COMPANIES AND THE “SOCIAL MEDIA REVOLUTION”.
THE USE OF WEB 2.0 TOOLS FOR INTERACTION WITH USERS.

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Abstract
Web 2.0 tools are becoming more and more popular and companies are facing a sort of “social media revolution”. In this work we develop and test hypothesis related to users’ involvement in brand on-line communities. Using feedbacks from 166 on-line community members we perform a regression analysis showing that perceived behavioural control and repeat patronage positively affect the intention to perform a community behaviour and the intention to perform a loyal behaviour. We made also a comparison between on-line communities created by companies and on-line communities created by users which opens the discussion for the managerial implications.

1. Introduction
1.1 Background
The recent diffusion of technology and connection devices among the population has positively affected the accessibility to the web. Today the researchers estimate a penetration of 70% in the United States while in Africa and Asia the penetration rate is around 10% but it is growing fast (IP address location on ipligence.com). The web is nowadays accessible to everybody and everywhere on the planet. The world of technology in business is one of the key issues for companies which know that large investments in the most advanced IT instruments are still useless without the proper managerial competences. Technologies are constantly under evolution and managers and companies must adapt their strategies day by day to gain always the maximum benefit for their businesses. In this work we will investigate Web 2.0 tools. Their rising importance is worldwide recognized. “Web 2.0 tools are beginning to change the shape of scientific debate” titles the Economist on its scientific publication “Intelligent life” of September 2008 and few months before he published a report about companies and internet called “Serious business, Web 2.0 goes corporate”.
More recently (April 2009) Microsoft published the report “Europe Logs On” showing its projections about the diffusion of Internet among the population (in 2008 it has surpassed all the other media except TV) and the rising of the time spent on content and social network services (65%) and e-commerce (33%).

This report confirms that also big multinational companies are moving their attention to Web 2.0 and more in general all the business world is looking with a greater attention to the Web and the Internet interaction.

With this work we will offer a model for interpreting users’ on-line behaviour and provide the basis for thinking new and proper strategies for using and managing Web 2.0 for obtain users’ involvement.

1.2 McKinsey Global Survey Results 2008

The confirmation that there’s a need for further analysis in the Web 2.0 area was given by the last McKinsey report.

Last year McKinsey, a technology consultant company\(^1\), presented its second annual survey on the business use of Web 2.0 technologies\(^2\).

“This year’s survey reveals continuing investments in Web 2.0 ... Last year, our respondents said that their companies had adopted just over two Web 2.0 tools on average; this year, those companies have adopted two and a half from the same list and more than three from an expanded one”.

The survey was conducted among 1988 executives of worldwide companies asking them which of the Web tools adopt most and for which purposes and if they are satisfied with them.

Companies report that they are using Web 2.0 tools more, both within and outside their walls. They say that they are inviting both employees and customers to contribute content that explains, supports, promotes and enhances their products or they are treating them as co-developers of new products.

We report one of the answers that shows the level of diffusion of Web 2.0 tools.

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\(^1\) www.mckinsey.com

\(^2\) See Appendix 1 for a complete classification of Web 2.0 technologies
Blogs are one of the most diffused while there’s an increasing in the services that facilitate social networking like the media sharing, podcasting and the wikis.

At the top they place Web services that is a very broad concept which comprise all that software systems designed to support interoperable machine-to-machine interaction over a network. Examples are flight/hotels booking tools and chats. These web services allow companies to mix Web 2.0 tools in a unique on-line platforms to approach a larger number of customers.

An important finding from the McKinsey report is that only 21% of the respondents say they are satisfied overall with Web 2.0 tools while 22% voice clear dissatisfaction. The paradox is that, satisfied or not, all managers declare that their companies are planning to spend more on Web 2.0 tools.

This sort of paradox reflects a general discontent among companies on the real value of internet tools that may not be attributed to the tools accessibility but rather on how they are implemented.

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1 en.wikipedia.org
1.3 Use of Web 2.0 technologies by companies

From the McKinsey report we can have also some important information on the kind of usage of Web 2.0 tools.

Three main categories are outlined above: internal use; interfacing with customers and interfacing with partners/suppliers.

The first one has the aim to facilitate the flow of knowledge inside the organization by fostering the collaboration between employees. With Web 2.0 tools they can easier share ideas, develop projects and working in virtual teams without meeting face to face (Polzer J.T. et al. 2006).

The third one is a more BtoB approach and has the aim to integrate better partners and suppliers in the company’s activity.

In this work we will focus on the second category. The use of Web 2.0 tools for interfacing with customers is here under observation because it is the most difficult to manage. While in the other two categories the company interfaces with a limited and well known number of users (the employees and the business partners); in this category it talks to a potential unlimited number of users, coming from all other the world and with different experiences, interests.
and knowledge. Moreover while the company has information about its employees and partners it knows almost nothing about individual consumers that use the Web 2.0 tools. Interfacing with Internet users using Web 2.0 tools is therefore a complex activity that requires a deep knowledge of the tools selected.

We would like to know if companies are able to interface with users in a productive way using Web 2.0 tools. It is not an easy question because Web 2.0 is a very broad concept. For this reason we will focus on a particular use of Web 2.0 tools that is very wide diffused today: the on-line communities.

Looking at on-line communities we can see how they works, which tools they use, how users interact between each other and above all we can linger on the role of the firm in these spaces. Measuring users’ behaviour and its determinants can help the company in enforcing value creation in a virtuous cycle of increasing users’ loyalty.

But before going in depth with the argument, let’s provide a short definition of Web 2.0.

### 1.4 Web 2.0: a definition

The concept of "Web 2.0" began with a conference brainstorming session between O'Reilly and MediaLive International. Dale Dougherty, web pioneer and O'Reilly VP.

This produced an article in which O’Reilly (2005) tried to clarify just what was meant by the expression Web 2.0.

"You can visualize Web 2.0 as a set of principles and practices that tie together a veritable solar system of sites that demonstrate some or all of those principles, at a varying distance from that core”.

From his words Web 2.0 conceives the network as a platform, spanning all connected devices. Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating
network effects through an ‘architecture of participation,’ and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences (O’Reilly, 2005). The first Web 2.0 conference in 2004 promoted the idea of the Internet as a participatory platform rather than a mere collection of static pages. O’Reilly used the map below to visualize better this web 2.0 idea: starting from some very well known examples of services on the web where users are key agents, he underlined the key properties of a web 2.0 technology (in the orange box) and he characterized them with some suggestions useful for practice (the pink bobbles).

From this brief review it is evident that when talking about web 2.0 we are not simply in the framework of technology and computer science, like with web 1.0, but we are going in touch with a more sociological environment: Web 2.0 are people. People that meet in virtual communities, share opinions, information, discuss about interests, hobbies, that show themselves or that simply listen and observe.
“Anything Web 2.0 begins with community participation,” says Stephen Baker, New York-based chief executive officer of search at Reed Business, the business-to-business division of Anglo-Dutch company Reed Elsevier. It is this sociological aspect of Web 2.0 and the evidence that we are living a sort of “social media revolution” that drives us to focus on on-line communities. In an article appeared on the The Economist on September 2007 they presented a survey conducted in January 2007 among 406 senior executives from around the world: “To go about reaping Web 2.0 benefits companies expect to focus most on community building”.

71% of the respondent said that they were already using or plan to use online communities for things such as marketing and product development. In January 2008, for instance, Procter & Gamble launched Capessa⁴, an online community where women share inspirational stories and practical tips about life. Communities often form online around blogs and wikis as well, so it is not surprising that nearly two-thirds of survey takers said that they are using blogs or wikis to initiate conversations either inside or outside the company. GM’s FastLane blog, for example, acts “as sort of a focus group,” more than 1.2m people visited the blog in its first nine months.

Most of the companies however agree that a key criterion for Web 2.0 is to have a community (The Economist, 2007).

1.5 The Research Question

Given what we said before about companies intentions we will analyze in the next chapter the literature about Web 2.0, community participation and users loyalty.

The literature about Web 2.0 is very recent and offers new perspectives on the Web and users’ interaction. Its relatively newness is however a limitation in explaining how Web 2.0 tools can be used effectively by organizations for facilitate users’ interaction.

⁴ Capessa.yahoo.com
Even if the literature about community participation is broader, it has some weaknesses too. It helps us to understand the behavioural dynamics of users in traditional communities but it says very few about on-line communities dynamics and users loyalty.

The social behaviour literature instead offers a good contribution for explaining community affiliation and brand identity. It helps us to understand how users express their loyalty to companies but it lacks in translating the traditional organizational approaches to the on-line environment.

Traditional community and communication practices may not be sufficient for Web 2.0 initiatives and companies may invest a lot without obtaining the desired effects.

We will fill this gap by developing a new conceptual model with contributions both from the community and the brand identity literature. This model then will be used to test empirically the success of some on-line communities. A survey will be proposed to users of two different types of communities: spontaneous users communities and communities created directly by companies. All these communities have however in common to be focused on a specific brand or product by an existing company.

The comparison between the responses from the members of the two groups of communities will help us to answer to the following question: how can firms obtain users’ involvement in the company’s Web 2.0 spaces and get high levels of participation together with user’s loyalty?

With a quantitative and a qualitative analysis we will show that the simple aggregation of Web 2.0 tools in an on-line platform is not enough for creating interaction. We will see that a key role is played by social aspects like the perceived behavioural control and the concept/passion around which the on-line community is focused.

