skææknejde says that the social interaction in Weberklubben OS was stronger than it is in Weberklubben FB and argues that it might be because of people just joining Weberklubben FB because they need an answer to a question (Interview, Æ Skææknejde, 09 April, 2015). However, he says that as Weberklubben OS gradually got more members, it became more difficult to create social cohesion; this has only become more difficult as Weberklubben OS moved to Weberklubben FB (Interview, Æ Skææknejde, 09 April, 2015). Laroche (2012, p. 1757) argues that Facebook provides consumers with a sense of freedom to communicate, which serves as a reason why consumers prefer to interact on the platform. Our three interviewees have all been part of the group for about 5-7 years, so it could seem that the strong social ties they have created through Weberklubben were in the beginning. Finally, we argue that members join to interact with peers in order to get advice, inspiration and socialize; however, the social relationship is not as strong as it once was when Weberklubben OS had fewer members.

Sub-conclusion

In order to create brand values in Weberklubben, we found that the relationships between the consumer and brand, marketer, product and other consumers are important. Weber has achieved a good and trustworthy relationship between the members and the brand and marketers as well as products. We conclude that a vital element in these relationships is transparency, as this is what consumers demand in today's network society as we saw in Weberklubben. Weber has been transparent in their communication in Weberklubben FB and has left the managing of community to the two volunteering administrators as Weber argue it is a group for members only, where members should interact without Weber's interference. We saw that the relationship between the members in the community is strong, and they gladly ask for advice on grill purchase, recipes, etc. However, in terms of strong social ties that also lead to friendships offline, Weberklubben FB does not seem to lead to this in the way that Weberklubben OS did in its first few years when there was not as many members as today.

Members Volunteer to Work for Weber

it makes no sense that a brand can try and replace your friends, and that's why we are seeing now with influencers and advocates has huge value to brands, they just haven't worked that out quite yet. Some brands have. Understanding the power of influencers and advocates (Interview, Gus, 30 April, 2015).

In the above quotation, Gus Murray states that influencers have huge value to brands as they can act as unbiased brand ambassadors. As Weber has invited several members into a partnership, they are co-creating value with some of their most loyal consumers. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p. 9), this partnership implies a dialog where members and marketers act as equal partners, which is argued to be a crucial building block for co-creation of value. Weber has appointed eight members as editors of Weberklubben OS and their volunteering job is basically to interact with the members, as Weber seemed to be aware that these advocates could personalize the Weber brand (Interview, HeidiV, 04 April, 2015). In the following example, Pia Kromann explains how the editors are more trusted among fellow members when biased situations occur:

Men så er det fint, at vi har de her redaktører her, der hjælper os med ligesom at kommentere ind og skrive på den og den måde, fordi vi tit står overfor en svær situation, hvis vi som Weber ansatte går ind og tager diskussionen, så er det bare sådan, jamen I kommer også bare fra Weber, og I skal sige det og alt sådan noget. Så derfor er det meget lettere, når vi har de her redaktører til ligesom at være neutrale i forhold til at kommentere (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015).

Pia Kromann says that often the ideas for new initiatives on Weberklubben OS come from Weber, but it is the editors that drive the online events; however, when editors come up with ideas, they are taken into consideration as well (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). When members sign up for the editor role they must upload 1-3 recipes a month to Weberklubben OS and also speak nicely of Weber on both platforms (Interview, Hisselholm, 23 April, 2015). It seems to differ how much time the editors spend on their editor roles during the week; Hisselholm says up to three hours,

whereas HeidiV spends about 1 hour, but Hisselholm further states that it is very much up to the individual how much time an editor spends on the job and how they count their time spent, as it is also their hobby (Interview, Hisselholm, 23 April, 2015; Interview, HeidiV, 05 May, 2015). Both editors say that they were encouraged by other members during Weber Camp last year to join Weberklubben OS as editors, and even though they decided not to sign up as editors at first, they seemed to be flattered and motivated by others' positive comments on their grill skills and thus decided to join the editor team after all (Interview, Hisselholm, 23 April, 2015; Interview, HeidiV, 05 May, 2015). In Weberklubben FB, the two administrators, Søren Aabenhus and Per Aastradsen, are also volunteers. As previously mentioned, Weber only joined the community a few months ago, but before that Per Aastradsen spent up to 30 hours a week managing Weberklubben FB, but with Weber's assistance his current number of hours has fortunately decreased (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015). Weber is aware that having a team of volunteers as advocates creates member-to-member trust, which Weber would never be able to achieve, and they do not even have to pay money for it: "Det er guld værd at have sådan et par stykker der virkelig støtter op om det også uden man skal betale dem for det" (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015). The editors are offered participation in some of the courses at Grilleriet, get new products for testing occasionally and are invited on an annual grill camp with the entire editor team to get inspiration and socialize. However, HeidiV says that even though it is nice to get those things, she volunteers because of her passion for grilling and because she wants to inspire others to feel the same joy about grilling that she does (Interview, HeidiV, 04 April). Hisselholm says that he was drawn by getting the free courses, but most importantly he wanted to help others, and he enjoyed the positive feedback and acknowledgement as seen below:

Nej, selvfølgelig til at starte med så var det da fedt at kunne få noget. Men grunden til, ja det var det der med at folk de spurgte mig "Aj, jamen skal du ikke være det, du skriver jo så meget alligevel" og så videre "det du laver, det er jo godt." Så det er da det, der har gjort at jeg begyndte at blive, at man får noget tilbage, ja hvad skal man kalde det, ja respons på det, man laver. (Interview, Hisselholm, 23 April, 2015)

Hisselholm further says that he gets really inspired when people ask him to make something and then upload a recipe so other members can try it out at home. HeidiV agrees to this point:

det jeg syntes, der var spændende, det var, at man skulle finde på opskrifter, man skulle afprøve nogle opskrifter. Også det der, at man kommer ind i verdenen til Weber, og jeg ville også gerne lære nogle flere folk at kende, der griller.

(Interview, HeidiV, 04 April, 2015)

Furthermore, both interviewees say that they want to be included in Weber; in the quote above, HeidiV underlines this point as she says that she was happy to be included in the “Weber world.” As Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p. 6) argue, consumers seek to influence the company’s value chain, as consumers want to feel included and thereby co-create value. The editors say that what motivates them is when people comment on their posts and show acknowledgement; as HeidiV says, it is a feeling of success for her: “Det giver da et skulderklap, og yes det lykkedes!” (Interview, HeidiV, 04 April, 2015). Per Aastradsen was an editor at Weberklubben OS before he became co-administrator of Weberklubben FB and agrees with Hisselholm and HeidiV that it was the acknowledgement from others that motivated him; what motivates him as administrator of Weberklubben FB is that he gets responsibility, insight and acknowledgement from other members (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015). It may seem as if Weber is exploiting the volunteers, but Cova and Dalli (2009, p. 31) argue that exploitation is a feeling; none of the volunteers express feeling exploited, and, on the contrary, they feel grateful and included. HeidiV expresses, for example, that she hopes to continue being an editor for Weber for a while: “på resten af den tid som jeg kommer forhåbentlig til at være hos Weber som frivillig redaktør” (Interview, HeidiV, 04 April, 2015). Furthermore, the volunteers seem to be satisfied with their “salary,” which is not of monetary value; however, as Cook (as quoted in Cova & Dalli, 2009) discovered in his findings, “payment can destroy participation by undermining a sense of collaboration and trust” (p. 19). We therefore conclude that payment in monetary value would not be able to satisfy the needs of the volunteers as they are motivated by acknowledgement both from Weber and other consumers. Per Aastradsen also states that he is not interested in money: “Søren og jeg har hele tiden haft en holdning til at det her, det er ikke

noget, der skal være penge i for os” (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015). The acknowledgment that the editors and FB administrators achieve also contributes to their identity creations, as it seems to give status in the community. By volunteering for Weber, they rise in the social hierarchy of grillers; one must believe they are very advanced grillers since Weber chose them to be role models for the entire community. As touched upon previously, it is crucial for the practice “who” the practitioners are; Shove and Pantzar (2009) underpin this with the argument that it is important that marketers see consumers “not as users but as active and creative practitioners” (p. 45). The volunteers create value that Weber would not be able to create. The volunteers are advocates for Weber and the members in the community seem to trust and respect them. Therefore we argue that the volunteers are co-creating with Weber and that this co-creation process creates invaluable brand values for the consumers and especially for Weber.

Sub-conclusion

Weber has understood that consumers think companies are biased and therefore seek advice from other consumers. We found that Weber has recruited members, as volunteering editors to communicate and inspire on Weberklubben OS and as volunteering administrators of Weberklubben FB. It is clear from our analysis, that Weber has understood the power of influencers and how these have the ability to affect the brand in a positive and honest way. The volunteers do not want or expect monetary values as feeling included and acknowledged is the motivational factor. We found, that this has value to other members, as they trust the volunteers because they find them unbiased. The volunteers act as influencers in the community as they are experienced grillers that other members look up to and when they give advice or share photos they achieve respect from other members. Conclusively, the volunteers relate to brand value as they only speak nicely of the brand and act as ambassadors for the brand in the community.

Generating Brand Values

In this paragraph, we will take Weberklubben through the following four thematic categories in order to find out how brand values are collectively created by the members of Weberklubben: social networking, impression management, community engagement and brand use (Schau et al., 2009, p. 32).

Social Networking

When trying to create, enhance and sustain ties among brand community members in social networking, welcoming, empathizing and governing are important factors (Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). In Weberklubben OS, new members must create a username and a password to join the community; other members cannot see that new members have joined. If someone wants to become a member of Weberklubben FB, they must ask for permission to join the group. Unless they are trying to sell something for a company or do advertising, which is not allowed on Weberklubben, everyone is granted membership. The two volunteering administrators, Søren Aabenhus and Per Aastradsen, manually approve applicants and are thus the gatekeepers who govern Weberklubben FB. The gatekeepers who govern Weberklubben OS are the Weberklubben OS management team. The members in Weberklubben FB occasionally highlight their entrance into the group; a new member recently posted, “Tak fordi jeg må være med. Jeg glæder mig til at følge jer” (FB 9). The member is grateful for the membership and shows excitement at the opportunity to be inspired by other Weber grillers; a handful of members have liked the post to acknowledge her entrance and message. This kind of acknowledgement is only the beginning of what a membership to Weberklubben can lead to. According to Schau et al. (2009, p. 34), some members move past the boundaries of the community, as community members might create events on their own initiative and thereby extend the social networking in the online community to offline interaction. One of the members, Ole, says that he hosts an annual event called “pizzatræf,” where 10-12 members from Weberklubben are invited on a first come, first serve basis to make pizza together and build new social ties (Interview, Ole, 13 April, 2015). This indicates that members are creating events on their own initiative, interacting offline and creating social networks that move beyond Weberklubben as they feel inspired to

do so. Furthermore, Æ Skæeknejde says that he has made many new friendships through his membership of Weberklubben OS, and he has also had positive experiences when participating in courses that were arranged by other community members (Interview, Æ Skæeknejde, 09 April, 2015). Reckwitz (2002, p. 252) says that using things in a certain way is carrying out a practice, and as Ole teaches other members how to prepare pizza on a grill he is teaching them how to carry out a practice. Through our netnography, we also found that the members are excited about the annual offline event arranged by Weber, Weber Camp, and even though they do not know each other, members encourage each other to participate and meet up as they want the event to be successful and meet fellow grillers (FB 61+62).

