Value Co-Creation Process: Reconciling S-D Logic of Marketing and Consumer Culture Theory within the Co-Consuming Group

Submitted by Siwarit Pongsakornrungrunsiplp to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management Studies In May 2010

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate how individual consumers negotiate in the collective community in order to co-create value. By making use of the concepts of ‘resources’ from the Service Dominant Logic of Marketing and ‘cultural lens’ from Consumer Culture Theory, this dissertation considers both individual and collective interaction in order to demonstrate the roles of individual consumers in the value creation process and how the value creation process works. A comprehensive and up to date review of literature provides a guide to the theory and a path for research. This dissertation employed netnography to understand social and cultural aspects of consumption from an online football fan community. The data collection also included participant and non-participant observations, and local fans interviewings. Hermeneutical framework of interpretation was used to analyse data.

The findings show that consumers can co-create value among themselves through the roles of ‘provider’ and ‘beneficiary’. It shows the dynamic movement of individual consumers within the continuous learning process of value creation. This dissertation demonstrates that brand community plays a role as a platform of value creation. Consumers can co-create value among themselves through the process of engaging, educating and enriching. The finding demonstrates active roles of consumers in value creation process. This dissertation also discusses how inequalities between resources of consumers in brand community can cause conflicts among them and how these conflicts stimulate consumers to co-create the collective resources. Within this process, consumers have collectively balanced the power through the social interaction in order to eliminate the domination and conflicts. This dissertation extends the previous researches in value creation within brand community by demonstrating how individual consumers engage and negotiated in value creation process. It contributes to respond working consumers and double exploitation through ‘sacrifice’.
“This dissertation is dedicated to my Grandad and Grandmum, 
and also
Assistant Professor Pattama Sidthichai, PhD and 
Assistant Professor Pongthep Fookul, PhD.”
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Finally, I owe my deepest gratitude to the Royal Thai Government for granting me to study PhD and my colleagues at Walailak University for carrying my lecture loads in last five years.
I remember that I was confused and frustrated about my PhD destination in my first year. I kept asking myself and also other PhD students about my PhD destination. Unfortunately, there was no other full-time PhD students in Marketing during that time, thus, I did only discuss with my roommate who studied Finance. I knew that I was panic. Those students in my office were in the final year and they saw a light at the end of the cave. They told me that don’t worry – You’ll know when you are there.

Supervisor teams, Professor Jonathan Schroeder and Dr Alan Bradshaw who has left Exeter in 2008, were my torch. They had gradually supervised and trained me to ready for tackling with PhD dissertation. I started my PhD journey with my research proposal – Branding football club. I remember being told at the time that PhD route was not a straight line, but instead, it might be a circle, non-linear, or complex process depending on how quick I could engage it. I began to read articles related to branding and corporate branding. It led me to consider other concepts such as consumption experience and brand community. Meanwhile, Jonathan’s a reading module was very useful and he introduced ‘S-D logic’ to me in the first time. Who know that my long journey and adventure had began from that time.

Although I had considered many theories during my training process in the first year, I still focused on football. To develop my dissertation, Alan suggested me to start writing the conceptual paper about consumption experience and football industry. This paper was benefit to my dissertation in the final year. However, in my first year, I still confused and looked for my destination until I attended the Consumer Culture Theory seminar at Bilkent University, Turkey recommended by my supervisors. This seminar was my turning point and lightened me to see my PhD route. I had opportunities to meet top professors and other PhD colleagues in Consumer Culture Theory. I remember that I did not well in discussion during the seminar, but I learnt a lot from this seminar and was more confident to pursue the doctoral study since there. At the end of the first year, I learnt that I needed to think separately between concept and context of study. This means to consider how concept(s) is suit for understanding context and how context is suit for driving the concept. Therefore, I had to begin thinking of how I could study value creation from the context of football fandom.