1.6 Project organization

This report consists in 10 main parts and 3 appendices. Part 2 offers a review of the literature about Web 2.0 tools, community behaviour and users’ loyalty. Part 3 describes the theoretical framework adopted and the hypothesis tested.
Part 4 reports the methodology used: how data were collected and analyzed. Part 5 shows the main finding from the quantitative analysis while part 6 reports the results of the qualitative research. Part 7 discusses the implications of the main findings and their managerial consequences. Part 8 concludes the whole report, part 9 considers the limits and future researches and part 10 is the references used. The appendices contain a terminology of the Web 2.0 tools mentioned, the completed form of the on-line survey and a description of the on-line communities selected for this work.
2. Previous research

2.1 Web 2.0 Literature

Besides the contribution from O’Reilly (2004 and 2005) other authors have recently made researches about Web 2.0. Among them we would like to mention three very recent researches to clarify better how the literature views Web 2.0 and to define the limits of this research. The first one is the work by Dearstyne (2007) which is helpful to sum up the causes of the birth of Web 2.0. The second are the five C’s proposed by Linda and Hershey Friedman (2008) that aggregate the characteristics of Web 2.0 tools in five main categories. The last one is offered by Gilchrist (2007) and it is one of the first attempts to look for the managerial implications of Web 2.0 for companies; his work is a good starting point for supporting our work and stress the need of specific managerial competencies for developing and using Web 2.0 in companies.

Dearstyne (2007) identifies four trends which have accelerated the upsurge of Web 2.0:

a) the development and popularity of on-line social networks for exchanging personal information, photos videos and other information (MySpace, YouTube, Flickr and Second Life);

b) the broadening availability of easy to use software;

c) the search for techniques to foster more productive use of information;

d) the rising importance of knowledge workers who have high degrees of expertise, education, or experience, and the primary purpose of their job involves the creation, distribution and application of knowledge.

The wide range of characteristics of Web 2.0 technologies can be summarized by the 5 C’s of Friedman et al. (2008): communication, collaboration, community, creativity, and convergence.

Like all the other media communication is one the key feature. Blogs are a perfect example: bloggers do not only engage in one-way posting but many will cite and link to other blogger's posts; enough of this cross linking and the result is the so called "conversational blogging" (Efimova and de Moor 2005).
Wikis are instead a good example of collaboration. Much Internet collaboration of the past (and present) has been done using email. When we use email for collaboration on a document, we tend to forward the collaborative document as an attachment repeatedly, at each iteration, to all members of the group. This is a tremendous waste of resources in terms of time, inbox, capacity, bandwidth, hard drive space, etc. and also limits the size of the group. With wikis and applications as Google Docs people can work on the same document without incurring in the problems listed before.

A lot of technologies with Web 2.0 have now a social networking component (like eBay) and the sense of belonging to a community has facilitated the democratization of the relationship on the web.

Another key feature of Web 2.0 is user-generated content. Users are no longer the passive receivers of the message; this together with the digitization has knocked down the limits imposed by the medium used and has promoted creativity.

The last C: Convergence is of different types, including convergence of technology, convergence of media, convergence of consumption, and convergence of roles. It represents the tendency of Web 2.0 to sustain the evolving of different media, consumptions and roles towards performing similar tasks.

Managers need to be concerned with all these changes with a constant training and upgrading to make optimal use of the new web tools.

This concept is stressed also by Gilchrist (2007). He points out that despite the fact that Web 2.0 tools are spreading very fast, it does not follow that they are all necessarily appropriate for implementation in all corporate enterprises. It is certainly likely that some of these technologies could be beneficial in certain areas of the enterprise, notably communities. This is, in effect, an extension of Knowledge management principles which are relatively well understood but any attempt to embrace these technologies too widely, or without careful planning, will be doomed to failure, and likely to be counterproductive.
Gilchrist and the others have offered some interesting intuitions but they are all almost qualitative and the literature on Web 2.0 lacks today of some empirical studies. Metrics for return-on-investment of Web 2.0 tools have not yet been developed and companies have some concerns about revealing data about their community’s participation. However community participation is a key argument for answering to our research question. In the next section we will look to the previous researches about community participation and group identity.

2.2 Researches on Community Participation

On-line communities can be viewed as a group of people that primarily interact via communication media such as newsletters, telephone, email, internet social network service or instant messages rather than face to face, for social, professional, educational or other purposes. Under this perspective to understand the dynamics of on-line communities we have to know the literature about face to face communities and their internal relationships. The first attempts to theorize about group cohesiveness and sense of community started in the middle of the last century. Toennies (1957) introduced the concept of Gemeinschaft, a broad concept of community that embodies a set of voluntary, social and reciprocal relations that are bound together by an immutable “we-feeling”. This definition was then drawn on by other authors and enriched with new features. Gusfield (1978), for instance, marked a community by three core components. The first and most important is consciousness of kind, the intrinsic connection that members feel toward one another, and the collective sense of difference from others not in the community. The second indicator of community is the presence of shared rituals and tradition; they perpetuate the community’s shared history, culture and consciousness. The third marker is a sense of moral responsibility, which is a felt of duty or obligation to the community as a whole and to its individual members.
Very similar but more detailed is the definition of the sense of community proposed by McMillan and Chavis (1986). In their view a sense of community has four elements: the first element is membership. Membership is the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness. The second element is influence, a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members. The third element is reinforcement. This is the feeling that members’ needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group. The last element is shared emotional connection, the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences.

Beniger (1987) stressed that the sense of shared community requires that participants be sympathetic to the ideas around which the group is based; even if they disagree, there needs to be some fundamental common ground. Trust in the shared motivations and beliefs of the other participants – in other words, their social identity – is essential to the sense of community.

The role played by social identity was then better defined by Walls (1993). He sees community as an identity that emerges from the mutual commitment, mutual involvement, mutual responsibility and mutual respect between a society and its individual members. The “we” or the collective identity that results is structured around others who are seen as similar to the “me”.

Although all the literature available before the 90s was focused, for obvious reasons, on face to face communities the “we feeling”, the consciousness of kind, the presence of shared rituals and traditions, the moral responsibility, membership, influence, reinforcement, shared emotional connection and the social identity are all present in on-line communities. However one of the first definition of virtual communities was expressed by Rheingold only in 1993. He defines on-line communities as the social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace. The literature about on-line communities is however poor of contributions about managerial implications of such kind of communities. One of the few
research studies about this topic was conducted by Cothrel and Ruth (1999) among managers of 35 on-line communities. It was a qualitative study that reveals some useful samples of what works in facilitating virtual communities. These are the tips that they found:

1. Invest in the means rather than in the ends: attract new users is not enough, the dynamics of the community must be under attention and activities for community building must be promoted.

2. Focus relentlessly on the needs of members.

3. Resist the temptation to control: a good community manager must be able to guide the focus of the community in the desired direction without falling in the temptation to restrict or eliminate discussion unrelated to business issues.

4. Do not assume the community will become self-sustaining: there is a greater need of investment in time and effort to maintain a community rather than to creating it.

5. Consider environmental factors: like the industry, the country and the cultural context.

6. Extend community building beyond the discussion place: organize activities (both on-line and off-line) to make the community vibrant and productive.

7. Seek out and support members who take on informal roles: as they are a good indicator of the wealth of the community they require support from managers.

The literature today lacks of more detailed analysis. We know a lot about off-line communities and their sociological implications and we perceive that on-line communities have some very similar behaviours but we haven’t specific studies and we don’t know if there are differences or new dynamics. For these reasons in this work we analyse in an analytical way some on-line communities trying to learn the key elements that are determinant for their efficacy in developing users’ commitment to the company.
2.3 Contributions about Users’ Loyalty and Brand Communities

The last elements from the literature that we must consider in our research framework are the researches about users’ loyalty. They are important because we are dealing with on-line communities implemented around a brand or a product from a specific company. This means that together with the implications about community participation and social identity, users’ have also feelings about the brand to which the community is about; so there’s a need to consider what the literature says about users’ loyalty and brand communities.

One of the first empirical contribution about users’ loyalty appeared in 1969 by Day. He interviewed 955 households asking about their attitude toward a couple of identified brands. Brand loyalty is here understood to describe the characteristics of those users who have a strong commitment to a brand, because they view that brand as being more satisfactory than the alternatives and this evaluation is reinforced through repeated use. This line of research maintains that loyalty develops from the positive reinforcement received from trying a brand and being satisfied with it, which leads to repeat purchase.

A step forward was made by Aaker (1991) which conceptualizes the concept of brand equity. This new conceptualization includes more behaviours than mere repurchase and it widen the relationship with the brand to include the role of other users, including community members. Under this perspective the literature about user’s loyalty mixes with what we have already said about community participation. Gruen and Ferguson (1994) suggest that developing a strong community could be a critical step in reinforcing brand loyalty. They identify the so called “active loyalists”: users of a brand who are committed, conscientious-almost passionate about it that like to speak about the brand, share experiences and build relationships with other users of that brand.

A new and very recent branch of research focuses on brand communities and user empowerment. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) theorize that forming relationship with other like-minded users who share one’s interest in the brand will be credible and impactful in persuading and bonding users to the brand, leading them to make more purchase behaviours and be more loyal.
A clear definition of brand community is given by Muniz (2001). 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 centre is a branded good or service. 

In a recent study, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) add that a brand community is a friendship group of users with a shared enthusiasm for the brand and a well developed social identity, whose members engage jointly in group actions to accomplish collective goals and/or express mutual sentiments and commitments.

What we want to stress here is that the concept of brand identity and loyalty has evolved during years by acquiring some more sociological aspects. From the mere repurchasing activity to an identification and sense of belonging to a community.

However empirically we don’t know much about brand communities today. Recently the rise of mass media enables brands to transcend geographically and spontaneous aggregation of users have appeared on the web.