Impression Management

Impression management refers to the focus on creating positive impressions of the brand between the members, going beyond the brand community, such as the practices of evangelizing and justifying (Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). An example of evangelizing members acting as ambassadors of goodwill is the two administrators of Weberklubben FB as well as the eight editors on Weberklubben OS. They voluntarily spend resources on maintaining the two platforms. The “normal” members also act as ambassadors of goodwill as they help each other by answering questions and giving good pieces of advice without wanting anything in return, but all the advanced grillers remember how it was to be a beginner and want to help. Æ Skæeknejde underlines this point by saying:

Jamen jeg prøver bare at hjælpe. Jeg tænker sgu ikke så meget over det ene eller det andet, det er bare for at hjælpe. Jeg ser sådan på det, at vi har alle sammen været nybegyndere, og har skulle spørge nogen om et eller andet, så må man ligesom gøre noget igen (Interview, Æ Skæeknejde, 09 April, 2015).

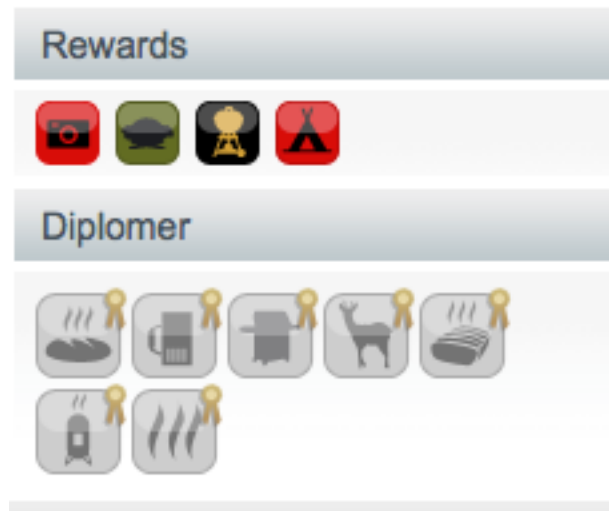
When dishonoring comments appear about the brand in Weberklubben FB, the volunteering administrators give warnings or even delete the comments if they do not follow the rules of the site (Appendix 10+11) (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015). In our netnographic research, we found that members also keep an eye open for dishonoring comments and defend Weber’s events and products if other members

say something negative. Once, a member complained that he could no longer buy Weber accessories at Weberklubben OS, only at Weber Camp (FB 55). He argued that Weber wanted to use the accessories as an incentive for people to attend Weber Camp and further said that he went to Weber Camp last year and thought it was not even worth the money (FB 55). Another member argues against this complaint and says that with that attitude, he will not be missed at Weber Camp, thereby defending the brand and its choices (FB 55). This is just one example of many. Often members ask the community if an unoriginal product has the same effect as an original Weber product, and several members then defend the brand by stating that one should only buy Weber as it is the only right thing to do and is definitely the best quality. The members justify their devotion to the brand and keep an eye open for dishonoring comments, as Schau et al. (2009, p. 34) also found in their research.

Community Engagement

Community engagement practices reinforce the engagement of users in Weberklubben. These include staking, milestoneing, badging and documenting (Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). These practices safeguard the community and the diversity of members. An example of staking is when members want to show their dedication to the community. In our netnographic research, it was clear that members often like to show their dedication to the brand; there have especially been many examples in relation to the annual Weber Camp, where people proudly share pictures of their tents, families and grills to show that they are participating in the camp and are going all in in bringing the right equipment. Milestones refer to brand experiences, such as their first meet with the brand, and the majority of examples on this are from people who are buying a new Weber grill (Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). There are many pictures on Weberklubben FB in which members introduce their “new member of the family” or “newborn,” as they call their new grills, to the community. Badging refers to a semiotic signifier of a milestone; this is especially present in the community when members have participated in offline Weber grill courses at Grilleriet or Grill Academy on Tour (Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). When members return from these courses, many chose to upload pictures of their diplomas on Weberklubben FB as a symbol of their participation (FB1). At Weberklubben OS, members get visible

diploma icons on their profile when they participate in courses or complete one of the challenges that Weber has arranged, as visualized below in the snapshot from a community profile.



Source: OS 27 (Appendix part 2)

A challenge could, for example, be to make pulled pork, and the member then has to post a blog about it in the community to be awarded the diploma. However, it seems that as the activity in general is decreasing in Weberklubben OS, the diplomas do not have the effect of badging in the same way as members do not see them on other members' profiles or make an effort to collect more (Interview, Æ Skæeknejde, 09 April, 2015). However, Sjanten expressed that even though he is not looking at others' diplomas, he likes to get them as he feels that they keep him on top of grilling; he even contacted Weber to ask for more opportunities to get diplomas (Interview, Sjanten, 08 April, 2015). Schau et al. (2009, p. 37) argue that badging codifies the expression of brand identity and thereby suggests the correct behaviors for being a true member. It seems that Weber made the diplomas to give members an opportunity to badge, show their dedication and try to reinforce the idea that the more diplomas a member has, the more they are a true member. Documentation gathers the three mentioned practices as it occurs when members construct a narrative of the experience with the brand, "staking their social space, participating in milestones,

badging the milestones for posterity, and finally evolving a cohesive personal brand narrative” (Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). Members even seem to compete at being the most dedicated Weber enthusiast, as seen in the example above where members post their diplomas as symbols of their dedication and badges they have collected; in Weberklubben FB they compete on other factors as the diplomas are not available. Schau et al. (2009, p. 38) argue that competition actually enables the community members to distinguish themselves and to create a social hierarchy. This is congruent with Goffman’s (as quoted in Elliot, 2014, p. 38) statement that the individual is the reflective agent who decides how to stage the identity creation, and we argue that transparently distinguishing oneself in the social hierarchy in the community is a part of this self-creation. Another way for members to distinguish themselves in the hierarchy in Weberklubben FB is to post pictures of the collection of grills they have.



Source: FB 39 (Appendix part 2)

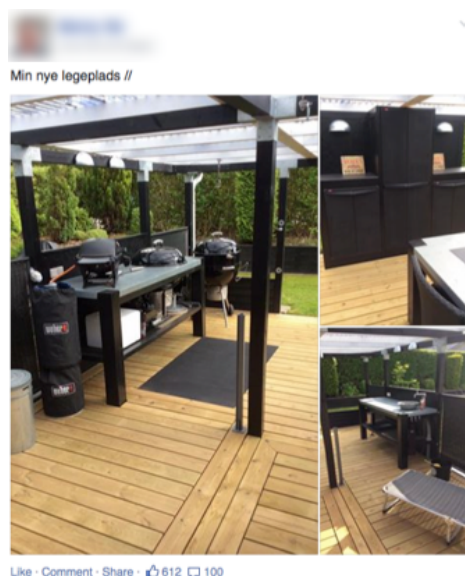
As seen in the post above, a member posted a picture of her four grills and wrote, “Nu er der 4... Mon Kul grillen føler sig alene mod de 3 gas. Det går jo virkelig ikke” (FB 39), and other members reacted very differently; some said congratulations on “the new member of the family,” while a handful of members replied by outdoing the number of grills in their households; other members showed clear signs of jealousy by asking why she needed so many grills. Competition is present in the community and can create a good opportunity for Weber to sell more products as they compete on the number of grills as well equipment and inspire each other to buy more. Schau et al. (2009, p. 39) also found that practices in online brand communities could generate consumption opportunities. Furthermore, the competition has a positive effect on Weber’s brand values as members compete to be the most loyal community member.

Brand Use

The following practices are related to how members’ interaction can improve or increase use of the brand: grooming, customizing and commoditizing (Schau et al., 2009, p. 35). Grooming is when members share good pieces of advice, tips and how to take care of the products (Schau et al., 2009, p. 35). Most members’ incentive to spent time in Weberklubben OS and FB is to get advice and inspiration; members therefore share good pieces of advice and tips on how to make the best pulled pork or how the coal briquettes are best arranged in the grill. Furthermore, many members also use the community to ask for advice in the purchasing process; other members respond with their personal experience of the grills they have, but still try to ask qualified questions as “how many people are there” and “how often do you use it” in order to give the best advice (FB 38). This opens up new consumption opportunities, as members might encourage other members to buy several grills or a more expensive grill than first anticipated. Furthermore, when members give advice or inspire with new recipes, they might include the accessories they use in order to create the perfect meal. This also opens up new consumption opportunities as members become aware of the possibilities of the accessories. The most recent hyped accessory, a fine meshed basket for the Weber grill, makes this evident (FB 19). Many members shared recipes for sausage mix and fried pork, which they made in the fine meshed basket, and the more community members that uploaded pictures of their food in the basket, the more

hype they created. Suddenly the fine meshed basket was sold out all over the nation, and members even shared pictures of various stores as soon as they came back in stock (FB 19). In this way, the community opened up a consumption opportunity, as everyone wanted the fine meshed basket. It seemed that a member would even rise in the social hierarchy if they were able to get their hands on one of the baskets, which then became a part of the self-creation. Furthermore, everyone wanted to get their hands on a basket to be acknowledged in the community and also to feel as a part of the larger group who proudly posted pictures of their baskets in use.

Customizing happens when consumers take a Weber product and change it, and there are several examples of this. In our netnography, we observed that when consumers buy small grills for camping, etcetera, they bore a hole in the grill so they can insert a thermometer and see the temperature (FB 34) (Schau et al., 2009, p. 35). This opens up consumption opportunities as these community practices give other members the idea of boring a hole for a thermometer and thus buy this Weber thermometer as suggested. An example of how the members of Weberklubben create new consumption opportunities is illustrated (FB 79) in Weberklubben FB, in which one member shares pictures of him building a new outdoor kitchen, which presents a whole new opportunity for consumption – the environment for the Weber grill. As seen in the picture below, innovations like this create much interactivity, as is made evident by the high number of “likes” and comments it has received.



Source: FB 79 (Appendix part 2)

This post is particularly interesting as it introduces a new topic for conversation, but also sheds light on an additional practice that revolves around grilling, which is creating the perfect outdoor environment for the grill. Furthermore, some enthusiasts discovered that they could use their old Weber grills for plants as decoration. Commoditizing happens when members encourage the brand to further develop a product or distribute products to new stores and happens in the community on an occasional basis; for example, members encourage Weber to insert thermometers in grills that do not already have one. Weber can use insights like this from the community to know what their consumers are talking about and what products they ask for in addition to the existing product line. Gus Murray elaborates on gaining valuable insight and what it can be used for: “you can see what people care about and what they are having problems with, you can see what they are talking about over here in terms of their desired outcomes” (Interview, Gus Murray, 30 April, 2015). By getting insight into what the members are talking about, Weber can spot new trends, what products they hype, like the fine meshed basket, and what products they might miss in the assortment.

Sub-conclusion

We have now looked at how Weberklubben’s members together can create value by going through Schau et al.’s four suggested thematic categories. By looking into social networking, impression management and community management, we can conclude that these practices give Weber the opportunity to not simply exploit customer competences but to be better co-creative partners through Weberklubben. We found that consumers too can extract value from the partnership, and in the following paragraphs we will analyse these specific values. Conclusively, through Weberklubben, Weber has the opportunity to make consumers realize value that Weber would not be able to when simply selling a product. We found that members in the community defended the brand, engaged with the brand, and even competed with other members to be most loyal to the brand. These dynamics obviously illustrate that Weberklubben relate to the Weber brand values.