However, even I was confident about my route and concept of study – value creation within co-consuming group-, I was asked by many colleagues how football fandom was suitable to understand value creation. I had to clarify them that I was not studying about football governance or research in football, but I was studying about value creation within brand community. Football fandom was only a context of study. In the other words, football fandom played a role as a consumption object which consumers (football fans) consume, and consumption experience can be used to explain their consumption. Moreover, as a Liverpool FC fan, I chose Liverpool FC fan community as a place of study. In this context, Liverpool FC plays a role as a brand which links all Liverpool FC fans to socialise. With the strong tradition of Liverpool FC fans, it provided an opportunity for me to understand how consumers (football fans) co-create value for themselves. Moreover, with the strong culture and long tradition of Liverpool FC, it provides an opportunity to understand consumer culture within a co-consuming brand community. In the same year, my conceptual paper about value creation in brand community was accepted to present in CRAW2008 at the University of Manchester. It provided me a good experience as my first international conference.

To prove the feasibility, Jonathan and Alan had supported me to conduct the pilot study. This would benefit to understand context of the study and the way for collecting the data. I travelled to collect the data at the city of Liverpool. I was lucky to know a Thai lady, P’June who provided hospitality to me during my data collection at Liverpool, even we had never
met before. I conducted interviews with 6 local Liverpool FC fans. I also conducted participant and non-participant observations at the Pub near Anfield, Liverpool FC homeground, and within Anfield stadium both before and after the game. What I had learnt from this pilot study was that it was very difficult to access the local Liverpool FC fans due to their strong local identity of Liverpool. I felt and perceived the tension of the local and global among the local fans from this pilot study. As a Liverpool FC fan for 25 years, I have never thought that I am not a true fan. I have supported Liverpool FC in the same way with local fans do, but just a chance to attend game at Anfield. However, after I embedded with the Liverpool City, I found that the history and culture of Liverpool city play an important role to bond local Liverpool FC fans with the club and create the strong local identity. I also understood the feeling of ‘Left Behind’ that their local identity was consumed by outsiders. They felt that they were losing their power and importance toward the brand. At the end of this trip, I found myself bonding with Liverpool as I was in my home town, even I wasn’t born here.

After I came back from Liverpool trip, Alan and I had discussed how I could access the Liverpool FC fandom. He asked me to read Rob Kozinets’s Netnography. When I had read those papers, I realised that netnography was suitable for me to access the realm of Liverpool FC fans. During this time, I had joined a project with Jason Healy, another PhD student from Dublin City University, Ireland, who was pursuing PhD in Marketing and the context of Liverpool FC by the cooperation between our supervisors. This study is the cooperation between the Marketing Group, the University of Exeter, and the Center of Consumption Studies (CCS), DCU Business School, Dublin City University, Ireland. This was one of the supervision processes which Jonathan employed to train me. I travelled to Liverpool again to collect additional data. We had set the goal for presenting paper at the Macromarketing conference at Clemson University, South Carolina, USA, and our paper got acceptance. To present paper in this conference, there was no question related to the context of study, football fandom. It implied that conducting research on football fandom was not a problem or limitation of the study, but I needed to consider the related issues such as the history and tradition of Liverpool FC, accessing to the Liverpool FC fans, etc.

Phew! I felt more comfortable in my PhD destination after I had presented the paper: ‘Left Behind, Local Fans of Global Brand’. By employing the lens of global fan, it helped me understand the tension of local and global fans. Moreover, as a researcher, I employed myself as data collection instrument during my observation about Liverpool FC context. I would call it an adventure because during one of my visitings at European game at Anfield, I had been abused by a local Liverpool FC fan who didn’t want to see outsiders, especially an international fan like me, in their realm. However, not all Liverpool FC fans closed the door to outsiders, because there was a mature fan who came to calm the situation. This also included one after the 206th derby match when I went back to the Pub, namely the Sandon. Once I stepped into the bar for ordering a pint of beer, there was a guy who looked like a guard of their group (wearing black jacket and jeans with the skinhead hairstyle) walked to me and asked me out. He had tried to search my stuffs but I denied and walked away from there. It was a place where Simon, my Liverpool FC mate, told me that it was one of the most friendly pubs for us. I told this story to the TIA forum, and all my fellow members agreed that it should not happen with the Liverpool FC fan. It’s shame!