The literature lacks of an analysis of this kind of phenomenon and its managerial implications on how companies can gain advantage from active loyalists.
3. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

At this point it is necessary to introduce and explain the framework adopted to explore our research question.

3.1 The Model of Planned Behaviour

From the literature we saw that community participation depends almost on the sense of community felt by members. Membership, influence, reinforcement and emotional connection are according to McMillan and Chavis (1986) four key elements in determine the commitment of people to a community. Moreover trust in the other participants (Beniger, 1987) and the identification in the collective identity, the “we” (Walls, 1993) contribute in enforcing community participation. Community participation is therefore a behaviour recognizable from specific actions, as for instance making comments to other users’ activities, taking part to groups of discussions, uploading videos, photos or audios, etc...

A good way for analyzing a behaviour is to use an attitude-theoretical model. An attitude-theoretical model is a model that combines measurements of a range of product attributes or features in order to predict attitudes towards the objects possessing those attributes (Westburn Dictionary of Marketing)\(^5\).

For this reason it suits well with our research question about the need by companies to predict users’ intention toward the participation to their on-line communities.

One of the most used attitude-theoretical model in literature is the Theory of Planned Behaviour developed by Ajzen in 1985.

This model maintains that behaviour is influenced by one’s positive intention to act that in order is positive influenced by three independent variables: the attitude toward the behaviour, the subjective norm and the perceived behavioural control.

3.1.1 Attitude toward the behaviour
The attitude toward a behaviour is the degree to which the performance of the behaviour is positively or negatively valued. It is determined by the total set of accessible behavioural beliefs linking the behaviour to various outcomes and other attributed.

In this work we see the attitude toward the behaviour as the perception by online community users about the consequences of using Internet to interact, share information and getting in touch with other people. Their level of satisfaction of internet use for social interactions purposes is a measure of their attitude toward perform an active behaviour in the on-line communities under analysis.

3.1.2 Subjective norm
Subject norm refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour. This is usually influenced by the so-called normative beliefs: the perception that one’s behaviour is influenced by the judgment of significant others (e.g., parents, spouse, friends, teachers).

In the case of on-line communities this variable can play a critical role because of the social aspects of people interaction. We ask to on-line communities users about the level of agreement and the support they receive from people who are important to them in participating in on-line communities in order to investigate the role played by social norms.

3.1.3 Perceived behavioural control
The third antecedent of intention is the degree of perceived behavioural control which refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour and it is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles.

It is linked to control beliefs, which refers to beliefs about the presence of factors that may facilitate or impede performance of the behavior.

In this work we measure the perceived behavioral control by asking about the probability, feasibility or likelihood of taking part to the on-line community initiatives (how easy it is, how free I feel...)

3.1.4 Intention to perform the behaviour and behaviour
A central factor is the individual’s intention to perform a given behaviour. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behaviour; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behaviour. As a general rule, the stronger the intention to engage in a behaviour, the more likely should be its performance.

The behaviour is defined as an individual's observable response in a given situation with respect to a given target.

In our analysis the behaviour is seen as an active participation to the on-line community. It is measured by the frequency of visits to the website, the frequency of participation to the on-line activities and the perceived usability and sociability of the tools proposed.
3.1.5 Strengths and limitations

At first, theory of planned behavior can cover people's volitional behavior which cannot be explained by other theories (as Theory of Reasoned Action, Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). An individual's behavioral intention cannot be the exclusive determinant of behavior where an individual’s control over the behavior is incomplete. By adding "perceived behavioral control," theory of planned behavior can explain relationship between behavioral intention and actual behavior.

In addition, theory of planned behavior as well as theory of reasoned action can explain the individual's social behavior by considering "social norm" as an important variable.

However there are also some limitations: theory of planned behavior is based on cognitive processing and level of behavior change. Compared to affective processing models, theory of planned behavior overlooks emotion variables such as threat, fear, mood and negative or positive feeling and assessed them in a limited fashion. This could be a great limiting for the health related behavior situation because most individuals’ health behaviors are influenced by their personal emotion and affect-laden nature. On the contrary for the specific purpose of this work its focus on subjective variables can be useful because it reflects the unique characteristics of the behavior in on-line communities that it is determined more by personal reasons than by logical cause-consequences relationships.

3.2 The Model of User Loyalty

From the literature we saw that brand on-line communities have elements both from the users’ behaviour literature and from the brand loyalty research. We have already defined what we mean by brand loyalty. The commitment to the brand by a repeat purchase is the first characteristic for identifying a loyal user (Day, 1969); than his behaviour towards the company and the other users helps in making him an active loyalist (Gruen and Ferguson, 1994). A very explicative model of loyalty relationship of a user to a brand was proposed by Dick and Basu in 1994.
They see loyalty as the strength of the relationship between an individual’s relative attitude and repeat patronage. This loyalty relationship than positive affect the intention to the behaviour and as a consequence the behaviour

\[ \text{Relative Attitude} \rightarrow \text{Repeat Patronage} \]

\[ \text{Loyalty Relationship} \]

\[ \text{Intention} \rightarrow \text{Behaviour} \]

Figure 5 – The Model of User Loyalty – Dick and Basu 1994

3.2.1 Relative attitude
Relative attitude represents the association between the user and the product to which we measure the intention to behave.

In this work we analyze the relative attitude of users toward the brand/the product/the company to which the on-line community is related. The basic intuition is that the relative attitude positive affects the intention to perform a specific behaviour connected to the brand.

This relative attitude can be influenced by a lot of factors like emotions, moods, antecedents, satisfaction in past experiences, etc. so it plays a critical role in determining users’ loyalty.

3.2.2 Repeat patronage
Repeat patronage is defined as the purchase of the same brand purchased on the previous purchase occasion. It represents the materialistic part of user’s loyalty and here it is measured by considering the frequency of use and buy of the brand.

3.2.3 Intention to perform the behaviour and behaviour
The attitude-repeat patronage combination causes the rising of a loyalty relationship with an intention to perform and re-perform the purchase behaviour. So motivational and perceptual feelings positive contribute to the
intention to perform an active behaviour toward the brand. In this work the object of the intention is the brand to which the on-line community is about and the behaviour is measured by the quality of participation to the community’s activities.

3.2.4 Strengths and limitations
This framework offers a reliable way to determine the loyalty status of a target by identifying the causal variables. It is however a model usually applied to the real world and we don’t know yet how it works for virtual behaviours.

In this work we are trying to apply it to on-line communities which present some features typical of brand loyalty and verify if the positive linkages between relative attitude, repeat purchase and intention to perform the loyal behaviour are here replicated.

3.3 Our model for analyzing Web 2.0 tools in Brand On-line Communities
Consistent with the literature overview and the two frameworks presented above we built our own model by combining the twos.

![Figure 6 – A Model for Brand On-line Communities](image)

This is in line with our research question that is specifically addressed to how firms can obtain users’ involvement using Web 2.0 tools in brand on-line communities.
Since our level of analysis has elements both from on-line communities behaviour and brand loyalty, we decided to combine the two models presented above. This represents something new in the research arena about Web 2.0. In our view users that take part to on-line communities activities have a behaviour that is conditioned both by their intention to community participation and their intention to the brand and the company to which the community is linked. An active behaviour in such kind of communities is determined by both the intention to perform a community behaviour and the intention to perform a loyal behaviour to the brand or the company. Both attitude-theoretical variables and user loyalty variables participate in influencing the actions of members of brand on-line communities.

3.4 Propositions

We can now derive a number of relationships involving antecedents of behaviour from our suggested framework. Seven hypothesis are formulated:

Hp1: attitude toward community participation has a positive impact on the intention to perform community behaviour;
Hp2: Subjective norms about community participation have a positive impact on the intention to perform community behaviour;
Hp3: Perceived behavioural control on community participation has a positive impact on the intention to perform community behaviour;
Hp4: relative attitude to the brand positive affects the intentions to perform loyal behaviour;
Hp5: repeat patronage of that brand positive affects the intentions to perform loyal behaviour;
Hp6: intentions to the community positively affect the behaviour in the Brand On-line Community
Hp7: intentions to the brand positively affect the behaviour in the Brand On-line Community
4. Methodology

Grounding on the proposed framework and the hypothesis we planned our research method.

As our research question is addressed to verify how companies can effectively using Web 2.0 tools for interacting with customers we decided to collect feedbacks from users because they are the addressees of the companies’ investments. Moreover they are the determinant of the success of the investment with their level and quality of participation in the community.

The strength of the relationships in our model was then demonstrated with a comparison between the answers of two different kind of on-line community users: users of Brand On-line Communities created by companies and users of spontaneous Brand On-line Communities.

The comparison of the companies’ investment with a spontaneous Web 2.0 phenomenon will offer some important inputs for discussion on how companies are using Web 2.0 tools.

4.1 Quantitative data collection

The data collection was made by conducting an on-line survey among virtual communities’ users.

We created a survey with 36 questions using a free form offered by Google. The first four questions are addressed to measure the demographic variables of our sample asking to specify the on-line community which they belong to; the gender; age and the country where they live. They helped us to build a reliable and representative model.

All the other questions were formulated with the aim to verify our hypothesis and identify the behaviour.

We decided to measure the behaviour by using three variables:

- the level of participation used by Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) to measure the group behaviour of Harley Davidson brand community participant.

---

6 You can have a look at the completed survey form in Appendix 2
29. About how many discussions, interactions and initiatives of the community will you participate in the coming month?