Intellectual Value – Members Want Knowledge

Seraj identified intellectual value through co-creation and quality insurance of content in her study of an online community; likewise, we identified several indicators of intellectual value in Weberklubben. In the community, knowledge is co-created through the interaction of members at all grill levels – from beginners to professional grillers from The Danish National BBQ Team (Seraj, 2012, p. 219). From our semi-structured interviews, we learned that it is almost like a sport and that it is very important for some of the very dedicated grillers within Weberklubben to challenge their grilling skills, develop their abilities through new innovative recipes and improve by practicing their grill skills. As Per Aastradsen said in the interview about his frequency of grilling:

Ja, altså jeg griller hele året, og i snit så griller jeg da fem dage i ugen eller sådan noget.

Interviewer: Så det er næsten alle måltider, som bliver lavet på grillen hjemme hos dig?

Ja, og også mellemmåltider og snacks og sådan noget. Jeg går meget op i at finde på nye ting og hele tiden dygtiggøre mig, og specielt også fordi jeg griller jo også på landsholdet, så der går jo meget træning der også

(Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April 2015).

From the quote above, we see several practices related to grilling, as Per Aastradsen states that he grills all year around regardless of weather conditions. Obviously, it is expected that when grilling all meals of the day, five days a week, throughout the year, one achieve a high level of grilling experience. In the community, we see that the elements of rehearsal and improving grilling skills, similar to a sport, and innovating new grilling methods are discussed, which contributes intellectual value to the community. These innovative ways of what and how to grill is something that experienced and professional grillers like to share with each other to challenge and inspire, thus contributing to the intellectual value and quality of content within Weberklubben. Additionally, we observed that Weberklubben functions as a great support system for grillers who want to develop their grilling skills and techniques, as Sjanten states below:

Det er dem, der kommer først til at svare, det er dem der ved noget om det. Og tit så er det eksperterne, fordi de er så nørdede, kan man sige, at det ved de alt om. Men så kan jeg jo også mærke på mig selv, at jo mere erfaring jeg får, og også på andre hjemmesider eksempelvis grillgruren, det er jo alle slags grill, og alle er velkomne, og det er gratis, og alt det her. Der får man også tips og tricks. Jeg syntes bare, at jeg er kommet så langt ind i det her grillhalløj, at nu er det lidt mig, der svarer på spørgsmål, også fordi man fået en masse erfaring, og man prøver nogle ting, og har prøvet en masse ting, og så kan man sagtens sige, nå men jeg gjorde sådan og sådan. Så det er ikke så tit jeg spørger længere, eller jeg spørger sådan set ikke længere.

(Sjanten, 8 April 2015)

The above quote clearly states that Weberklubben has facilitated some sort of education within the practice of grilling for this member, as he started out knowing very little about grilling and now perceives himself as one of the experts within the general grill community. This illustrates that intellectual value is created and that knowledge production and quality of knowledge, as well as the desire to become experienced grillers, is a motivator for members in Weberklubben (Interview, HeidiV, 04 May, 2015). Moreover, the willingness of the experienced members to provide knowledge and the inexperienced members' eagerness to learn creates a dynamic through which intellectual knowledge about grilling techniques is co-produced. The desire to become better at grilling and continuously wanting to develop and expand knowledge corresponds to the concept of self-development and self-actualization that Halliday and Astafyeva (2014) define as a motivational factor to engage in online communities (p. 126). According to Halliday and Astafyeva (2014), self-development and self-actualization cover the desire among consumers for education and knowledge as well as a desirability to apply this knowledge in a way that will help the greater good of the community (p. 126). In the quote below, Æ Skæknejde expresses that he likes to help other members, which implies a creation of intellectual value. We asked if he replied when other members asked for help in the community, to which he responded:

Æ Skæeknejde: Ja jamen det gør jeg da også. Der kan jeg godt svare også. Og så får man jo en dialog i gang, så får de måske ikke det hele med, og så spørger de igen, og så får de svar igen.

Interviewer: Er det også en god følelse?

Æ Skæeknejde: Ja og jeg er jo på mange forummer. Grillforum, Røg og sådan noget er jeg med i inde på også. Altså jeg ryger meget fisk og kød og sådan noget.

(Interview, Æ Skæeknejde, 09 April, 2015)

The concept of self-development and self-actualization is another element we found that contributed to the co-creation of knowledge, as we observed the level of technical detail in regard to grilling and all products involved in the practice of grilling of high quality. The level of high technological detail is undoubtedly achieved as a result of many hours spent online in the community exchanging experience as well as from real-life experience with Weber grills. The members guide, help and exchange knowledge with each other based on personal experience and in-depth knowledge about the products, as seen in (FB 7), where a member experienced trouble with his gas cylinder and received seven posts with suggested solutions within an hour. The above examples from our empirical data clearly illustrate how the role of the seeker and the educator, identified by Seraj (2012, p. 219), are central and dominate in the production of intellectual value in Weberklubben. The roles of the seeker and the educator add value, as many of the members of Weberklubben, especially Weberklubben FB, look for this constant development of their grilling skills and therefore seek advice from more experienced and professional grillers to extract intellectual value. This exchange of information is also illustrated in FB 12, where a member seeks advice for the time, temperature and recipe for her smoked saddle of ham. The post and the comments generate actual interactivity and members help achieve the desired outcome, which in this instance is a well-grilled ham with delicious seasoning. This interaction creates a dynamic in which several motivational factors for participation are present. The member has a need for information, which is illustrated in the initial post. Then there is need to help and to feel useful, which motivates the other members to comment on the post (Gummerus et al., 2012, p. 861). And finally, the interaction arises from the need to connect with other members who share the same passion and engage in the same practices (Seraj, 2012, p. 215). This social relation between members, who share the same passion for grilling and love for

the Weber brand, creates the member-to-community loyalty that Cova and Cova (2002) argue is a result of social interaction among members (p. 603).

Our netnographic research of Weberklubben clearly establishes the “presumption” of content within Weberklubben, as content is simultaneously produced and consumed by the members. The production of knowledge and the variety of the subjects discussed in the community, whether recipes or technical advice, are valuable for members and serve as a motivational factor in joining Weberklubben. As one interviewed member describes, “Så grunden til at jeg valgte Weberklubben (OS), det var selvfølgelig fordi, at der er med eksperter at gøre inden for Weber” (Interview, Sjanten, 8 April, 2015). The fact that members can ask for and get advice from some of the most experienced grillers within Weberklubben is a great motivator for Weber and grill enthusiasts to join Weberklubben and make posts within the community. It is indeed the dialog and ongoing co-created production of knowledge that engages members and spurs interactivity.

As mentioned earlier, the high level of interactivity is specific to Weberklubben FB, where the dialog takes place at a very rapid pace compared to Weberklubben OS. However, most of the members that we interviewed agreed that because the content in Weberklubben must be about Weber and members are not allowed to discuss other grill and BBQ brands, they visit other online grill forums like Grillguru.dk, Dansk Grillforum.dk and Smokeitall.dk. This corresponds to the view of Cova and Cova (2002), who explain that consumers might feel the need to belong to several groups or communities in order to create several aspects of their personalities (p. 602). Even though members primarily referred to visiting other grill sites in the interviews, the fact that they do seek out other groups indicates an unmet desire to discuss all aspects of the world of grilling – including brands other than Weber. Additionally, we found in our empirical research that even though the interactivity within Weberklubben FB is high, the fact that Weberklubben FB is located on Facebook presents other challenges with regard to the quality of the knowledge produced and ultimately the intellectual value. The potential reach of consumers on Facebook is much greater than Weber’s own platform, which has strengths and weaknesses in connection with an online community. As Facebook is a social network platform with multiple purposes, Weberklubben FB might not be the main reason or purpose that members log in. It is

evident that the traffic in general is much vaster in Weberklubben FB than in Weberklubben OS. However, the content produced in Weberklubben FB also seems characterized by quantity over quality. According to Seraj (2012, p. 213), this is not ideal for intellectual value creation as it requires high quality content. Topic and quality of topic is an ongoing subject of discussion within Weberklubben. Many newcomers ask questions that have been asked many times before, and this brings out some frustrations among some of the members who have been part of Weberklubben for a longer period of time. Some members mock or reply in a hostile way to the more novice members, while other members defend them. As Heidi states in the interview, asking questions in Weberklubben should never be an issue as everyone has been new to grilling at some point:

Altså det gælder om at have en god tone. Vi har alle sammen været nye, og vi skal være her. Der er ingen dumme spørgsmål, der er kun dumme svar, som engang min køkken chef sagde til mig, dengang jeg var elev. Og det er rigtigt

(Interview, Heidi, 4 May, 2015).

However, the members of Weberklubben partly blame the technical limitations and structure of the Facebook site itself for the occasional repetition of posts, as there are limited opportunities for organizing and structuring the content of the site compared to Weberklubben OS, which makes it harder to the members to find information. As the daily number of posts is very high in Weberklubben FB, the thread quickly gets long, making it almost impossible for members to know whether a question or recipe has already been posted.

Sub-conclusion

Through examples from our empirical material we have established how knowledge is co-created in Weberklubben. From our netnographic research, and based on our semi-structured interviews, it is clear that intellectual value is produced in Weberklubben and that it serves as a motivational factor for the members to join, stay and interact in the community. Intellectual value is important to members of Weberklubben as they feel they widen their knowledge and improve their grilling skills, which corresponds

to the concepts of self-development and self-actualization that we found to be important and motivational for members as well. We established how presumption of knowledge creates interactivity in the community, which further spurs social relations, which we will analyze in the following paragraph.

Social Value – Members Want to Interact

We established through our netnographic research and our interviews that there are various levels of interactivity on the two Weberklubben platforms. In Weberklubben FB there is a great level of interactivity, which according to Seraj (2012, p. 2015) is a generator of social value. There is also interactivity within Weberklubben OS; however, the level of interactivity has declined in the last few years. As previously mentioned, this may be the result of the emergence of Facebook and, more specifically, Weberklubben OS's inability to adapt its usability to keep up with Facebook's new and easier operating system. We argue that Weberklubben FB's popularity is because of convenience, since most consumers are on Facebook already and therefore do not want to go through the trouble of logging in to several sites, as suggested by the members based on our empirical findings (Interview, Ole, 13 April, 2015). However, many dedicated and loyal Weberklubben members started their membership through Weberklubben OS and have created strong social ties, which they keep intact on both platforms and even face-to-face interactions in some cases. As stated in the section about Weber, it is partly from the foundation of these strong social ties that Weberklubben FB has arisen and developed at such fast pace. Strong relationships have been created between the members, which enhances social value. When asked if the social aspect of the community was a central part of membership, Ole answered:

Ja, det er det sociale i det. Vi har jo nærmest noget, vi kalder den nære Weber-familie, hvor vi mødes en gang om året. Og når vi er på Weber Camp så går vi sammen og hygger os og sådan noget. (Interview, Ole, 13 April 2015)

As for Ole, we found that the social aspect of being a part of Weberklubben plays a dominant role for members when looking at what creates value. The ability to talk to other members with the same passion, to share their successes and failures and to help and get help are some of the key social motivators for interactivity for the members of Weberklubben. The fact that Ole refers to his relations within the community as Weber family corresponds to the sense of belonging to a group and to what Cova and Cova refer to as tribal belonging, as well as the characteristic of consciousness of kind described by Muniz and O'Guinn (2002, p. 603) (2001, p. 413). Our empirical

findings suggest that there are very strong social ties among the members who have been a part of Weberklubben for a long time, when Weberklubben OS was a hive of interactivity. These strong social ties among members are illustrated in an interview, in which one of the members explains how he is now too old to participate actively in Weber Camp and the Danish National Grill Championship, but he still attends both events to see Weberklubben friends (Æ Skæknejde, 9 April, 2015).