But the process of training did not finish, Jonathan supported me to submit my research proposal to ‘Doctoral Dissertation Proposal in Marketing Contest’, held by Marketing Science Institute (MSI). The result was not the prize but it was the comments related to the feasibility of my conceptual, context of the study, research questions and also the methodology. The feedback was very useful to my dissertation and made me ready to start my real journey.
Since I had walked through different training processes, it was the right time for me to walk into real pitch. I had reconsidered my conceptual part, context of study, research questions and also methodology. I spent most of my time within ThisIsAnfield.com by permission of the moderator and other members to collect and observe data. I walked into the midway of my doctoral journey and another half was presented in the Chapter One to Chapter Nine of this dissertation.

When I had started my second half, I was panic again because whenever I looked at the new issue articles, there were interesting and important papers related to my dissertation. Therefore, I had to control myself to concentrate with my research questions and data. I remember being told by Jonathan that I should think ‘enough’ and concentrate with my study.

What’s New? This is a common question I have been asked since the beginning of my second half of journey, writing the dissertation. Has someone never done before? Does it employ new concept to understand the phenomenon? Is it a new context to understand this issue? How does it extend our understanding the concept? These questions were raised during my attending QDA workshop and the CCT IV conference at the University of Michigan. One of this workshop aims was to drive me and other young scholars to challenge the theory. Another issue I learnt from this workshop was ‘let data talk’, and I agreed with them because as a young researcher, it’s quite often that I was over reflective and did not provide related data. Until now, I realise that attending conferences both presenting and listening is the good opportunity to learn and accumulate knowledge and experience from the research community.

When I was nearly my destination, I realised that I did not only receive a degree, but also my wisdom and experience in the international academic society. One thing I learnt from studying PhD at the University of Exeter was that PhD was value creation through a continuous learning process between supervisor and student. This process required interaction, shares, dialog, cooperation and discussion. This process can be employed to understand with other phenomena such as relationship within family, or workplace. This process likes a football required 11 players to support each other.

At the end of my prologue, I ask myself: Do I believe in fate? Yes, I do. This is one of reasons why I am here in Exeter as one of Jonathan’s students. It seemed like I was walking into the Great Hall at Hogwarts in J.K.Rowling’s Harry Porter on my first day as one of the Marketing Group at the ‘real’ Great Hall, the University of Exeter. It was not sorting hat, but a register officer to point me to the Streatham Court where my office and long journey were. Like Dumbledore, Jonathan always provided me good weapons at the right time. Those weapons did benefit me to achieve my PhD destination. Therefore, I would say that I have not walked through the PhD journey alone, but with my supervisor, Marketing Faculty, other PhD colleagues, and my family. I have a feeling in the same way with all Liverpool FC fans toward our tradition:

“YOU’LL NEVER WALK ALONE”
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Co-creation of value has assumed central importance in marketing theory. Consumers are currently much more active and creative in that they can co-create value with companies and other consumers by themselves. They can co-construct their own consumption through different life projects (i.e. anti-consumerism, consumer empowerment, consumer resistance, brand communities, consuming tribes, and so forth). These active and creative movements have helped to shed the light on the value creation process which can pose opportunities and threats for companies. Value creation is a remarkable and interesting issue among academic and practical debates in marketing. Although these debates have touched upon the active roles of consumers through different research streams, they tend to focus on the capability or potential of consumers to solve technical or product usage problems via the value creation process. Moreover, these debates focus on either the individual or social level of value creation.

Although a recent study by Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould (2009) has revealed that consumers can co-create value within brand communities through different practices, they do only focus on the macro-perspective of value creation and less concern on the micro-perspective of value creation. This dissertation hopes to shed some new light on the value creation process by demonstrating how individual consumers participate in the collective process to co-create value through the functions of co-consuming group, Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing (hereafter; S-D logic) and the cultural lens of Consumer Culture Theory (hereafter; CCT).