30. About how many discussions, interactions and initiatives of the community will you participate in a typical month of the coming year?
- the frequency of visits by Davis (1993)

31. On the average I visit the community:
- don’t visit at all
- visit less than once a week
- visit several times each week
- visit about once per day
- visit several times each day

32. Specify how many hours do you normally spend each week in the community.
- the usability and sociability framework offered by Preece (2001) to measure the perceived quality. Usability is concerned with how intuitive and easy it is for individuals to learn to use and interact with a product; 4 key design criteria were selected by Preece: dialog and social support, information design, navigation and access. Sociability is concerned with developing software, policies and practices to support social interaction online and the design criteria are the 3 P’s: Purpose, People and Policy. The choice of measuring behaviour using the perceived quality is determined by a cause-effect logic. It is hard to analyze in a quantitative way a behaviour in an on-line community because what usually determines an active behaviour is not the number of posts but the quality of them which is impossible to determine objectively. So to measure the behaviour in the most complete way we have to look also at what it causes it like usability and sociability, as Preece (2001) suggests.

33. Please rate from 1 (high) to 5 (low) the navigation and accessibility of this on-line community (time, errors, problems in downloading, etc)

34. Please rate from 1 (high) to 5 (low) the information quality and availability in this on-line community (time spent for finding information, message exchange, etc)
35. Please rate from 1 (high) to 5 (low) the interactivity of this on-line community (quality of contributions and interactions)

36. Please rate from 1 (high) to 5 (low) the policy that supports the personal interface (quality of dialogue, behaviour policies, level of trust)

For the other 24 questions we used 5 points Likert scales adopted from existing literature. In the table below you can find a categorization of the questions based on the variable of interest and the source of the items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Variable measured</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. I am SATISFIED with using Internet to interact with other people</td>
<td>ATTITUDE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. It is SIMPLE to use Internet for interacting with other people</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dholakia and Bagozzi 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. It is FUN to use Internet for interacting with other people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Using Internet is a GOOD WAY to know new people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Internet is a FAST way for sharing infos, files, photos, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Most people who are important to me think that I should participate</td>
<td>SUBJECTIVE NORMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Most people who are important to me think themselves should</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Most people who are important to me support me in participating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. I feel free to express my opinions in the community. 1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree
14. It is easy to chat and discuss with other community's members. 1=strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
15. I feel this community is a good place for sharing ideas, thoughts, etc. 1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

PERCEIVED BEHAVIOURAL CONTROL

16. I appreciate the philosophy of the company to which this community is about. 1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
17. I think that company's values partially overlap with my own values. 1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
18. I frequently visit other websites of this company. 1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

RELATIVE ATTITUDE

19. I frequently use a product from this company. 1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
20. I have bought more than a product from this company. 1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
21. I am satisfied with the products from this company. 1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

REPEAT PATRONAGE

22. The relationship I have with this community is important to me. 1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
23. I really care about the fate of this community. 1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
24. The relationship I have with this community is one I intend to maintain indefinitely. 1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree

INTENTION TO PERFORM COMMUNITY BEHAVIOUR

25. I have recommend this brand to my friends

INTENTION TO

Mathwick, Wiertz and De Ruyter 2007

Davis 1993
1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree

26. I consider myself to be loyal to this brand. 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree

27. I know this brand well enough to evaluate it against competitors. 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree

28. In general this brand gives me exactly what I need from that kind of product. 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree

Table 1 – Questions’ categorization

We selected two different types of users. Feedbacks from members of Brand On-line Communities created by companies were put in comparison with feedbacks from members of spontaneous users aggregation in Brand On-line Communities.

A total of seven Brand On-line Communities were selected and analyzed. These are:

- Kraftfoods.com
- Mini Space
- Swatch The Club
- Diesel The Cult
- NewBeetle (Volkswagen)
- MiniMac
- IKEA Fans

All the communities have a worldwide diffusion and English as their main language. Moreover they are focused on a unique brand or company without the possibility of misunderstandings by users when we ask a feedback about their attitude to the company.

For an extensive analysis of each community we remind you to Appendix 3.

---

7 www.kraftfoods.com
8 www.minispace.com
9 www.swatchtheclub.com
10 cult.diesel.com
11 www.newbeetle.org
12 www.ikeafans.com/
We collected feedbacks by proposing the questionnaire to active community members in May 2009. Our goal was to solicit participation from a representative sample of community members from around the world. The survey was diffused inside the communities by directly contact each user, encouraging him/her to participate by visiting a website where the survey was made available for a period of approximately four weeks.

4.2 Qualitative data collection
In addition to the survey data, we also collected observational data to investigate the user behaviour in the virtual communities selected. We spent considerable time observing selected communities to develop richer insight into community interaction. We collected both information about the structure of the community (number of users, kind of Web 2.0 tools) and about the behaviour of its users (level of participation, interaction, shared passion, etc). The research was made with the aim to collect information relevant to the theoretical framework investigated in this study.

4.3 Analysis Plan
We estimated the measurement as well as structural parameters using the statistics software SAS version 9.0. All the answers (except the demographical questions) can be referenced to a Likert scale from 1 to 5. We considered the items having the same value for the variable to which they refer, so that each variable is the mean of its group of items.

For measuring behaviour we decided to adopt a different approach. Since it is measured by three sub-variables with different weights, we agreed upon calculate the principal component of each observation. Usually the Principal Component Analysis is done on continuous variables, in our case we can consider our sub-variables to be continuous because they are the means of their items (which are discrete but their means are continuous). The Principal

---

13 The distance between 1 and 2 and 2 and 3 in an answer is the same.
Components Analysis was chosen because it allows to reproduce at best information from the original variables (which have to be standardized before applying the analysis). After running the Principal Component Analysis we selected the first principal component of each observation because it is the standardized linear combination with maximum variance.

Even if our variables were all expressed on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 we decided to use a standardized dataset because we are not sure that the respondents have interpreted all the variables in the same way.\textsuperscript{14}

With SAS we performed different functions: the PROC MEAN and the PROC CORR to obtain a descriptive analysis of our dataset. The PROC SYSLIN to make the regressions between the variables and verify the model.

As regarding the PROC SYSLIN we will see more in details in the next section that our model can be classified as a simultaneous equation model and analyzed with the two stage least squares method.

The quantitative analysis was divided in two steps. Firstly we tested our hypothesis and verify the relationships between variables using the full dataset.

Secondly we tested the model on the two groups of feedbacks collected: we created two datasets, one with the answers from users of on-line communities created by companies and one with the answers from users of spontaneous on-line communities. Our aim was to show, if there are, the differences in community participation between the two types of communities and investigate the reasons by looking at the variables selected.

Analysis of the observed communities was then made using qualitative data trying to find an interpretation of the quantitative results until we achieved sufficient interpretative convergence.

\textsuperscript{14} A given value of 1 to the Perceived Behavioural Control may not be equal to a given value of 1 to Repeat Patronage
5. Results of quantitative data analysis

5.1 Measurement model

The measurement model was estimated using the full data set. A total of 169 users from the seven communities selected participated to the survey. Three feedbacks were evaluated as outliers and eliminated from the analysis.

According to the model proposed we can formulate three regressions. The first regression is intended to verify hypothesis from 1 to 3 and has intention to the community as dependent variable.\(^{15}\)

\[ INT_1 = \beta_0 + \beta_1ATT + \beta_2SJNORM + \beta_3PBHC + e_1 \]

The second regression verifies hypothesis 4 and 5 and intention to the brand as dependent variable.\(^{16}\)

\[ INT_2 = \beta_4 + \beta_5RATT + \beta_6RTPATRO + e_2 \]

The last regression uses intention to the community and intention to the brand as independent variables and behaviour as dependent variable in order to verify hypothesis 6 and 7.\(^{17}\)

\[ BH = \beta_7 + \beta_8INT_1 + \beta_9INT_2 + e_3 \]

Our model can be classified as a simultaneous equation model because of the cause-effect relationship between the first two regressions and the third one. This implies that we have to consider a system of linear equations that have some variables in common.

\[
\begin{align*}
INT_1 &= \beta_0 + \beta_1ATT + \beta_2SJNORM + \beta_3PBHC + e_1 \\
INT_2 &= \beta_4 + \beta_5RATT + \beta_6RTPATRO + e_2 \\
BH &= \beta_7 + \beta_8INT_1 + \beta_9INT_2 + e_3
\end{align*}
\]

A simultaneous equation model can be estimated in different ways. The most diffused is the ordinary least squares (OLS) technique that consists in

\(^{15}\) INT\(_1\)= intention to perform community behaviour  
ATT= attitude  
SJNORM= subjective norm  
PBHC= perceived behavioural control

\(^{16}\) INT\(_2\)= intention to perform loyal behaviour  
RATT= relative attitude  
RPATRO= relative patronage

\(^{17}\) BH= behaviour
estimating a single equation to approximate the data. This approach ignores as to which of the predetermined variables in question are endogenous or exogenous, and the estimators are biased and inconsistent because of the inclusion of the endogenous variables into the set of the predetermined variables. A better technique is the two stage least squares (2SLS) method that considers one equation at a time using the information as to which variables, both endogenous and exogenous, are included in the other equations of the model but excluded from the equation being estimated. Considering the specific characteristics of our model we decided to use this second technique and apply a simultaneous equation procedure with the two stages least square technique on our standardized variables.

In the next section we will make first of all some considerations about our sample, before entering into the statistical analysis.

5.2 About the sample
Before analyzing in details the relationships between variables we can trace a profile of our respondents and comment the participation to the survey.

5.2.1 Community of origin
The next table offers a description of the sample composition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>N. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diesel The Cult</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kraftfoods.com</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiniSpace</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatch The Club</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communities by Companies</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>45,2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiniMac</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NewBeetle</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IkeaFans</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communities by Users</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>54,8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>166</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – Sample composition by community of origin
From the table we can see that the strongest participation came from the user communities even though they were only three. The most participative communities were Kraftfoods.com, MiniMac and NewBeetle while MiniSpace was the less enthusiastic in participating to our survey. We will look more in details in the qualitative analysis for the reasons of this differences in survey participation.