Det jeg har fået ud af det, det er jo en masse kollegaer, en masse gode venskaber og ting og sager rundt om i hele landet. Altså jeg snakker med folk på Sjælland, i Norge, i Sverige i Nordjylland, der griller. Så det er da nok blevet noget, man får en masse gode venner ud af det. (Interview, Hisselholm, 23 April 2015)

As illustrated in the quote above, it is evident that interactivity within Weberklubben has created a foundation from which social ties are created both online and offline. As Hisselholm states, the most important thing he has gained from his membership in Weberklubben is good friendships. Seraj (2012, p. 2016) also finds in her study that some of these ties develop into strong relationships and can lead to face-to-face interaction, which is very much the case with Weberklubben. Examples are Weber Camp and the other social offline activities the members mention in the semi-structured interviews, arranged both by Weber and privately among members. It is very clear that offline activities have a positive effect on the members of the communities with regard to the strengthening of relationships. As previously mentioned, Ole hosts an offline event, “pizzatræf,” through which members socialize and strengthen bonds, as is evident in the quote below:

Altså jeg har da fået en god omgangskreds af at være medlem af weberklubben. Vi holder en gang om året noget, der hedder pizzatræf, hvor vi ligesom ser forskellige fra weberklubben først til mølle princip, hvor de ligesom har meldt til og så mødes vi en 10-12 stykker og bager pizza og laver noget aftensmad og hygger på den måde, og der har vi da fået en kæmpe omgangskreds ved at være medlem af weberklubben
(Interview, Ole, 13 April, 2015)

Although Weberklubben is an online brand community, the offline activities that are initiated by the members themselves or Weber create experiences for members and

are part of creating stronger social ties, rituals and traditions that influence the community and help shape a specific community culture. This is in line with Collins' (as quoted in Seraj 2012, p. 215) argument that rituals and traditions occur and develop at physical gatherings.

Recognition is a Motivational Factor

However, it is not only social ties that motivate interactivity within Weberklubben. Self-enhancement is also a motivator. In the interview, Per Aastradsen describes his motivation to interact in Weberklubben as follows:

Jamen i bund og grund, så er det jo anerkendelsen fra andre, ikke. Når man går i front og siger det her, det kan jeg bare, ikke også. Interviewer: Og den anerkendelse den fik du?

Ja, jeg syntes, at jeg fik det indtil at ligesom den afmattede lidt, men det var også efter, at Facebook kom, og så havde jeg simpelthen ikke tid til at sidde på begge to, det havde jeg simpelthen ikke (Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015).

The desire for self-enhancement is evident as members talk about what a good feeling it is when they receive many "likes" or comments on their posts; this corresponds to the view of Gummerus et al. (2012, p. 861) about feeling useful and needed and being recognized by other members. The feeling of usefulness in particular is an evident and recurring subject, as we found that the need for help and the ability to help each other in the community is one of the strongest motivators for interactivity (FB 7) (FB 8) (FB 9) (OS 4). Members feel a very strong desire to help and give back to Weberklubben. So although self-enhancement clearly motivates some members of the community, they all express a need to help others. We argue that active self-making such as this contributes to their self-identity (Elliot, 2014, p. 164).

Entertainment Value – Members Socialize Through Entertainment

Dholakia et al. (2004, p. 244) have presented the entertainment value separately from social value; however, we have chosen to include it as part of social value, as we agree with the findings of Seraj (2012, p. 215) that entertainment value is a part of the collective liveliness that contributes to the overall atmosphere. According to Seraj

(2012, p. 219), it is often the role of the player who creates entertainment value, which is also the case in Weberklubben. Through our observations, the player produces entertainment value by posting funny pictures and videos or creates comments that further produce a fun and playful atmosphere in the community, which corresponds to the findings of Seraj (2012, p. 219). We observed that players spur the production of social value, as humor and fun content increase interactivity in the community. We discovered that fun posts and pictures posted by consumers who take on the role of the player have a high attraction of “likes” and comments; humor is generally one of the generators for dialog and relation building and adds yet another dynamic within Weberklubben. The posts and pictures generated by the player work as great entertainment for the members in Weberklubben, but also trigger discussion, as some members find the content or pictures too provocative or offensive. The funny posts, videos or comments posted in Weberklubben are strongly characterized by gender roles, food and animal welfare (or lack thereof), as illustrated in the below picture.



Source: FB 41 (Appendix part 2)

Looking at the number of “likes,” comments and the times the picture has been shared, it is clear that content with entertainment value also spurs interactivity in the community. In the comments to this specific picture, it is clear that reactions are both positive and negative. Some members think it hilarious and “like,” post supporting comments or post additional pictures to show their reaction to the entertainment. Other members are offended and comment stating their view that animal abuse should not be supported, even though it is intended as fun, as illustrated below, where a member disapproved of a joke being made involving animals that are clearly not being treated well.



Source: FB 41 (Appendix part 2)

Even though the reception of players’ posts are both positive and negative, they undeniably receive a lot of attention and generate a lot of interactivity and entertainment value, as a joking tone in the community develops and proves an incentive for many members to join Weberklubben, as they describe their time spent online as fun. This clearly validates the argument of Gummerus et al. (2012) that the dynamic of fun within the online community reinforces social interaction, which is evident in the case of Weberklubben (p. 861). As seen in the example above, the post received 92 “likes” and was shared 50 times, which indicates that entertaining content creates social value as the members collectively are entertained or support each other in the content being offensive.

Sub-conclusion

We can through analysis of social value conclude that the social ties between members work as a strong motivation for members to engage in the Weberklubben. We established that social ties increase interactivity and are an essential part of creating loyalty towards the community and the members in it, as it creates a sense of belonging that members seek. The social value created in Weberklubben is the core

value that attracts members and, more importantly, that makes them stay. Furthermore, the relationships that are created between the members can lead to off-line relationships. In our analysis, we found that entertainment value plays a big part in the social interaction between members of Weberklubben and thus in social value production. We also established the roles that generate social value are important, as they create a dynamic from where social value and entertainment value are created. Additionally, we found that self-enhancement was a driver for members to engage in Weberklubben as it accommodates a need for acknowledgement. The interactivity in Weberklubben provides a foundation for a specific community culture that we will analyze in the next paragraph.

Cultural Value – Members Want to Belong

In our empirical research, we observed and investigated the dynamics of the culture in Weberklubben. We identified several characteristics for Weberklubben that relate to consciousness of kind, pride, personification, respect, recognition, language and self-governance. We established that there is a sense of belonging, also described as consciousness of kind by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 418), within the community, which, apart for the name of the community, is illustrated in the way members greet and address each other in the community. The members use terms such as “Weberfolk,” “medgrillere,” “grillvenner,” “grillglade mennesker” or “Weber familie” when they address each other and write posts in the community (OS 4; OS 5; OS 8; OS26; Interview, Ole, 13 April, 2015). They also refer to a common feeling within the community, “Weberfeber” (FB 67), which describes their strong feelings towards the brand and the practice of grilling and is best translated to what we know as a fever or an obsession. The consciousness of kind is also present through the extensive use of “we” in the community. The members of Weberklubben refer to the community and the members as a collective rather than individuals in a forum and thus express a relation or a link with each other. The relation between members and their shared feeling of “Weberfeber” translates to what Cova and Cova (2002) describe as the linking value and are what ties the community together and create loyalty towards the community (p. 602). The linking value is what establishes a foundation, from which the Weberklubben culture has emerged. The culture and the norm of Weberklubben have been created through cultural exchange between the members, which have created a common understanding of the behavior within the community and a strong sense of belonging to the brand, Weber, as well. The members show a strong feeling of pride in their activities in what they communicate to and share in the community. When they have succeeded in preparing a meal that takes great technical grilling skills or have invented a completely new dish on their own, they want to share it in Weberklubben to show what they have produced and to receive recognition. Recognition is a strong characteristic within the community and something most of the members in the interviews agreed was a motivator for interaction. The members praise each other with words or comments like “sådan!” (OS 13), and recognize when other members have created something delicious or of a high degree of difficulty.



Så er der kylling 🤔🤔



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Source: FB 73 (Appendix part 2)

As exemplified in the above post, the members also cheer each other on when trying something difficult or comfort each other when failing horribly with comments such as “keep trying,” which demonstrates the support members provide each other (OS 13) (FB 73).

Consumers Identify with the Brand

From our netnographic research, it was evident that identification with the brand is a strong characteristic of the community. An example of identification is seen in Weberklubben OS, where most members go by self-invented usernames rather than their real names as in Weberklubben FB. Here several members include Weber in their name, such as “fru.weber” (OS 11), to illustrate how close they feel to the brand. In the interview with Sjanten, he explains how his colleagues call him “Weber kongen,” which is something he takes pride in because he is identified not only as being part of the brand but also as being very skilled at the practice of grilling (Interview, Sjanten, 8 April, 2015). As stated by Belk (1988, p. 139), it is behavior in

connection to products that constructs an extended self, and as Sjanten is being called “Weberkongen,” his friends acknowledge his behavior, i.e., his skills on a Weber grill, which becomes a part of Sjanten’s identity and extended self. Additionally, it is clear from our netnographic study that the members of Weberklubben are very excited about Weber merchandise and gimmicks that show that they have a relation to Weber or grilling. One very dedicated member has flames tattooed on his arms, and other members show their dedication to the brand and lifestyle by wearing Weber T-shirts or having little LEGO Weber grills displayed at home as decoration (FB 49). This want for decorating oneself, one’s house or wearing clothes affiliated with the Weber brand supports the argument that the members of Weberklubben feel consciousness of kind as they want to show the world, both physically and online, to which community or brand their passion and loyalty belongs (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413).

Members Speak Weber

The members in Weberklubben have created their own language through interactivity online and offline. Abbreviations are used frequently, such as PP for Pulled Pork (FB 2), which outsiders or new members would not necessarily understand before spending some time in the community. Many terms are common in the grilling and food community but demand some sort of insight into Weberklubben’s community in order to understand what actually is occurring. As illustrated in the post below, the language used is a mix of grill terms and food and brand references that one would need certain knowledge to understand.

- så prøver vi country style ribs igen, denne gang smurt i honey mustard, rubbet og så skal de have små 4,5 time med æblerøg og så Jack Daniels glaze til sidst - håber de bliver gode, det er sin sag at prøve at langtidsstege på en Q3200 😊



Like · Comment · Share · 17 4

Source: FB 76 (Appendix part 2)

The members have also invented their own names or nicknames for some of the Weber products such as the rotisserie, which they almost always refer to as “rundtossen” (FB 66). Food also goes by other names in the community to add an element of fun, which again supports the entertainment value within the community and creates a fun and relaxed atmosphere. This is especially seen when referring to pigs, which often go by self-invented nicknames such as “grissebassen” (FB 8) to add an element of fun or simply to shorten the original words.