Thus, this dissertation considers both the individual and social levels of value creation as units of analysis in order to understand how consumers co-create value among each other. In order to do this, this dissertation investigates how individual consumers negotiate and engage with the collective community for the purposes of co-creating value. In this way, this study through individual level contributes to our understanding of the roles played by consumers in the value creation process and also contributes how the value creation process works among consumers through the collective level. This dissertation also sheds light on the dynamic movements of individuals within the social arenas. Moreover, this dissertation also contributes to the understanding the whole interaction process of marketplace – individual and collective interaction.

In order to do this, ThisIsAnfield, an unofficial online Liverpool FC fan-site (hereafter; TIA), is used as a case study to demonstrate how consumers co-create value by themselves.
Investigating value creation through football fandom can provide a useful case of co-consumption group because it is considered as a consumption object which links all consumers to socialise in the same way with other objects e.g. computer (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001), food (Cova and Pace, 2006), motorcycle (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), or festival (Kozinets, 2002a). Moreover, this community can help us to understand value creation because it provides a case of active consumers who manage and run the community by themselves.

The theoretical foundations in this study are developed from the reconciling of S-D logic and CCT. Although these two insights have been considered by Arnould (2007a) as natural allies, they have different ways of conceptualising movement. In marketing literatures, Peñaloza and Mish (2010) have employed the ‘cross-fertilising insights’ of S-D logic and CCT to understand the market co-creation from nine firms. Their synthesis of S-D logic and CCT help us to understand the nature of co-creation in markets.

To develop the theoretical foundations, key aspects of S-D logic and CCT regarding to value creation process are reviewed. Vargo and Lusch (2004a) have brought together debates of S-D logic on resources and the roles of actors in marketplace by emphasising value-in-use, rather than value-in-transaction and also exchange process of firm perspective. In a parallel development, the notion of active consumers has been illuminated by the concept of CCT which focuses on the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). In CCT marketing scholars view value co-creation in terms of a cultural framework that focuses on how consumers perceive, interpret, understand and interact with the market offering (Holt, 2002). The cultural perspective taken by CCT provides marketing scholars with a framework for understanding the behaviour of consumers in cultural environments where value is a multi-dimension.

Consumers are seen as being increasingly powerful in current consumer research because the growing number of consumer-to-consumer (C2C) interactions can create both opportunities and threats for companies (e.g. Denegri-Knott, Zwick and Schroeder, 2006; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Wright, Newman, and Dennis, 2006). In this respect consumers have been labelled ‘Free Consumers’ (Zwick, Bonsu and Darmody, 2008). Therefore, the unit of analysis in consumer research is not only the individual level of consumption or the relationship between companies and consumers, but also the social level of consumption among consumers (e.g. brand community, subculture of consumption, consumer tribe, etc.), known as the ‘co-consuming group’ (Arnould, Price and Malshe, 2006).
The notion of the co-consuming group is useful to marketers who aim to understand the social connections among brand users that affect the meanings and value of brands (Carlson, Suter and Brown, 2007). In order to understand the power of co-consuming groups many scholars have investigated the characteristics, emergence, or other important factors of brand communities (Belk and Tumbat, 2005; Carlson et al., 2007; Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006; McAlexander, Schouten and Koening, 2002; Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). Thus, this dissertation would consider brand community as a co-consuming group. Cova and Dalli (2009) have recently proposed another perspective on value co-creation which they have labelled ‘working consumers’. In these studies, marketing scholars found that consumers can co-create value by themselves. However, the roles played by participants in the value creation process and how the process itself works are less well understood.

Reconciling S-D logic and CCT can help marketing scholars understand the whole interaction process of marketplace. In S-D logic, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) primarily focus on company resources (i.e. skills and knowledge) in the context of interactions between companies and consumers. Arnould et al. (2006) have advanced Vargo and Lusch’s (2004a) work by adding the consumer resources to explain the whole exchange process. They bring together CCT with its emphasis on value co-creation and S-D logic in order to show how companies engage the cultural schemas of consumers with the intention of initiating a process whereby they co-create value with (rather than for) consumers. Therefore, instead of being concerned with purchasing power as a first priority, companies should understand how consumers value their set of life projects, or how they enact their life narratives (Arnould and Price, 2000). This enables companies to “anticipate consumers’ desired values and help them create the value in use” (Arnould et al., 2006: 93). Thus, this dissertation has provided an additional perspective of value creation by focusing on individual and collective interaction within brand community.