5.2.2 Gender
Looking at the demographic variables we have that 57% of the total respondents are men and 43% women (see Figure 8).

Looking in details to the gender of users for each community we can see that some communities have a strong prevalence of men (for instance MiniMac) or women (for instance Kraftfoods.com).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communities by Companies</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Male %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diesel The Cult</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kraftfoods.com</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiniSpace</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatch The Club</td>
<td>45,5</td>
<td>54,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities by Companies</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiniMac</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NewBeetle</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.3 Age

Another information we know about our sample is the age. We asked in the survey to indicate how old the respondents were and in Figure 9 you can see how they answered.

40% of the respondents are between 25 and 35 years old while 32% are between 36 and 45 so we can see that more than 70% of the respondents are between 25 and 45. This means that our sample is quite homogeneous.

Looking at the age of users of each community (Figure 10) we can see that in some communities there’s a prevalence of users from a particular age bracket (Diesel has almost users under 25 years old while more than 50% of NewBeetle members are between 25 and 35).

Other on-line communities instead have a broader range of users as regarding age: Kraftfoods.com and MiniMac for example for 25 to 50 years old without a significant prevalence of a particular age group.
5.2.4 Country of origin and the sample bias
The variable country of origin was here used to test the presence of a bias in our sample. This is a way to test the representativeness of our sample. We compared the data from the survey with the data offered by the website Alexa\(^\text{18}\) about the id of origin of visitors of the on-line communities analyzed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Our sample</th>
<th>Alexa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DieselTheCult</td>
<td>35% USA</td>
<td>27,5% USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13% Germany</td>
<td>13,1% Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13% Japan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kraftfoods.com</td>
<td>100% USA</td>
<td>83,5% USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,5% Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiniSpace</td>
<td>33% Germany</td>
<td>20,5% Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% Italy</td>
<td>10,6% South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SwatchTheClub</td>
<td>27% USA</td>
<td>17,1% USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18% China</td>
<td>12,9% India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18% Germany</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiniMac</td>
<td>100% USA</td>
<td>49,7% USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13,9% India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NewBeetle</td>
<td>100% USA</td>
<td>68,3% USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8,8% Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IkeaFans</td>
<td>91% USA</td>
<td>57% USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{18}\) www.alexa.com
From the table above we can see that the general trend about the origin of communities’ users is confirmed by our sample. Only for MiniMac and Ikea the representativeness is less strong. However we can say that our sample is a good representation of the members of the entire on-line communities selected.

5.3 Results
5.3.1 Descriptive analysis
For each variable we report the mean, the standard deviation, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient and the correlations.

| Mean | Std Dev | Alpha $^{19}$ | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) |
|------|---------|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| (1) Attitude | 1.98 | 0.69 | 0.78 | - |
| (2) Subjective norm | 2.88 | 0.63 | 0.69 | 0.18 | - |
| (3) Perceived behavioural control | 1.90 | 0.95 | 0.88 | 0.43 | 0.07 | - |
| (4) Relative attitude | 2.53 | 0.89 | 0.79 | 0.04 | 0.22 | - | 0.01 | - |
| (5) Repeat Patronage | 2.06 | 1.07 | 0.92 | 0.09 | 0.06 | 0.23 | 0.19 | - |
| (6) Intention to perform community behaviour | 2.27 | 1.09 | 0.92 | 0.27 | 0.12 | 0.39 | 0.07 | 0.33 | - |
| (7) Intention to perform loyal behaviour | 2.19 | 1.15 | 0.94 | 0.25 | 0.02 | 0.32 | 0.09 | 0.53 | 0.67 | - |
| (8) Behaviour | 0 | 1.39 | - | 0.06 | -0.06 | 0.07 | -0.22 | -0.08 | 0.19 | 0.07 |

Table 5 – Means, standard deviations and correlations

$^{19}$ Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is an index to measure the reliability of the items for each variable. It is a correlation between the items and here it is calculated with SAS. The Cronbach’s alpha can assume values between 0 and 1 where values close to 0 indicate a weak correlation while values close to 1 indicate a strong correlation so more homogenous items.
From the table above we can see that all the means are quite low if we consider that the Likert scales were from 1 to 5 (where 1 indicates a strong agree to the sentence). Our values are all below 3 but the standard deviations are high that means that the answers are very heterogeneous and so we cannot rely on the means.

A valuable information is given by the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients which are all close to 1 that means that the items within each variable are homogenous. This supports our choice of calculate the mean of the items for express each variable.

Note that behaviour has negative correlations with almost all the variables; this could influence the test of hypothesis 7.

5.3.2 Test of hypothesis

We performed then a regression analysis to test the hypothesis.

Table 6 reports the results of the regression analysis using the two stage least squares estimation on the whole dataset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Intention to perform community behaviour</th>
<th>Intention to perform brand behaviour</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Attitude</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std err = 0.08</td>
<td>Pr&gt;</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Subjective norms</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std err = 0.07</td>
<td>Pr&gt;</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) <strong>Perceived behavioural control</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.33</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std err = 0.08</td>
<td>Pr&gt;</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Relative attitude</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std err = 0.07</td>
<td>Pr&gt;</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Repeat patronage</td>
<td><strong>0.53</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std err = 0.07</td>
<td>Pr&gt;</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Intention to perform</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community behaviour</td>
<td>Std err = 0.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the regression model provide support for two hypothesis.

*Hp3*: *Perceived behavioural control on community participation has a positive impact on the intention to perform community behaviour*

*Hp5*: *Repeat patronage of that brand positively affects the intentions to perform loyal behaviour*

Perceived behavioural control and Repeat patronage are significant with a Pr>|t| = <.0001 and confirm the hypothesis that they positively impact on the intention to perform community behaviour and the intention to perform loyal behaviour.

The other hypothesis, also if the coefficients of the regression analysis are positive, cannot be confirmed because of the relatively high values of Pr>|t|.

In the next section we will divide the main dataset in two different groups and perform the regressions on two datasets: one with data from the on-line communities created by companies and one with data from on-line communities created by users. We will test all the hypothesis with a particular attention to the differences between the two groups.

### 5.3.3 On-line communities by companies vs on-line communities by users

First of all we have a look at the means and the standard deviations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D121</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D221</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

20 The dataset with data from the on-line communities created by companies

21 The dataset with data from the on-line communities created by users
The table shows that in general values from on-line communities created by companies are higher than values from on-line communities created by users; this means that members of on-line communities expressed high levels of agreement to the variables proposed. In particular the difference is high for behaviour: the mean of the principal component for D2 is very low (remember that the mean on the whole dataset was 0). This can be interpreted as a more active behaviour of the members of these communities.

Note that the variance of D1 is higher than D2, this means that answers from users of on-line communities created by companies are less homogeneous than answers from the other group of users.

A more detailed view of the differences between the two datasets is given by the regression analysis with the two stage least squares method.

Table 8 reports the results of the analysis on standardized variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>D1</th>
<th>D2</th>
<th>D1</th>
<th>D2</th>
<th>D1</th>
<th>D2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Attitude</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Subjective</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We can see that for both the datasets hypothesis 3 and 5 are confirmed. This means that Perceived behavioural control and Repeat Patronage are significant in determining the intention to perform a community and a loyal behaviour.

As regarding the other hypothesis, D2 satisfies hypothesis 2.
Hp2: *Subjective norms about community participation have a positive impact on the intention to perform community behaviour*

While D1 completely rejects hypothesis 6 with a good significance level. We can indeed say that for on-line communities created by companies the intention to perform community behaviour has a negative impact on the behaviour. This could be seen as a sort of paradox or it could be interpreted as a problem of on-line communities created by companies and a reason for their bad levels of users’ participation.

These differences between the two datasets are not unexpected. As we will see more in details in the qualitative analysis brand on-line communities are places where the social interaction mixes with the users’ affection to a brand (and inevitably to the company behind the brand) so some users tend to identify themselves in the company while others don’t really care about the company or the brand but only to the product; moreover subjective norms can play a critical role in on-line communities created by users.
6. Results of qualitative data analysis

The unique context of a virtual community affects the nature of the community interactions and the social capital production that we observed. You can find a detailed description of each community in Appendix 3; here we report our main results.

Table 9 reports a summary of the main characteristics of each community. The last two columns (Interactivity and Social Identity) are a qualitative grade that we gave to each community according to some selected characteristics. For Interactivity we considered how easy is for a new member to getting in touch with other members using the tools offered; some community haven’t a forum or a place where users can discuss between each other (like a portfolio where a user can post his pictures and receive comments from the others). For Social Identity we considered how strong is the sense of belongingness to the community and the collective “we”. In some communities we found topics about the identity of the community and when we asked to take part to our survey they answered enthusiastically by underlining the unique characteristics of their community. In some others communities we didn’t find any mention to the identity of the community and they were more focused on individuals rather than on members’ aggregation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Creator</th>
<th>Date of born</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>TOOLS</th>
<th>Company presence</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Interactivity</th>
<th>Social Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diesel the Cult</td>
<td>Company</td>
<td>09.2007</td>
<td>6900</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Music Arts</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiniSpace</td>
<td>Company</td>
<td>06.2008</td>
<td>29300</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Creativity Swatch watches</td>
<td>Medium-low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatch the Club</td>
<td>Company</td>
<td>06.2007</td>
<td>16200</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KraftFoods</td>
<td>Company</td>
<td>10.2006</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NewBeetle</td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>11.1999</td>
<td>24467</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>NewBeetle Cars</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiniMac</td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>01.2005</td>
<td>12262</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>MiniMac Computers Software</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikea</td>
<td>Users</td>
<td>02.2005</td>
<td>95956</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ikea products &quot;do-it-yourself&quot;</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium-high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 – Qualitative analysis
First we can notice that on the average communities created by companies are younger than communities created by users. This is historically true and confirmed by the literature. Muniz (2001), for examples, stresses that spontaneous users aggregation was typical of some brands with a strong image, a rich and lengthy history, threatening competition and some sectors, as cars and computers, were more likely than others (see NewBeetle and MiniMac community). Historically companies saw the success of the first Brand On-line Communities created by users and tried to replicate it by aggregating some Web 2.0 tools in an on-line platform with the aim to reunify the fans of their brand and inspire a unique social identity.