A Scattered Community Culture

As mentioned in the paragraph above about social value, the interactivity of Weberklubben differs on the two platforms, which affects content production, social ties and the culture. Although Weberklubben is one community on two platforms that have many cultural similarities, the members feel there is a difference in behavior, mood and ultimately culture on the two different platforms (Interview, Ole, 13 April, 2015; Interview, Sjanten, 08 April, 2015; Interview, Æ Skæeknejde, 09 April, 2015). Although the members feel consciousness of kind and Weberklubben has its own

unique culture that is built on a common language, common rules for use of the community and a shared set of values, we also observed a level of legitimacy within the community that Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) describe as "tension between old and new, 'real' and 'faux' members" (p. 419). There are members of Weberklubben who are very dedicated and loyal and who have created a consensus as to what the proper and correct use of the community is and, more importantly, who and what does not use the community as intended. From our empirical research, we learned that some of the members feel nostalgic about the "original" and older community, Weberklubben OS, where social ties and thus culture appear to have been established. As Æ Skæknejde states about the two platforms: "Ahmen det er ikke det samme, for der er jo mange, der er med inde over Facebook gruppen, som ikke er medlemmer af Weberklubben" (Interview, Æ Skæknejde, 9 April, 2015). As mentioned in the quote, it is not necessarily all the members in Weberklubben FB who are also members of Weberklubben OS, which, according to the interviewed members, is the "original" community and from which the culture and core values originate and can challenge the creation of the same values and culture on Weberklubben FB. As Ole elaborated in the interview:

det drejer det sig jo kun om Weber-grill, og hvad der ellers bliver lavet på sådan noget. Men det gør det i princippet også når man snakker Facebook Weberklubben, altså hvis man kun går ind på Weberklubben. Men man har jo en Facebookprofil, hvor det vælter ind med alt muligt andet, så hvis det stod til mig, og Weberklubben fungerede som den gjorde i gamle dage, så var jeg ikke på Facebook

(Interview, Ole, 13 April, 2015).

This quote clearly states the dissatisfaction with the development in Weberklubben, which has been scattered across two platforms, and the feeling that this change has affected the culture of the "old" community. From the quote above, it is clear that the perception of and association with Weberklubben is not the same when asked if they felt differently towards the community on the individual platforms. However, members find it difficult to voice what exactly it is that creates the difference in Weberklubben on the platforms except for the platforms themselves. This observation agrees with the discussion of Laroche et al. (2012), who argue that research on the behavior of online communities on Facebook (and other social media network sites)

could and should be a field of research of its own (p. 1756). Furthermore, Laroche et al. (2012) underline that the development of the Internet has created changes in communities, as the first communities were established on the Web 1.0 platform by the companies themselves, but today, online brand communities are established on Web 2.0, often by consumers (p. 1757). From our empirical research, it became quite clear that the members who were members of Weberklubben on both platforms collectively felt different towards the two platforms and the interaction that occurred in them. They all pointed to the tone of voice, which they felt was harsher in Weberklubben FB, and from our netnographic research, we found that managing the tone of voice within Weberklubben takes up a lot of attention in the community and is a lot of work for the administrators. We observed moral responsibility from some of the members in preventing the tone in the community from taking a turn in a negative direction.

Self-governing the Culture

It is evident that the role of the governor plays a central role in safeguarding cultural values in the community. Especially in Weberklubben FB, where the interactivity is very high and many new members join every day, the two administrators play a central role in ensuring that the community rules are respected to ensure the long-term survival of Weberklubben. In Weberklubben FB, it is very often the two administrators who secure and remind the members of a good and constructive tone of voice. Previously we discussed Weber's handling of the Funktionsdesign case, but here we find it relevant to show how the volunteering administrators reacted to the matter. In the following post, one of the volunteer administrators explains to the community why "Funktionsdesign" no longer is allowed to post within the community.



Søren Aabenhus

2 hrs

Kære medlemmer..

Vi kan se at der er skriverier omkring at vi har "smidt" Funktionsdesign på porten.. Sådan skal det ikke tolkes!

Det der er sket er at siden i længere tid har fremstået som en åben reklamesøjle for flere forskellige firmaer og butikker, og det har skabt en del splid på siden omkring hvad, hvem og hvordan man må reklamere. Alt dette giver Per og jeg ekstra arbejde, og vi er her lige så frivilligt som alle i andre og vi har også kun 24 timer i døgnet som i andre..

Det vi gerne vil med den her side er en god stemning, et godt kammeratskab og ikke mindst en hulens masse lækre opskrifter og billeder af maden fra Webergrillen..

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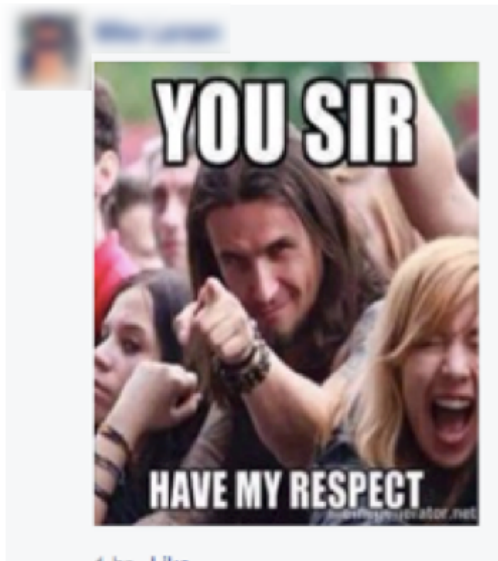
Source: FB 63 (Appendix part 2)

It is clear from the comments that not everyone in the community agrees with this decision and express that they feel that Weberklubben is too restrictive and controlling, whereas the opposing views are that the community should not be a platform for commercials, only the joy of Weber and grilling (FB 63). However, one member threatens to leave the community out of frustration, and several of the members refer to the negative development of the discussion as childish. As stated in the below quote from the interview with Sjanten, this is a recurring issue and something that the older members are not too upset about, as it is common for some to need to express their dissatisfaction with the regulations from time to time.

Der er selvfølgelig alle de der er kritikere, der kommer med at det er for dårligt at man ikke må det og det inde på hjemmesiden, og det kan jeg måske også syntes at nogen gange så jahh. Man må ikke reklamere med forskellige ting inde på Weberklubben og vi må ikke sælge forskellige ting inde fra weberklubben og det er også fair and square og sådan skal det jo være. Så der kommer altid nogle sure smileys indimellem, så syntes de det er for dårligt sådan og sådan

(Interview, Sjanten, 8 April, 2015).

Although discussions between the members, as the above-mentioned example, can create some disagreement and disturbance within Weberklubben, it also clearly demonstrates how the community is governed by members and how moral responsibility among members is present as the community is reminded of the purpose of Weberklubben. Weberklubben has its own set of rules that are concerned with buying/sales, tone of voice, civility, commercials, membership and a focus on Weber only. Seraj (2012, p. 218) argues that a common set of rules is vital to preserve the authenticity and identity of a community – just as it is vital for any company to have rules and values. Gus Murray points out that it is different when you join an online brand community than when joining an online community not related to a company, as “ you join under the impression that these are the rules of the game, I buy into it therefore I participate” (Interview, Gus Murray, 30 April, 2015). Weberklubben’s rules are posted on both platforms (Appendix 10+11). However, it is not only the administrators who enforce the rules in the community; the members also take on the role of governor and remind their fellow members of the community rules before the administrators even get to do it (FB 53) (Seraj, 2012, p. 219). In Weberklubben OS, it is the editors and the Weber employees who primarily enforce the rules; however, members can also take on the moderating role. The fact that the community enforces their own rules themselves shows that a self-governing culture is present in Weberklubben. Some situations can create disturbances within Weberklubben FB when the administrators enforce the community rules. Some members voice their disagreement with administrative decisions, which makes some of the members take on the role of the challenger. They disagree or present opposing views to what is being presented in the community and thus spur discussion and interactivity within the community. So even though the challenger does not always act positively, the challenger is still important for the community as they diminish group domination and question the governors, which makes the community more democratic as everyone can voice their opinion towards the decisions (Seraj, 2012, p. 219). As seen in the previously mentioned case of Funktionsdesign, there are opposing views towards the administrators’ decision of excluding it from the community. Many of the members, however, express their deepest respect for the administrators’ work through comments or pictures (FB 65) such as the one illustrated below.



Source: FB 47 (Appendix part 2)

Many of the members show their support for the governing role by posting “thumbs up” and “liking” the post (FB 47). According to Seraj (2012), it is a typical characteristic for the appraiser to support and cheer on achievements that create further interactivity (p. 219). Seraj (2012, p. 219) describes the appraiser as a bad cop vs. good cop approach in connection with what is considered the appropriate cultural norm. As we see in Weberklubben, the appraiser has a deep understanding and extensive knowledge about the community and what is valuable information to the community, but supports the actions in advancing relevant information and behavior rather than dominating the community themselves (FB 47).

Weber is also part of the administrating team in Weberklubben, and even though they state that it is challenging to control Weberklubben FB especially, they rarely enforce any rules or censorship as they only answer to criticism directly addressed to them. As they explain in the quote below, the community exists for the members and it is the members who must decide on and enforce their own rules.

Vi går kun ind og svarer, hvis det er en eller anden kritik omkring os. Der var en forkert indmelding for eksempel om, at vi havde lavet et produkt, som blev trukket tilbage. Og der vi så inde som administratorer mig og Marc og talte om, hvad gør vi her og snakkede sammen med vores kollegaer bag i huset om, hvad vi gør her, og så

sagde vi, at vi synes, vi skulle udmelde det, og så fik vi skrevet en tekst om, at det var forkert og misforstået information, og den rettede vi selvfølgelig. Så det er noget, der vedrør os som Weber, som brand, som navn, som produkt, så går vi ind og kommenterer (Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015).

The fact that Weber only intervenes when they feel it absolutely necessary also provides the community with the opportunity to exercise their own rules and self-govern, which Seraj (2012, p. 220) argues is a crucial element for the community culture. This approach of very little interference and control is, according to Gus Murray, also the smartest management style:

But we are seeing now is that brands have to basically give up their control and basically put it out there, and people aren't going to access a brand based on whether the pantone or the shape or the edges are bezzled or square or whatever (Interview, Gus Murray, 30 April, 2015).

According to Gus Murray, consumers have, through the development of social media network platforms, gained so much power and control that companies have to let go of control and stop trying to manage their consumers (Interview, Gus Murray, 30 April, 2015). Instead, companies should concentrate on engaging with their loyal consumers and create practices in relation to their brands that will create a value exchange between consumers and companies (Interview, Gus Murray, 30 April, 2015).

Sub-conclusion

We conclude that there is consciousness of kind in Weberklubben, which is a motivating value for members, as they want to belong to a group of like-minded, who share the same passion. Also, we found that members identify with the brand by incorporating the Weber brand name in their online names or wearing branded clothes and accessories, which creates value for them on their quest for identity-creation. Additionally, we identified several cultural characteristics and rules in Weberklubben such as a common language. However, the culture in Weberklubben has become scattered as the community operates on two platforms, where Weberklubben OS is

controlled by the company and Weberklubben FB is controlled by consumers. In Weberklubben FB we established that there is a self-governing culture, which is an important factor in securing the long-term survival of the community as Weberklubben FB otherwise could take off in an unwanted direction. We conclude that it is important for consumers to create the rules and manage the community, as the culture otherwise will not develop organically and will have implications for sustaining the community.

Economic Value – Members Want to Save

The last value we identified as being produced by consumers in Weberklubben is economic value. One of the most dominant topics of the discussions in Weberklubben revolves around the practice of “shopping,” or more distilled, localizing Weber products, charcoal and foods like meat or special grill sauces; basically all the practices that relate to grilling at discount. In the findings of Seraj (2012), economic value is a part of social value; however, Gummerus et al. (2012, p. 861) describe this value as an economic benefit that, in the case of Weberklubben, is present through a noticeable cost consciousness among the members. In other words, there is a very explicit focus and excitement when it comes to discounts that we find relevant; through our netnographic research, we found that there are an uncountable number of posts related to price savings, geographic location of discounts and names of vendors with current discounts. The members share pictures or write posts similar to news alerts with the spotted deal, location and vendor, and the community begins to buzz with excitement. An example of this is illustrated in the picture below, where a member shows the community how many Weber products he has just purchased with a great discount. From the high number of “likes” and comments, it is clear that such posts are popular and create interactivity around consumption.