Value is a core component in the social interaction of marketplace. However, it is problematic to construct a perfect definition of value for all entities because value may be judged by consumer’s perception through an internal process. Because it is dynamic and controversial, value can mean different things and be viewed in different dimensions (Lawrence and Phillips, 2002; Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2008a). For example, value can be viewed as an interactive relativistic preference experience (Holbrook, 2006a), as a symbolic meaning (Richin 1994a), or as a value added concept (economic worth for customer and seller) (Woodruff and Flint, 2006), among other things. Therefore, a cultural framework has been employed to inform the view taken of the value co-creation process in
this dissertation; specifically by focusing on the cultural and symbolic meanings of consumption rather than what value is.

Netnographic observations have been conducted from the TIA community. This case study provides additional understanding of value creation within an online brand community in which consumers both socialise and work to solve their individual life goals (e.g. Blazevic and Lievens, 2008; Mathwick, Wiertz and De Ruyter, 2008; Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001; Muñiz and Schau, 2005). Moreover, participant and non-participant observations are conducted at the Anfield (Liverpool FC homeground) and the pubs near the Anfield, interviews with local Liverpool FC fans in order to understand deep engagement with the club and its fans. My long history and engagement of being a fan myself are used to make understand about this social phenomenon. This dissertation demonstrates the continuous learning process and many-to-many relationship of value creation which occur among consumers. Or in other words, it provides a good study of the creativity of consumers within a social network. These kinds of social interaction are defined as ‘service’ in S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a, 2008a), which is to say ‘a process of doing something for someone’. Moreover, this dissertation focuses on a collective group of consumption which is solely controlled and managed by consumers.

The preliminary work indicates that the study of brand communities is an effective way to gain an understanding of how the value co-creation process works among consumers. In this context, ‘brand community’ is defined as a co-consuming group in which consumers initiate the formation of a community based on their passion for a brand. This dissertation is designed to investigate how consumers co-create value by themselves, and to that end, it seeks to answer four research questions: (1) What roles do consumers play in value co-creation process? (2) How does the value co-creation process work? (3) How do the individual members of co-consuming groups negotiate with each other?

The conceptual discussions in Chapter Two are began by demonstrating how and why S-D logic is an emerging dominant logic of marketing. To do this, the traditional dominant logic, namely ‘Goods Dominant Logic of Marketing’ (hereafter G-D logic) is compared with the emerging dominant logic, S-D logic. The traditional and fundamental paradigm of the marketing discipline, G-D logic, is also discussed in order to present of a case for why marketing needed new dominant logic.

Following this, S-D logic is purposed as ‘an emerging thought’ in the marketing discipline and distinguished between the terms ‘service’ and ‘services’. The updated Fundamental
Premises (FPs) are outlined as the main concept of S-D logic. In order to do this, ‘service’ is at the centre of the exchange process, thus shifting the focus of marketing from the collection of productive resources to skills and knowledge. While previous marketing research and practices have focused on value-in-transaction (economic value) through the exchange process, S-D logic proposes value-in-use or ‘service’ (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a), as a focus of the value co-creation process.

The new roles played by companies are demonstrated in the value co-creation process by showing how they can help consumers to achieve their life goals through the value proposition. Because consumers are the best judges of what value is to them, value cannot therefore be produced in factories as value-added. Instead, companies can only communicate the value proposition to consumers and thereby acting as consultants who help consumers to engage in the value co-creation process. Then, ‘cash flow’ is presented as a marketing feedback in order to evaluate marketing performance. Finally, the reasons of synthesising between S-D logic and CCT as a framework for understanding the value co-creation process are discussed.

Chapter three explains how the terms ‘value’ and ‘value co-creation process’ relate to brand communities. This chapter is began by presenting the whole exchange process; synthesising company resources (‘skills and knowledge’: Vargo and Lusch, 2004a) with consumer resources (‘social, cultural and physical schemas’: Arnould et al., 2006). In this process, companies need to engage themselves in value creation by employing their competencies to understand consumer schemas. Additionally, consumers employ these schemas to co-create value with companies or other consumers in order to achieve their life goals.