The number of registered members is not a relevant information because they are not comparable and we don’t know how many of them are active users. The only observation that we can make in relation to the number of users is about how we got this information. In all the Brand On-line Communities created by users the number of members was available at the bottom of the forum page or there was a special section with the list of the members; in all of them it was also displayed the nick names of the members currently on-line. Knowing who is “on-line” is a good way to foster social interaction. On the opposite side for Brand On-line Communities created by companies it was impossible to obtain a detailed number of members; in some cases we managed to estimate it but for other communities (like Kraft) there was no way to do it. This is only one example of the transparency that characterize more user communities than company communities and this may be one of the contributors of their higher attitude.

Another point of analysis was the tools available in each community. In the Brand On-line Communities created by companies there is a tendency to focus more on the individual identity rather than on the creation of a collective “we”. For example MiniSpace and Diesel The Cult offer the possibility to create a personal page and to exchange private messages but there isn’t a space where users can discuss, exchange opinions and interact. In MiniSpace the interactivity is higher because of the competitions promoted by the company: users can publish their works in a portfolio and collect votes from the other
users, so there are comments on the pictures posted; but they never go beyond the competition.

Typical of the user communities are instead the forums, they are always present. Nowadays this is the best tool available for enforcing communication between members and create discussions. In this way these communities have a track of “what’s going on” and with the threads of the forums they define their path and create a collective identity. Users in these kind of communities are always classified according to their number of posts: from the “green” member to the veteran or the ambassador users can build their reputation and are incite on keep on posting.

However our analysis shows also that having a lot of Web 2.0 tools (include forums) is not enough. Swatch for example in its community, Swatch the Club, offers all the tools considered (plus others like the photo sharing and the group creation) but it has a very low level of interactivity and the forum has very few topics. Why?

Two possible reasons can be identified for explaining this matter: the role of the admins/moderators and the topics around which the community is built.

During our analysis of the communities we noticed how the figure of the administrator or the moderator is important for the wellness of the community. They do not only act against abuses and by punishing rude behaviour; they personify the spirit of the community.

I report the comment of one of Kraftfoods’ moderator to my question: what do you think makes this a good community?
As much as folks don't like to admit it and may even think I'm biased since I'm a moderator - but I think a good community is based on the way they interact and that can be helped or hindered by whether or not the community is moderated.

A lot of unmoderated communities I've seen tend to have a lot of in-fighting, rude behavior and even escalating to pretty severe verbal harassment. Even on sites you would think would be more family-friendly.

Kraft making the decision to moderate these forums was definitely a wise move, as we don't want to inhibit conversations and personalities, but having people actually looking at each post and making sure that the site remains cordial and family-friendly certainly goes a long way towards a happier community.

In my opinion, anyhow.

We found the same spirit in all the Brand On-line Communities created by users while in Swatch the Club the moderator is less active (his last post is of the 11th of February) and his role is more of proposing topics of discussions rather than taking part to members discussions and interact with them.

I report here just two examples that received zero answers:

**TIME TO BE - COMMUNITY**

Swatch The Club - Aug 25, 2008 09:52

What can be harder to grasp than time? That elusive dimension which forever escapes us and which we can never recapture... in the club VOICE N33 six people talk about time to be -

Start your discussion and tell the Community your interpretation of TIME TO BE...

**CHOICES IN LIFE**

Swatch The Club - Feb 11, 2009 11:14

We're all faced with choices in life.

Our personal histories are marked by decisions which, at one time or another lay down the path of our existence.

At these decisive moments, it’s up to us to choose what place we wish to give to our passions and our dreams.

What are yours?
is dedicated. The collective “we” is much more present when they broaden their passion to other related topics.

For KraftFoods for instance the broaden topic is the passion for cooking, for NewBeetle is the passion for cars and motors, for MacMini is the passion for computers and software and for IKEA is the passion for the “do-it-yourself”.

When the topics of the community are only focused on the product (like Swatch watches for Swatch the Club) or they are centred on a topic that has no connection with the product (like music and arts for Diesel), members tend to get bored after sometimes and see the community only from an utilitarian perspective (to buy and sell watches or to promote their works or music).

The last point of analysis is the graphic and layout of the on-line communities selected. In general we can say that Brand On-line Communities created by companies have a very nice graphical layout, very colourful and they are user friendly. On-line Communities created by users are more technical and they require some knowledge of computer tools (for example to insert an image in NewBeetle forum you need to copy the html code of the site that host your image) that not everybody knows. This could me a limitation or a form of self selection of the members of the community.

To sum up with the qualitative analysis we have a confirm of the differences between the two groups of on-line communities. The transparency and the role of moderators in on-line communities created by users reflect the low values of the mean that we had for perceived behavioural control. Moreover from on-line communities created by users emerges a diffused disown of the company to which the community is linked. They stress their independence from the firm and this is reflected by the high values of relative attitude in the quantitative analysis.

One important contribution from the qualitative analysis is about the high individualism that characterizes some on-line communities created by companies. This facet can be seen as a possible reason of the negative

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22 Note that a value close to one represents a high agreement to the item (in this case it was about freedom and ease of interaction)

23 Again values close to one must interpreted as a high relative attitude to the brand and the company (philosophy)
relationship between the intention to perform community behaviour and the behaviour for members of on-line communities by companies.
If the community doesn’t offer tools for enforcing interaction between members they will not engage in active behaviour, also if their intention to do it is high.
So the qualitative analysis confirms the quantitative results and it opens some new points of discussions about the differences between the two kind of communities.
In the next section we will discuss these implications and we will try to learn some managerial practices about how a company can obtain users’ involvement in its on-line community.
7. Discussion and managerial implications
Conceptually and empirically, the present work offers a model from which we can learn some tips on how to obtain users’ involvement in on-line communities.

The study shows that a positive perception of the behavioural control over discussions, activities, chats impact the intention to perform a community behaviour. In other words the perceived freedom in sharing ideas and thoughts with other community’s members affects the willingness to take part to the community’s activities and become an active member.

As regarding the intention to perform a loyal behaviour, it is positive affected by the repeat patronage: the re-purchase and re-use of a product increase the loyalty to that product/brand and the participation to the virtual community.

The study reveals also that there are differences between on-line communities created by companies and on-line communities created by users. On average on-line communities by companies present good values for all the variables analyzed and the qualitative analysis confirms that they are better evaluated by users with higher levels of interactivity and social identity.

Based on the results we think that for the creation of a brand on-line community Behavioural control and Repeat patronage have to take carefully into consideration together with another critical variable: intention to perform a community behaviour. As we have already mentioned its negative correlation with the behaviour for on-line communities created by companies can be linked to the high individualism of the on-line communities analyzed so that a positive intention to perform a community behaviour cannot be expressed in an active behaviour because the Web 2.0 tools offered and the topic of the community don’t allow high interactivity.

We have seen that offering a lot and efficient tools doesn’t mean having high levels of interactivity and an active behaviour. The qualitative analysis suggests that the topics around which the community is built are fundamental. The on-line community has to develop its own identity by going beyond the mere interest to the product. The on-line communities created by users that we analyzed show that they were born to satisfy a need from users related to a
specific product (ikea furniture, MiniMac computers or NewBeetle cars) but then they evolved into a broader passion and enlarged the topics of discussion. This is the critical step that allows the creation of a community identity and aggregates members of the community not only around a product or a topic but around a concept, a cognitive unit of meaning that is perceived by members as a shared passion.

Following this reasoning we developed a matrix having the variety of tools available on the horizontal axis and the strength of concept on the vertical axis.

The matrix suggests a possible categorization of the on-line communities analyzed in this work based on the strength of concept and the variety of tools offered.

We can see that only one of the communities considered meets both the requirements; as a matter of fact IkeaFans members gave positive feedbacks in all the answers of our survey (intention to perform community behaviour=1.5, intention to perform loyal behaviour=1.6).

As the qualitative analysis suggested on-line communities created by users are built around a strong passion/concept while in on-line communities created by companies the variety of tools prevails.
We can agree that a strategy focused on tools is a failure: offering a lot and sophisticated tools without making efforts for creating a concept and revival members’ passion is not appreciated by Internet users.

At the same time a company cannot choose a strategy focused only on the concept because if the passion around its brand already exists and if it strong there is probably already an on-line community on it, developed directly by users.

So a company has to balance the two aspects and find the right mix by keeping in mind the unique nature of this kind of on-line communities. In our model we combines the community and the brand nature that together affects the development of an active behaviour in the on-line communities.

To sum up, the main implications of this research are for the managerial practice. During the development of a strategy for the creation of an on-line community around a brand, a company must answer to the following questions:

1. For what reason am I creating an on-line community? If the answer is “to attract new customers”, an on-line community may be not the right solution.
2. Is there a need by users to interact with me and with other users?
3. Are there elements in the real world that suggest an existing social interaction between users’ of my brand?
4. Is there already a common passion/concept around my brand? What it is? Is it applicable to Internet users? What people say about this concept? Which are the most common topics?
5. Is it feasible to build an on-line community around my brand and its passion?
6. What about transparency of my on-line community? Am I able to guarantee a good level of transparency and the consequences that it implies? Do not forget that if you want to share information you have to sacrifice control.
7. What about the usability of my on-line community? Is it easy to use by users, immediate and with the right number of tools?
8. What about trust in my on-line community? Did I choose the right community managers/moderators and do they know how to better interact with users and involve them in discussions and community initiatives?