Source: FB 10 (Appendix part 2)

Such posts as the one above typically get responses from other members who act on the post or from other members who have localized similar good-saving opportunities. Similarly, we observed that many joined the community as they were about to invest in a Weber grill; aside from information about which Weber grill to buy, they also compare prices and confer with the community about the best deal. The members basically discuss every step of the consumption process of products. Not only does the discussion of consumption practices, like mapping of discounts, save the members a great deal of money, it also saves members time, as information about product, price, location and vendor is always at hand. Members from the same geographical area also help each other with updates on stock if they are at a location with discounts. They might post to inform other members that there is a certain amount of a given product left or to inform the community if the vendor has the product the other members are looking for so they do not have to take the trip in vain. This behavior within the community is what Gummerus et al. (2012, p. 861) refer to as economic value; they argue that value occurs between community members as members exchange knowledge that leads to an economic benefit, either monetary or in time saved. We also observed that the relationship between some of the very dedicated members and the vendors/distributors of Weber products were strong and friendly. Thus the members get special treatment, alerts on upcoming Weber sales and good service when visiting the stores (FB 75).

Gummerus et al. (2012, p. 861) further argue that competitions and discounts posted by companies are a motivator for consumers to join the community, as they create a dynamic of fun and excitement in addition to the potential economic gain of the competition. Weber post competitions in Weberklubben, which are popular among the members for the obvious economic reason of winning something and thus getting something for free; in accordance with the argument of Gummerus et al., we observed that competitions create a high level of interactivity in Weberklubben, which supports social value creation as illustrated in the picture below, which got 32 “likes” and 73 comments within 18 hours (FB 74).



Source: FB 74 (Appendix part 2)

Economic value can contribute to strengthening the relation between companies and consumers. Discounts, products or courses provided directly from the company to the community can especially motivate consumers to join the community and can strengthen the relationship as well as increase loyalty for members (Gummerus et al., 2012, p. 861).

Sub-conclusion

We found economic value to be a great motivational factor for members to participate in Weberklubben, as we found that topics concerning discounts, offers, coupon codes are often discussed. Members create buzz by sharing good offers in the community by posting pictures of good deals and we even saw a competitive element as members try to discover the best discounts. However, we realized that economic value alone would not be able to keep the community active and attract new members and argue that economic value alone is not enough to sustain the engagement of an online community.

5

»» CONCLUSION

Conclusion

The overall purpose of this thesis was to explore:

- 1. How online communities relate to brand values*
- 2. What are the actual dynamics in online brand communities and what motivates consumers to engage in these?*

We wanted to investigate this relation in depth and in a real life setting and therefore we chose Weber's online brand community, Weberklubben, as our case study. In order to answer the research question we conducted eight qualitative interviews and used netnography, which we then applied to our theoretical framework. In the following we will present our key findings.

We found that Weber has created a successful online brand community by co-creating with enthusiastic consumers. By creating Weberklubben and offline activities like Weber Camp, Grilleriet courses, Weber has created customized experiences that allow consumers to explore the practice of grilling and interact with the brand and other Weber fans. In our analysis, we saw that societal factors and trends can have influence to practices as they have an affect on consumer behavior. By engaging with consumers through Weberklubben, Weber has managed to gain competitive advantage. We found that it gives them insight to what consumers are talking about as well as ideas for new products and product modifications.

We found that Weber secure loyal relationships in Weberklubben through transparent and honest communication. As a consequence of the development of the Internet and the fact that consumers are generally more informed, we found that consumers might find it hard to trust companies. We conclude that the transparent dialog between Weber and members increase members' trust in the Weber brand. The relationships between consumers are essential, as consumers prefer to get advice from other unbiased consumers and this creates activity in the community. We found that brand ambassadors working voluntarily for the company can ensure the members' trust and create relationships where they feel equal. Additionally, we found that when brand

ambassadors co-create with Weber they contribute with their real life stories, experiences and photos, which create trustworthiness that Weber would not be able to create on their own. In our findings it was clear that these volunteering brand ambassadors are not motivated by monetary value, as being included and acknowledged is of greater value to them.

Through four thematic categories we established how Weber can use Weberklubben to become better co-creative partners with consumer and not simply exploit customer competencies. By enhancing these practices we discovered that dynamics were created between the members in Weberklubben where they defended the brand, engaged with the brand and even competed with other members to be most loyal to the brand. We found that in order to relate Weberklubben to brand values, Weber must facilitate a community where consumers extract value from interacting.

We identified four motivational factors that create value for the members of Weberklubben.

- Intellectual value: Members desire knowledge on how to become better at grilling and the experienced members enjoy being acknowledged for their expert knowledge.
- Social value: Members are motivated by social interaction in the community and occasionally, new friendships continue offline. Entertainment value is present when people socialize and create bonds as they begin to make friendly jokes and have fun, which motivates members to interact.
- Cultural value: The culture in the community, which the members become part of and identify themselves with, creates a sense of belonging.
- Economic value: Prices and discounts have great value and members share tips and spotted offers, which creates buzz and excitement.

As Weber realize what values their members are motivated by, they can strengthen the relationship with them by making sure to facilitate enhancement of the above values.

Managerial Recommendations

For online communities to relate to brand values, companies must create customized experiences for consumers where co-creation of values occurs. Marketers must spend resources in managing these in order to gain valuable insights and create strong relationships between consumers and the brand. Companies can create strong ties between consumers and the brand by facilitating a community, which helps the consumers explore the practice that evolves around the brand and especially create relationships with other members, who they do not feel are biased. When managing an online community, the communication must be transparent and honest from the company; they should only interfere when necessary, as consumers today want the control of online communities. Furthermore, companies can find out what motivates their consumers to join their community by finding out how the consumers gain value in the community and then try to enhance activities around these. Finally, we found that online communities relate to brand values as loyal consumers gather in these communities and when they can extract value then brand values enhanced.

Limitations and Further Research

We acknowledge the limitations of our thesis and accordingly suggest new prospects for research. As we concentrated on one single case, Weberklubben, it could be interesting to look into several case studies, maybe in the same industry, to research how relations are created in other similar communities and how marketers manage these. In this research we looked into Weberklubben on two platforms, the official site and on Facebook; however, Weber also interacts on other platforms such as Instagram and Twitter, and these might show other trends that could be useful. Furthermore, we only delved into the interaction of the online community; however, it could be interesting to explore the offline activities and conduct an ethnographic data collection to support the already existing data. Finally, we have found the values that motivate the existing members of the community; but as the value creation practices might change over time, further research could explore which values motivate members at that given time.

6

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»»» APPENDIX

Appendix Part 1

Appendix 1 – Netnographic Categories

Appendix 2 - Overview of Contacted Active Members

Appendix 3 - E-mail for Members

Appendix 4 - E-mail for Weber

Appendix 5 - Weberklubben Members Interview Guide

Appendix 6 - Weberklubben OS Editor Interview Guide

Appendix 7 - Weberklubben FB Administrator Interview Guide

Appendix 8 – Weber Interview Guide

Appendix 9 – Social Media Expert Interview Guide

Appendix 10 – Weberklubben FB Rule Set

Appendix 11 – Weberklubben OS Rule Set

Appendix Part 2 (USB)

Interviews

- Interview, Sjanten, 08 April, 2015
- Interview, Æ Skæeknejde, 09 April, 2015
- Interview, Ole, 13 April, 2015
- Interview, Hisselholm, 23 April, 2015
- Interview, HeidiV, 04 May, 2015
- Interview, Per Aastradsen, 30 April, 2015
- Interview, Weber, 16 April, 2015
- Interview, Gus Murray, 30 April, 2015

Netnographic Data Collection

- Weberklubben FB Posts 1-79
- Weberklubben OS Posts 1-27

APPENDIX 1 – Netnographic Categories

- Tone of Voice
 - Negative
 - Acknowledging
 - Frustrated
 - Know-all attitude
 - Patronizing
 - Bragging
 - Petty-minded
- Entertainment
 - Joking
 - Sarcasm (Danish humor)
 - Teasing
 - Funny pictures
- The practice of grilling
 - Challenges
 - Educational
 - Advising
 - Expertise
 - Technical knowledge
 - Helping
 - Do it yourself projects
- Price-conscious
 - Location of offers
 - Discounts
 - Distributors
 - Discount coupons
 - Competitions
- Personification
 - Grills has emotions
 - Part of the family
 - Newborn equals new grill
- Identification
 - Weber branded goods
 - Pride
 - Pseudonyms including Weber
- Product buzz
 - Fines meshed basket
- Weber brand
 - Original vs. unoriginal products
- Offline events
 - Weber camp
 - Courses
- Weberklubben
 - Community feeling
 - Weber fever
 - Dedication
 - Familiar feeling

APPENDIX 2 - Overview of Contacted Active Members

Contacted	Interview	URL	Weber ID	Location	Age	M/F	Posts	Blog posts	Recipes	Grill experience	Rewards	Diplomas	Weber Camp	Weber Score	Member since	Last online
02.04.2015		http://w/JOHNNY99				Male	143	9	0	na	0	0	0	1295	2011	01.04.2015
02.04.2015	09.04.15	http://w/ÆSKÆKNEJDE			72	Male	243	103	5	Erfaren	7	3	1	6340	2008	30.03.2015
02.04.2015		http://w/MARKVARDT		Midtjylland	38	Male	64	7	2	Erfaren	1	0	0	920	2009	03.01.2015
02.04.2015		http://w/GRILL_BILL		Randers		Male	43	3	1	Let øvet	1	0	0	615	2009	28.01.2015
02.04.2015		http://w/FOZGRAFEN				Male	608	67	4	Ekspert	6	4	2	8125	2007	31.03.2015
02.04.2015		http://w/WHOOSAH			43	Male	145	2	0	Erfaren	3	6	1	2975	2011	01.04.2015
01.04.2015		http://w/LENNIE		Nordjylland		Female	775	35	0	Øvet	2	1	2	6400	2008	17.03.2015
01.04.2015		http://w/JENS JØRGEN		Horsens		Male	27	1	0	Erfaren	1	0	1	500	2011	01.04.2015
02.04.2015		http://w/EJEGOD81			32	Male	14	0	0	Let øvet	0	0	0	280	2011	05.03.2015
02.04.2015	08.04.15	http://w/SJANTEN		Nordjylland		Male	90	29	1	Øvet	2	2	0	2900	2010	31.03.2015
02.04.2015		http://w/HCTK		Viborg		Female	15	55	4	Øvet	2	0	1	3805	2008	01.03.2015
02.04.2015		http://w/SFJ		Odense		Male	1497	187	9	Guru	8	3	2	28530	2007	01.04.2015
02.04.2015	13.04.15	http://w/OLE		Horsens		Male	98	80	0	Erfaren	10	5	2	7485	2000	01.04.2015
06.04.2015		http://w/BJBR				Male		0	0	na	0	0	0	5	2009	06.04.2015
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06.04.2015		http://w/FAMILIEN BÆCH				Male	0	0	1	Erfaren	0	0	0	60	2013	31.03.2015

APPENDIX 3 – E-mail for Members

Hej XXX

Vi skriver til dig, da vi søger ekspertviden og håber på, at du har lyst til at hjælpe. Vi er to studerende fra Handelshøjskolen i København, som skriver speciale om online communities, og finder Weberklubben specielt interessant da her er mange dedikerede brugere.