These were just few aspects that this work suggests for obtaining users’ involvement in an on-line community created by a company but an on-line community, as we saw, has complex dynamics and there are probably more variables to consider as the nature of the industry/product or the history of the company.
8. Conclusion

In this work we started from the growing attention that organizations and companies are giving to Web 2.0 and social media. We saw (McKinsey report, 2008) that a lot of companies are starting to interact with users using Web 2.0 tools, so we asked how they can obtain users’ involvement and get high levels of participation together with user’s loyalty.

Because of the specific characteristics of our research topic we had to look at three branches of research: the literature about Web 2.0, the researches on community participation and the literature about users’ loyalty to a brand.

All of them helped us to clarify our research contest but they also underlined the gaps: empirical studies on Web 2.0 are too few to have a clear knowledge of the topic, we miss studies on on-line communities and an analysis of their dynamics and behaviours, the literature lacks also of an analysis of brand on-line communities and their managerial implications to understand how companies can gain advantage from active loyalists.

Considering the specific nature of our research question and the newness of the problem we decided to adopt a particular theoretical framework and we developed a model that considers at the same time variables typical of community participation and variables typical of brand loyalty.

These are the variables tested: attitude to community participation, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, relative attitude to the brand, repeat patronage, intention to perform community behaviour, intention to perform loyal behaviour and behaviour.

From the quantitative analysis we found that perceived behavioural control on community participation has a positive impact on the intention to perform community behaviour and repeat patronage positive affects the intention to perform loyal behaviour.

Looking at the two main groups of on-line communities (created by companies vs created by users) we also found that subjective norms positive impact on the intention to perform community behaviour in on-line communities created by users while intention to perform community behaviour negative impact on the behaviour for on-line communities created by companies.
With the qualitative analysis we could analyze more in details the on-line communities selected and find the evidence of the results of the quantitative analysis. With the qualitative analysis we could also open some new perspectives about what determines users’ involvement in on-line communities, like the transparency of the discussions, the role of moderators and the availability of tools.

The results of the quantitative and the qualitative analysis, together, allow us to find an answer to our research question that is summarized by the managerial implications of the previous paragraph.

To conclude a company when decides to interact with users using non-traditional instruments, has to keep in mind that it cannot follow the traditional strategies. On-line communities have their own dynamics and the creation of knowledge inside them depends both on the content and on the quality of interaction. The socialization process creates information that has value because of socialization so it needs to be managed constantly with an ongoing retrieval of languages, not expressed rules and relationships.
9. Limitations and future research

A few limitations of this study along with starting points for future research should be noted.

First our sample could be not completely representative of the entire on-line community population. We used the country of origin as a control variable for the sample bias because we found external data only about it. A better control on our sample could be done by asking to the community administrators data about the gender and the age of the community members.

Another limitation is regarding the language of our proposed survey; we created a survey in English and although English is worldwide diffused this choice could limit the participation of our respondents which can suffer a sort of auto-selection based on the language of the proposed survey.

Another form of auto-selection of our respondents depends on our choice to set all the questions of the survey as “required”; this facilitates the creation of our dataset but could have caused the abandon of users that didn’t want to answer to some questions.

In the end the last limitation is about the size of the datasets considered for the comparison between the two types of communities. Although the whole dataset has 166 observations the two sub groups of observations are of course less, and under one hundred, so a better study could be done by collecting more answers from the two types of on-line communities.

This work would be a starting point for encouraging further researches about the use of Web 2.0 tools for business purposes. In the future the model could be enlarged by considering other variables like the industry of the firms or by stressing more the role of the identity of the company and how it is perceived by users as a whole.

Web 2.0 is something relatively new and the management needs more recommendations on how to interact with Internet users.
10. References


IP Ligence.com “IP Address Location”


The Economist (2007), Serious business: Web 2.0 goes corporate, The Economist Intelligence Unit.


Appendix 1 – Terminology

Aggregation services: gather information from diverse sources across the Web and publish in one place. Includes news and RSS feed aggregators and tools that create a single webpage with all your feeds and email in one place;

Audio blogging and podcasting: a podcast is made by creating an MP3 format audio file (using a voice recorder or similar device), uploading the file to a host server, and then making the world aware of its existence through the use of RSS (see next section). This process (known as enclosure) adds a URL link to the audio file, as well as directions to the audio file’s location on the host server, into the RSS file (Patterson, 2006).

Blogs: a simple webpage consisting of brief paragraphs of opinion, information, personal diary entries, or links, called posts, arranged chronologically with the most recent first, in the style of an online journal (Doctorow et al., 2002). Most blogs also allow visitors to add a comment below a blog entry. Each post is usually ‘tagged’ with a keyword or two, allowing the subject of the post to be categorised within the system so that when the post becomes old it can be filed into a standard, theme-based menu system

Collaborating tools: collaborative reference works (like Wikipedia) that are built using wiki-like software tools;

Data 'mash-ups': web services that pull together data from different sources to create a new service (i.e. aggregation and recombination);

RSS and syndication: RSS is a family of formats which allow users to find out about updates to the content of RSS-enabled websites, blogs or podcasts without actually having to go and visit the site.

Social Networking: professional and social networking sites that facilitate meeting people, finding like minds, sharing content;

Source ideas or work from the crowd: seek ideas, solutions to problems or get tasks completed by out-sourcing to users of the Web.

Tagging and social bookmarking: a tag is a keyword that is added to a digital object (e.g. a website, picture or video clip) to describe it, but not as part of a formal classification system. multimedia sharing: YouTube (video) Flickr (photographs) and Odeo (podcasts)
**Tracking and filtering content**: services that keep track of, filter, analyse and allow search of the growing amounts of Web 2.0 content from blogs, multimedia sharing services etc. Uses ideas from e.g. data on epic scale; **Wikis**: a wiki is a webpage or set of webpages that can be easily edited by anyone who is allowed access
Appendix 2 – Survey form

Survey about community participation

Welcome!

I am a student at Copenhagen Business School and at Bocconi University and I am conducting an analysis on the use of Web 2.0 tools by companies for interacting with Internet users.

Thanks for have accepted to take part to this short survey.

Important: please answer statements from 1 to 5 by tipping the number in the scale which best reflects the strength of your opinion in relation to that statement.

* Required

1. Please select from the list the on-line community where you found the link to this survey *
   Kraftfoods.com

2. Please select your sex. *
   Male

3. Please indicate your age *

4. Please select the country where do you live. *
   Afghanistan

5. I am SATISFIED with using internet to interact with other people *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

6. It is SIMPLE to use internet for interacting with other people. *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

7. It is FUN to use internet for interacting with other people. *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

8. Using Internet is a GOOD WAY to know new people. *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
9. Internet is a FAST way for sharing infos, files, photos, etc. *
1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

10. Most people who are important to me think that I should participate to on-line communities. *
1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

11. Most people who are important to me think themselves should participate to on-line communities. *
1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

12. Most people who are important to me support me in participating to on-line communities. *
1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

13. I feel free to express my opinions in the community. *
1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

14. It is easy to chat and discuss with other community’s members. *
1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree

15. I feel this community is a good place for sharing ideas, thoughts, etc. *
1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
16. I appreciate the philosophy of the company to which this community is about. *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

17. I think that company’s values partially overlap with my own values. *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

18. I frequently visit other websites of this company. *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

19. I frequently use a product from this company. *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

20. I have bought more than a product from this company. *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

21. I am satisfied with the products from this company. *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

22. The relationship I have with this community is important to me. *
   1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree
   1 2 3 4 5
23. I really care about the fate of this community. *

1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree

24. The relationship I have with this community is one I intend to maintain indefinitely. *

1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree

25. I have recommend this brand to my friends *

1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree

26. I consider myself to be loyal to this brand *

1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree

27. I know this brand well enough to evaluate it against competitors. *

1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree

28. In general this brand gives me exactly what I need from that kind of product. *

1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree

29. On the average I visit the community *

- don't visit at all
- less than once a week
- several times each week
30. Specify how many hours do you normally spend each week in the community *

31. About how many discussions, interactions and initiatives of the community will you participate in the coming month? *

32. About how many discussions, interactions and initiatives of the community will you participate in a typical month of the coming year? *

33. Please rate from 1 to 5 to the navigation and accessibility of this on-line community (time, errors, problems in downloading, etc) *
   1= very high 5= very low

34. Please rate from 1 to 5 to the information quality and availability in this on-line community (time spent for finding information, message exchange, etc) *
   1= very high 5= very low

35. Please rate from 1 to 5 the interactivity of this on-line community (quality of contributions and interactions) *
   1= very high 5= very low

36. Please rate from 1 to 5 the policy that supports the personal interface (quality of dialogue, behaviour policies, level of trust) *
   1= very high 5= very low
Appendix 3 – Inside the communities

Kind of community: Brand On-line Community created by a Company
Company: Diesel
Data of birth: September 2007
Members: ~ 10900

How the community defines itself:

"Discover, download and share tracks from a rapidly expanding international community of the best new music artists. Popular music rises as the community decides what they like most, and users influence which artists will get additional support from the many benefits and opportunities on offer. Musicians, no matter what their music style get a platform to host their music, promote news and events and connect with existing and new fans from a vast international music hungry community."

Kind of users: musician/band, artist, normal user. No moderators, members can change their profile any time they want.

Tools available:
- personal public page with personal infos, photos and free comments from other users;
- personal blog;
- personal calendar;
- U:music: a tool for listening to others’ music or upload personal songs (only for users registered as musicians);
- send private messages.

Company presence: no advertisement of Diesel products, no space of sharing ideas about the brand and its products. The company as a manufacturer company is never mentioned.

Topics of the community: music, arts and events connected to them (concerts and exhibitions).
**Comment:** the interactivity is really bounded without a space for sharing ideas and comments. There’s a search engine for users but to find someone you need to know his nickname; it is indeed hard to getting in touch with other users without knowing them before. It is almost impossible to know the level of activity of this community and the real number of active users. The community says that is inspired by the philosophy of creative commons for sharing music but there is a limited freedom for users within the community.
MINI SPACE

CREATIVE USE OF SPACE. AN URBAN INITIATIVE BY MINI.

Kind of community: Brand On-line Community created by a Company
Company: BMW
Date of birth: June 2008
Members: 29300

How the community defines itself.
Sarah Klippert, MINI Manager of BMW Group Middle East, said:

‘MINI has always been an intelligent brand that opens its doors to the very notion of using space more creatively. A majority of the MINIspace.com competitions and projects are open to an international audience, and provide an excellent platform for creative people in the region to network with design-focused people and share ideas online. The potential for members’ work to reach a global audience is very high and will help demonstrate just how much talent there is in the Middle East.’

Kind of users: architects, designers, photographers musicians, normal users. No explicit moderators; users can choose the creative field that they want.

Tools available:
- personal public page with personal infos, a portfolio, a guestbook and a watchlist for other profiles
- send private messages
- possibility to comment the corporate blog

Company presence: the company is a strong presence with the corporate blog (with news from the company and the brand) and the competitions (often built around the concept of the car).

Topics of the community: the creativity as a way of life, the creative use of spaces, the promotion of young artists.

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24 www.ameinfo.com/180802.html
Comment: there are few chances for interact with other users except that with the comments on other’s portfolios. The community is really focused on the brand and the passion for creativity but it is hard to getting in touch with other users and sharing with them ideas and other interests. The perceived behavioral control is high and it is impossible to determine the level of participation of users and the community activity.
Kind of community: Brand On-line Community created by a Company

Company: Swatch

Date of birth: June 2007

Members: 16200

How the community defines itself:
"The Swatch community is a fun-filled place for provocative ideas and lively, curious fans of Swatch watches - online and in the world."

Kind of users: all users are classified as Swatch fans, most of them are collectors. There’s one moderator.

Tools available:
- personal public page with personal infos, pictures and a guestbook
- personal blog
- forum divided in 5 categorizes
- groups of interests: to aggregate members around common interests.

**Company presence:** the company is present with advertisement and the moderator, not very active.

**Topics of the community:** the Swatch watches are the core argument, there’s a strong presence of a sell and buy activity between users.

**Comment:** the community is very focused on the collection of Swatches as a hobby; there isn’t a common passion or interest that goes beyond the product and there isn’t an identification in a kind of “Swatch philosophy”, also if the aim of the community seems to be the aggregation of Swatch enthusiasts and share their way of living. Although all the tools available can easier the interaction, the activity in the forum is very low and there are few active bloggers.
EM QUE DIA NASCISTE?

DIA 1 = DIA DA LIDERANÇA. É um líder nato; gosta de mandar em vez de fazer. É criativo e original, tem raciocínio lógico e rápido, e é capaz de discutir sobre os mais variados... read more

A EVOLUCÃO DO ROUBO

http://img230.imageshack.us/my.php?
image=1aevolucaordoroubogif.jpg read more
Kind of community: Brand On-line Community created by a Company

Company: Kraft

Date of birth: October 2006

Members: impossible to determine

How the community defines itself:

"This is your place to connect with other cooks and share ideas about dinner, kitchen tips, entertaining, healthy living and more!"

Kind of users: almost all are women. There are 4 moderators (with experience in cooking and in moderating other forums) and 2 people from the company (a cooker of Kraft kitchens and a dietician).

Re: moderator

Culeen1

Posted: Mar 17, 2007 4:51 PM

> I think there is a post floating around somewhere
> here describing Pam's pretty vast experience as a
> moderator on other boards.
> 
> I think you need to be experienced.

Tools available:

- forum: is divided in 12 categories. Some are for interact with the company and expert people, some other are for enforcing the interaction among members.
- recipe exchange: each user can submit his recipe, look for others’ recipes, classified by categories and recipes’ type, and add to his personal recipe box.

**Company presence:** the company is present with a lot of advertising, with a selection of recipes with its products and it is active in the forum with the moderators and a couple of employees.

**Topics of the community:** from recipes to tips for eating better, everything that is connected to food.

**Comment:** although the company has a strong presence in the community, the discussions aren’t focused only on the products from the company. Users take part to the community because of their common passion for cooking and not for Kraft’s products. The level of interaction is high and the moderators are really active in helping users.
Kraftfoods.com is recognized as one of the best websites in terms of quality design (visual + technical + creativity). Users appreciate in particular its big and of good quality images: they help in the navigation and they represent well the recipes.

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25 www.bestwebgallery.com
26 bestwebgallery.com/2009/02/19/kraft-foods/
**Kind of community:** Brand On-line Community created by Users

**Company:** Volkswagen

**Date of birth:** November 1999

**Members:** 24467

**How the community defines itself:**

“A personal project of Jeff Croft, it was never intended to become what is has. It didn't take long before the forums section of the site had a few hundred members, and it was obvious that NewBeetle.org was well on its way to becoming the top Internet resource for Volkswagen New Beetle drivers. Nearly nine years later, NewBeetle.org has seen over 22,000 registered members, and averages between five and eight new members per day. Anywhere between 300 and 500 new discussion posts are created and over 20,000 pages are viewed by 1,000 unique visitors each day. NewBeetle.org is driven by support from sponsors, which have ranged from aftermarket product retailers to Volkswagen dealerships. In addition, many members of the site have chosen to donate to the cause and become a Member Sponsor.”

**Kind of users:** members are categorized according to the number of posts they did (from new to senior members). There are 2 administrators and 10 moderators.

**Tools available:**
- send private messages
- chat
- calendar
- forums: where users can also post pictures. 9 categorizes: newbeetle.org, community, news, the gallery, discussion styling, discussion technical, how to's, marketplace, international forums.

**Company presence:** no affiliation with the company. Everything is managed by users and fans.
**Topics of the community:** the product and all its features, cars in general and the love for the product.

**Comment:** the level of interaction is really high and every moment a user can know who is on-line, how many members are registered and where they come from. Both administrators and moderators are very active and support discussions on every topic. The strong presence of US members allow the organization of off-line events in the US, so that the sense of belongingness to the community is enforced.
**Kind of community:** Brand On-line Community created by Users

**Company:** Apple Computer

**Date of birth:** 25th January 2005

**Members:** 12262

**How the community defines itself:**

“Our goal is to create a place where Mac mini and Mac enthusiasts can come, hang out and share information. We are also a great place to get all of your Mac mini news, reviews, accessories, guides, links, pictures, videos and more. So whether you consider yourself a newbie or seasoned Mac user, everyone is welcome to join in!”

**Kind us users:** users are almost men and classified according to the number of posts they did (from new to veteran members). The community is very self moderating with only one administrator.

**Tools available:**
- send private messages;
- forums: where users can also post pictures. The forum is very technical with 6 categories: main forums, news and reviews, Mac software, Mac hardware, community, site announcements and feedback.
- other tools like a map of members were made up by users and are available in the forum threads.

**Company presence:** no affiliation with the company

**Topics of the community:** everything is built around the product and what it represents for the users. A lot of them are software developers so they share a broad passion for computers and programs (very similar to Linux Users’ Groups).
Comment: the interaction in the community is very high and it is self sustaining without a specific effort from the administrator. All the discussions are from members for members with a high solidarity.
Kind of community: Brand On-line Community created by Users

Company: Ikea

Date of birth: February 2005

Members: 95956

How the community defines itself:

“This site evolved out of a desire to provide consolidated and archived information for investigating, planning, assembling and installing IKEA products. Our goal is to enable access to information about IKEA products, to provide inspiration and ideas, to furnish assistance with planning, to make available instructions, to help with assembly, modification and installation questions and to provide answers to both common and uncommon queries about IKEA in general and IKEA kitchens especially. In addition, we are now providing access to an online database of photos, articles, tutorials, store information, product information as well as providing blogging functionality to our members.”

Kind of users: users are classified according to the number of posts they did (from fan to ambassadors). There are 2 administrators and 5-6 moderators. About the administrators: “We, in a more specific sense, are Susan and James. We live one of the last small towns in America: Pop. 302, no joke. We work from home and are homeschooling our children. We devote a LOT of hours to the site every day...in fact, if you contact us, one of us will likely to get back to you within an hour unless we happen to be out of town, or well...sleeping. You can often find us on the forums, where we're quite present.”

Tools available:

- personal public page with personal infos, friends, group memberships and visitors;
- send private messages;
- galleries: for pictures;
- blog
- forum: it is divided in 5 categories with a lot of sub-categories: welcome to IKEA Fans, Plan and Design, Order and Purchase, Making it Work, Share.

**Company presence:** no affiliation with the company and no advertising.

**Topics of the community:** IKEA products and its concept of good design at a low price. Members share the passion for the “do it yourself” and extend it to other field like cooking.

**Comment:** the level of interaction is very high and also the quality of discussions is good because of the professional level of some members: experts in that sector.