Vi kan se, at du er en af dem, som holder meget af at grille og dele dine gode erfaringer. Vi er i gang med at indsamle en masse information, og vil derfor høre om du vil hjælpe os med at dele din viden og erfaringer.

Vi har lavet et par spørgsmål, som omhandler din oplevelse af at være medlem i Weberklubben.

Vi vil rigtig gerne mødes til et lille interview over en kop kaffe (eller velgrillet steg), men vi befinder os i København. Hvis du befinder dig et andet sted i Danmark, vil vi høre, om vi kan tage spørgsmålene over telefon i stedet. Vi regner med, at det tager ca. 15 min, og håber at du har tid til at tale med os i løbet af næste uge hvornår end det passer dig? (Alternativt kan vi også på fredag og i weekenderne)

Vi glæder os til at høre fra dig.

Bedste grill-hilsner,

Sarah (saskhim) & Cecilie (cille_skov)

APPENDIX 4 – E-mail for Weber

Hej Pia,

Vi skriver til dig, da vi søger ekspertviden og håber på, at du har lyst til at hjælpe. Vi er to studerende fra Copenhagen Business School (CBS), som skriver speciale om online communities, og finder Weberklubben specielt interessant da vi kan se, at her er mange dedikerede brugere.

Det som vi håber, du kan hjælpe os med, er indsigt i Weberklubben fra Webers perspektiv. Med godt 70.000 brugere har i opnået en stor medlemsbase, og der ligger garanteret gode ideer og mange timers hårdt arbejde bag, som har mundet ud i erfaringer om, hvordan man driver et dynamisk community. Alt dette er noget, vi meget gerne vil høre mere om.

Vi vil rigtig gerne byde dig på en kop kaffe, hvor vi kan tale om ovenstående. Vi befinder os i København, og kan mødes stort set alle dage any time. Er vi så heldige, at også befinder dig i Købehavn? Vi regner med, at interviewet tager 30 min.

Vi håber rigtig meget på, at få indblik i din viden og hvis du ønsker, får du selvfølgelig en kopi af vores speciale, når det er afleveret. Specialet vil indeholde strategiske anbefalinger til, hvordan man bedst driver et aktivt online community.

Vi glæder os til at høre fra dig.

Bedste grill-hilsner,

Cecilie & Sarah

APPENDIX 5 – Weberklubben Members Interview Guide

Introduktion

Tak fordi du havde lyst til at hjælpe os. Som skrevet er vi midt i vores speciale som handler om online communities. Vi kommer til at spørge ind til dit medlemskab og generelt hvordan du benytter dig af sitet for at få en bedre forståelse for medlemmernes tanker. Vi vil bare lige nævne at vi er hverken arbejder for Weber eller skriver vores speciale for Weber og derfor er fuldstændig neutrale i vores holdninger til Weber. Vi starter lige med nogle introducerende spørgsmål. Har du nogle spørgsmål inden vi går i gang?

Intro

Hvor gammel er du?

Hvilken by bor du i?

Hvad beskæftiger du dig med til hverdag?

Grill

Hvor ofte griller du?

Hvad er det du godt kan lide ved at grille?

Hvilket Weberudstyr har du?

Hvorfor har du valgt netop Weber udstyr og ikke et andet mærke?

Weberklubben

Hvor længe har du været medlem af Weberklubben?

Hvor ofte logger du ind?

Har du valgt at være VIP medlem?

Hvad synes du er det bedste ved at være medlem af Weberklubben?

Har det også en negativ side?

Blog/Debat/Opskrifter

Føler du, du giver Weber en hjælpende hånd, når du poster/besvarer ting på bloggen?”

Har du nogle diplomer og/eller rewards?

Hvad betyder de for dig?

Kunne du godt tænke dig at få flere?

Lægger du mærke til om andre har diplomer/rewards?

Hvad synes du om redaktørerne?

Er de gode repræsentanter for weberklubben?

Er der ”grill-status” i at være redaktør?

Kunne du godt tænke dig at blive redaktør

Har du deltaget i aktiviteter gennem Weberklubben, såsom kurser, camps osv?

Hvad syntes du om de aktiviteter?

Vil du gerne deltage igen?

Har du deltaget i events arrangeret af andre medlemmer?

Har du selv afholdt nogle events for medlemmer?

Hvordan vil du beskrive sammenholdet i Weberklubben?

Nævner du nogle gange Weber i din omgangskreds? (Sikr sig at de ikke er weber-medlemmer).

Kan du huske hvad det var du sagde? (positivt eller negativt)

Følger du Weber på de sociale medier?

Hvilke?

Har du selv delt noget og hvor? (evt bruger du fb mere end weberklubben)

Hvad syntes du om FBsiden sammenlignet med Weberklubben? (Pros/cons)

APPENDIX 6 – Weberklubben OS Editor Interview Guide

Introduktion

Tak fordi du havde lyst til at hjælpe os. Som skrevet er vi midt i vores speciale som handler om online communities. Vi kommer til at spørge ind til din rolle som redaktør og som bruger af de forskellige weber online communities for at få en bedre forståelse for redaktørernes tanker. Vi vil bare lige nævne at vi er hverken arbejder for Weber eller skriver vores speciale for Weber og derfor er fuldstændig neutrale i vores holdninger til Weber. Vi starter lige med nogle introducerende spørgsmål. Har du nogle spørgsmål inden vi går i gang?

Intro

Hvor gammel er du?

Hvilken by bor du i?

Hvad beskæftiger du dig med til hverdag?

Grill

Hvor ofte griller du?

Hvad er det du godt kan lide ved at grille?

Hvilket Weberudstyr har du?

Er Weber en livsstil? Hvordan?

Hvorfor har du valgt netop Weber udstyr og ikke et andet mærke?

Vi har set på FB at nogle klager lidt over at kvaliteten er blevet ringere, syntes du også?

Weberklubben

Hvor ofte logger ud ind på Weberklubben?

Hvad syntes du er det bedste ved at være medlem af Weberklubben?

Har det også en negativ side?

Hvordan vil du beskrive sammenholdet i Weberklubben?

Har du nogle diplomer og/eller rewards?

Hvad betyder de for dig?

Kunne du godt tænke dig at få flere?

Lægger du mærke til om andre har diplomer/rewards?

Hvorfor har du valgt at redaktør og hvordan blev du det?

Hvad synes du om at være redaktører?

Hvad får du ud af det?

Hvad består dit arbejde i som redaktør? (Weberklubben eller FB)

Hvis vi må spørge, får du så en form for aflønning for dit arbejde?

Hvad gør redaktørerne for at holde gang i weberklubben?

Hvor meget tid bruger du på det?

Oplever du at brugerne gerne involveres eller have indflydelse på Weberklubben?

Føler du at du repræsenterer weberklubben?

Er der ”grill-status” i at være redaktør?

Føler du, du giver Weber en hjælpende hånd, når du poster/besvarer ting på bloggen?”

Har du deltaget i aktiviteter gennem Weberklubben, såsom kurser, camps osv?

Hvad syntes du om de aktiviteter?

Vil du gerne deltage igen?

Har du deltaget i events arrangeret af andre medlemmer?

Har du selv afholdt nogle events for medlemmer?

Nævner du nogle gange Weber i din omgangskreds?

Kan du huske hvad det var du sagde? (positivt eller negativt)

Nu er der Weberklubben, Facebookgruppen og Weber ID – overlapper de på nogen måde?

Hvad syntes du om at meget af aktiviteten er rykket på Facebook? (Pros and cons)

Har det gjort noget ved sammenholdet?

Hvor ofte lægger du noget op på Facebook?

Hvor ofte kommenterer du andres opslag?

Hvornår blev redaktørerne og Weber involveret i Facebookgruppen?

Hvordan er tonen på Facebook gruppen i forhold til weberklubben?

APPENDIX 7 - Weberklubben FB Administrator Interview Guide

Introduktion

Tak fordi du havde lyst til at hjælpe os. Som skrevet er vi midt i vores speciale som handler om online communities. Vi kommer til at spørge ind til din rolle som admin af Facebookgruppen og som bruger af de forskellige online communities som Weber har for at få en bedre forståelse for det. Vi vil bare lige nævne at vi er hverken arbejder for Weber eller skriver vores speciale for Weber og derfor er fuldstændig neutrale i vores holdninger til Weber. Vi starter lige med nogle introducerende spørgsmål. Har du nogle spørgsmål inden vi går i gang?

Intro

Hvor gammel er du?

Hvilken by bor du i?

Hvad beskæftiger du dig med til hverdag?

Grill

Hvor ofte griller du?

Hvad er det du godt kan lide ved at grille?

Hvilket Weberudstyr har du?

Hvad tænker du på, når du tænker på Weber?

Hvorfor tror du, at Danmark er sådan en grill nation?

Føler du, at Weber er en livsstil? - Kan du beskrive den?

Weberklubben

Hvor ofte logger du ind på Weberklubben.dk?

Hvad synes du er det bedste ved at være medlem af Weberklubben?

Har det også en negativ side?

Blog/Debat/Opskrifter

Vi kan se, du er med på grill landsholdet. Hvad er det, der er fedt ved det?

Har du deltaget i aktiviteter gennem Weberklubben, såsom kurser, camps osv?

Hvad syntes du om de aktiviteter?

Har du deltaget i events arrangeret af andre medlemmer?

Har du selv afholdt nogle events for medlemmer?

Hvordan vil du beskrive sammenholdet i Weberklubben?

Nævner du nogle gange Weber i din omgangskreds? (Sikr sig at de ikke er weber-medlemmer).

Kan du huske hvad det var du sagde? (positivt eller negativt)

Weberklubben Facebook

Hvordan blev Weberklubben på Facebook til?

Hvilken rolle syntes du redaktørerne har i weberklubben?

Fortæl om dine rolle som administrator?

Hvad får du ud af at være administrator

Ved medlemmerne på facebook hvem du er?

Er der status i at være administrator?

Hvordan sørger i for, at brugerne overholder reglerne?

Hvor mange timer, tror du at du bruger på at administrere Weberklubben på Facebook om dagen?

Føler du, du giver Weber en hjælpende hånd, når du poster/besvare ting på bloggen?

Ser du dig selv som en del af Weber?

Hvad er de største udfordringer i at administrere Weberklubben på Facebook?

Synes der er forskel på, hvordan folk ”skriver” til hinanden på Weberklubben.dk og Weberklubben på Facebook? (tonen)

Hvad synes du den største forskel er på at være medlem af Weberklubben.dk og Weberklubben på Facebook? Fordele og ulemper

Tror du weberklubben.dk lukker ned?

APPENDIX 8 – Weber Interview Guide

Indledende

Tusind tak fordi i har lyst til at hjælpe os.

Vi vil lige starte med at introducere os – jeg hedder Og læser ... Sarah er primær interviewer, men Cecilie kan også spørge undervejs.

Som jeg fortalte til Pia, er vi midt i vores speciale som handler om online communities og vi syntes at Weberklubben er specielt interessant da vi kan se at i har mange dedikerede brugere. Gennem interviewet kommer vi til at spørge ind til medlemmerne og generelt om Weberklubben og hvordan i håndterer den. Vi optager.

Har i nogle spørgsmål inden vi går i gang?

Spørgsmål til Weber (Pia og Marc)

Hvad er jeres rolle på Weberklubben.dk? Uddybe arbejdsopgaver og tiltag.

Vi har set at Danmark er det land i verden med flest webergrill pr indbygger, hvad skyldes jeres succes i netop Danmark?

Hvorfor tror i at Danmark er sådan en grillnation?

Hvad forsøger weber at få brugerne til at tænke på når hører ordet weber?

Hvad får Weber ud af at have weberklubben.dk?

- De største fordele

Har Weber mange omkostninger forbundet med weberklubben?

Hvem er jeres målgruppe?

- Hvordan ser det typiske medlem ud – demografisk set?
- Hvorfor tror i, at det er sådan?

Hvilke oplysninger har i på jeres medlemmer

- Hvordan bruger i de oplysninger?
- Hvor ofte logger medlemmerne på? Har det ændret sig de seneste par år?

Hvorfor startede i med Weberklubben

- Hvordan blev det så succesfuldt med over 68.000 medlemmer?
- Hvordan vil i beskrive Weberklubben som den er i dag?
- Har i skabt en livsstil med Weber?

Tror i, at kunderne som er medlemmer af Weberklubben har andre associationer til Weber end kunder der ikke er medlem af klubben?

- Oplever i, at medlemmerne ser ud til at føle sig som en del af Weber?
- Og har i en stærk relation til jeres medlemmer?
- Tror i, at medlemmerne er mere loyale overfor jeres brand end ikke-medlemmer – altså kun køber weber og anbefaler weber.

Oplever i at brugerne gerne involveres eller have indflydelse på Weberklubben?

- Tiltag eller/og tekniske forbedringer
- Har i så implementeret deres ønsker? Ex ”synes godt om”

Hvad gør i for at holde brugerne aktive på Weberklubben?

- Vi kan se at i giver meget ejerskab over sitet, hvorfor gør i det?

Hvordan er processen for at blive redaktør?

- Gør i noget for at belønne dem?
- Hvor ofte er der udskiftning i redaktørerne?

Hvad ser i som den største udfordring for weberklubben.dk

- Via et debatindlæg spørger en bruger om siden er ved at uddø, er den det?

Har i kendskab til weberklubben på Facebook?

- Hvem er tovholder på den?
- Hvad syntes i om at weberklubben nu også eksisterer på Facebook?
- Er tonen anderledes?
- Vi kan se at der er et par forskellige weberklubben sider på Facebook – hvad gør i når andre opretter grupper i jeres navn?
- Har i mindre kontrol over sitet på fb end på weberklubben.dk?
- Bliver brandet taget i en anden retning end ønsket af entusiastiske brugere

- Så vidt vi kan se, ejer i al indhold på Weberklubben.dk, hvordan forholder det sig på fb?

Så vidt vi kan forstå må man ikke sælge ting på weberklubben.dk, men vi kan se at folk sælger/køber weber udstyr på weberklubben på Facebook, hvad er jeres holdning til det?

- Vi kan se at folk sælger udstyr, der ikke er fra weber – hvad gør i ved det?

Hvilken del af jeres marketing mix (altså sociale medier, magasiner, tv, bannere etc) tror i er det mest effektiv?

- På hvilken platform bliver der skabt mest værdi for weber: på weberklubben på Facebook eller på Weberklubben.dk
- Tror i, at Weberklubben generer mere mund-til-mund omtale mellem kunder end andre medier

Efter interview

Har i demografiske oplysninger vi må få

Har i nogensinde lavet nogle undersøgelser på sitet – spørgeskema/interview/fokusgrupper?

APPENDIX 9 – Social Media Expert Interview Guide

Brand

How would you define brand value?

Digitalization / Information society / Network society

Due to digitalization and the mobile era, we see that consumers have easy access to information and increasingly seek consumer-to-consumer advice. Why do you think that is, and where is this tendency going?

Online Communities

- Which tendencies do you see within online brand communities right now?
- Pros and cons for a company to have an online brand community
- How do you think companies can best engage consumers in online brand communities?
- How do you think brand value is created in an online brand community?
- We see a tendency that people are more active on the Facebook community “weberklubben” than in Weberklubben.dk the online brand community – is there a general tendency that companies have difficulties in engaging consumers on their own platforms?
- Weber has three different communities Weberklubben.dk on their webpage, Weberklubben on Facebook and Weber ID, which is the only one of the three platforms that is data driven, do you recommend companies such as Weber to have communities on several platforms? Do you think they cannibalize each other?
- Do you think it is too late for Weber to revitalize the original Weber community, Weberklubben.dk?
- From your perspective, what are the main concerns of managing a community that is as vibrant as the one on Facebook?

CO-creation / Free Labor

We see that the members of the Weber communities are very involved in the co-production of knowledge by answering posts both on Weberklubben Facebook and

Weberklubben.dk. What do you see being the main motive for consumers for co-creating? And for companies?

The Self /Living the brand

Weber is involved in a TV show, provides grill courses, sponsor the Danish national BBQ team, organizes a yearly Weber camp and are active on all social media – Weber states that they are creating a life style – what is your take on this (is this a strategy that companies turn to today?)

Recommendations

If you were the community manager for Weber, what would be the biggest challenges and the biggest opportunity ahead and what would you do?

APPENDIX 10 – Weberklubben FB Rule Set

En side for Weberentusiaster.

LÆS VORES REGLER HER:

Her kan du dele opskrifter på lækker mad fra Webergrillen samt dele lækre billeder af den mad du laver hjemme på Weberen.

Weberklubben er ikke ejet af Weber, men er en udspringer af www.weberklubben.dk Siden er lavet for at vi Weberentusiaster kan mødes et sted og tale om vores fælles lidenskab nemlig Webergrillen.

Vi deler opskrifter, samt tips og tricks på grillen, samt deltager i arrangementer lavet af www.weberklubben.dk

Vi har få men simple regler:

1. Vi snakker helst kun om Weber og tilbehør dertil.
2. Vi laver ikke reklame for andre grillmærker.
3. Det er tilladt at vise hjemmegjorte gadgets og tilbehør frem.
4. PRIVAT Køb og salg er tilladt, så længe det drejer sig om Webergrills eller tilbehør dertil. kommerciel salg, samt salg af serieproducerede produkter kræver tilladelse fra administrator.

Ved salg SKAL varens pris samt lokation anføres.

Salg af fødevarer er ikke tilladt.

Auktioner er ikke tilladt.

Administrator har tilladelse til at slette salgsannoncer uden yderligere varsel.

5. Vi holder en god tone og taler ordentligt til hinanden.
6. Tænk på hvad du skriver, der er mange brugere af siden.
7. Administratorerne forbeholder sig ret til at slette indlæg eller medlemmer, hvis de ikke overholder reglerne.
8. Ønsker du at reklamere for et produkt, webshop eller lignende, kontakt venligst administratorerne først.
9. Weberfeber er en tilladt sygdom herinde og kan kun holdes nede ved at smitte

andre. :-)

10. Vi hjælper hinanden herinde, også hvis spørgsmålene er set før, der kommer mange nye til hver dag.

Administrator: Søren Aabenhus - Medadministrator: Per Aastradsen

APPENDIX 11 – Weberklubben OS rule set

Hvad vil det sige at være medlem ?

For at sikre at du ved, hvad Weber Klubben er, har vi samlet en række praktiske informationer her. Finder du ikke svar på dit spørgsmål, så skriv en e-mail til os.

Hvem kan blive medlem?

Alle med en interesse for at grille kan være medlem af Weber Klubben. Det er ikke et krav, at man er medlem, men man skal være det for at kunne skrive og poste indhold på hjemmesiden.

Det skyldes, at vi gerne vil have "hånd i hanke" med, hvem der poster hvilke informationer - lige som dine aktiviteter måles i forhold til vores "Mest aktive..."-barometre.

Det er selvfølgelig gratis ...

Det er gratis at være standard-medlem af Weber Klubben, og et standard-medlemsskab giver dig mulighed for at deltage i mange af aktiviteterne omkring Weber Klubben, herunder at have din egen BLOG, deltage i debatter, deltage i events og arrangementer - herunder Weber Camp - samt have muligheden for at deltage i konkurrencer og meget andet. Ønsker du det, kan du opgradere til at blive VIP-medlem og på den måde få endnu mere ud af klubben.

VIP-medlemsskab - du får hele pakken ...

Opgraderer du til et VIP-medlemsskab, kan du mere end de almindelige medlemmer - ligesom du vil få tilbud specielt tilpasset VIP-medlemmerne. VIP-medlemmer kan blandt andet se videobiblioteket - de modtager nyhedsbrevet/magasinet, når det udkommer, og de får blandt andet rabat på grillkurser hos Grilleriet. Det er også for VIP-medlemmerne, vi pt. arbejder på et fordelsprogram med rabat ved forskellige grillrelaterede steder.

Hvordan melder jeg mig ud igen?

Ønsker du IKKE at være medlem, kan du sende en e-mail til info@weberklubben.dk, hvor du skriver "Udmeldelse" i emnefeltet. Derudover bedes du skrive dit navn, den e-mail-adresse du har oprettet dig under samt alias, for at vi er sikre på at slette den

rette. Derefter sletter vi dig uden yderligere spørgsmål - det skal jo være sjovt at være medlem af Weber Klubben, så du kan stoppe når som helst. - Og det koster naturligvis ikke noget at melde sig ud af klubben. Ved udmeldelse refunderes eventuelle VIP-medlemsskaber ikke.

Hvem ejer rettighederne til indholdet på Weber Klubben?

DU ejer selv rettighederne til dit eget indhold på klubsiden. Forstået på den måde, at fotografier taget af dig er dine. Weber Klubben forbeholder sig ret til at anvende dem til promovering af Weber Klubben, men vil som udgangspunkt ALTID indhente tilladelse fra rettighedshaver, inden vi anvender dem. Weber ejer rettighederne til andet ikke-fotografisk materiale, der er oprettet - med mindre andet er beskrevet. Det er medlemmets ansvar at sikre, at denne ikke krænker tredjeparts ophavret i forbindelse med, at medlemmet poster materiale på Weber Klubben.

Er der ting, man IKKE gør på Weber Klubben?

Weber Klubben handler om at hygge sig omkring Webergrillen. Det er af praktiske grunde Weber, der er fokus på på denne hjemmeside. Ønsker du at debattere Kamado, Dancook, Beef-eater, Cadac, Landmann eller andre grillalternativer, kan dette gøres på mange andre udmærkede hjemmesider, der er bedre til den slags. Dette er ikke for at udøve censur eller lignende, men for at undgå misforståelser og ytringer, der kan gøre andre med præference for et andet grillmærke fortræd. Holdninger med politisk, religiøst, krænkende eller egoistisk indhold hører heller ikke hjemme på Weber Klubben - her er der plads til alle, der kan lide at grille. Det er dét, det handler om herinde ...

Hvorfor er der nu reklamer på hjemmesiden?

Reklamerne kan IKKE købes på kommerciel basis i handel. Reklamepladsen lånes KUN ud til samarbejdspartnere af Weber Klubben. Det kan være virksomheder, der sponsorerer Weber Camp, temasider, workshops eller andre aktiviteter, der direkte kan tilbageføres til Weber Klubben. Enhver indtægt via disse sponsorer/samarbejdspartnere går ubeskåret til at sikre medlemmerne bedre arrangementer - herunder specielt i forbindelse med Weber Camp. Ønsker du at støtte Weber Klubben, kan du rette henvendelse med en beskrivelse af dit formål af støtten til info@weberklubben.dk.