Because value is a multi-dimensional concept, the definition of ‘value’ is clarified in the less subjective term for this dissertation. Then, the emergent of value is discussed through a co-creative process between companies and consumers (i.e. via dialogue, interaction, involvement, and consumption). Holt’s (1995) ‘How Consumers Consume’ metaphors are employed to explain the value co-creation process at the individual and collective levels of consumption. Finally, the idea of social connection and value co-creation within the brand community are discussed by synthesising S-D logic and CCT. This chapter also explains the social network of consumption whereby consumers form their empowerment (Denegri-Knott et al., 2006).

Chapter Four concludes the conceptual portion of this study. In this chapter, the active roles of consumers within social networks are demonstrated by discussing the collective and
individual levels of consumption. The “community of practice” theory (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991) is employed to explain the active roles played by consumers within brand communities. At the collective level, the social network or brand community is considered as a community of practice which requires three components of practice: understanding, procedures and engagement (Warde, 2005). Moreover, the experience paradigm is used to discuss the individual of consumption. And finally, the forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) are employed to discuss the negotiation between individual consumers and collective group.

This chapter is presented in three parts. Firstly, the individual level of value co-creation is discussed through the experience paradigm which is used to demonstrate how individual consumers engage in consumption and brand communities. Then, a typology of experientialism is disussed which distinguishes between the ‘market dimension’ (consumer experience and consumption experience) and the ‘activity dimension’ (extraordinary experience and ordinary experience). Moreover, examples of experiences in football fandom are provided in order to understand the context of the study.

Secondly, the social network or brand community as a co-consuming group is discussed by employing the community of practice theory to understand the value creation process. In this part, the reasons why brand communities are viewed as co-consuming groups and the concept of brand community are discussed. At the end of this part, ‘virtual brand’ or online brand communities are argued as a kind of co-consuming group in which a number of consumers socialise via the internet and co-create a social network of consumption.

Finally, the theory of capital is employed to understand how individual consumers negotiate with each other in collective groups. The forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) provides an additional framework for understanding how consumers employ resources in the value co-creation process by helping to account for the resources that consumers employ in the co-creation process.

Chapter Five explains the research methodology, or “netnography”, which was employed to understand the value co-creation process by investigating how individual consumers engage themselves in online communities. This chapter begins by discussing why this research methodology is useful for the purposes of enquiring into the social and cultural aspects of consumption in online communities. Then the reason of selecting the TIA community as a case study is presented. Consumer-to-Consumer interactions within the TIA community were observed and recorded using the humanist inquiry method. A hermeneutical framework of
interpretation is discussed to demonstrate how individuals engage in the value co-creation process. The outlines of the research ethics during the data collection process are present at the end of this chapter.

The findings of netnographic observations are presented in three chapters: Chapter Six, Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight. These chapters are intended to answer the following questions: How do social structures or rankings affect how consumers engage in the value co-creation process? How do individuals engage in the value co-creation process? What are the roles of consumers and the brand community within the value co-creation process? How does the value co-creation process work? How can the forms of capital explain consumer engagement in the online community?

Chapter Six outlines and discusses seven social structures or ranks in order to understand the social interaction from the different levels of participation in the value co-creation process. Each social structure or ranking separately is discussed, focusing in particular on how ranking affect how TIA members engage with the community. The impact of consumer resources on how individual consumers engage in brand community is highlighted in this chapter. These resources are the knowledge, information, and experiences that consumers use for the purposes of co-creating value. Additionally, social interactions within the online community provide another perspective to understand the value co-creation process through the theory of capital which will be presented in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Seven employs the social interaction debates from Chapter Six in order to demonstrate how individuals engage in the value co-creation process. This helps us to understand how consumers are able to co-create value by themselves and how the value co-creation process works. In this chapter, the interaction of both the individual and collective levels is considered in order to understand how individuals interact with collective groups. The process that individual consumers use their resources to interact with other consumers for the purposes of co-creating value is also demonstrated.

At the collective level, the roles of the brand community or the community of practice as a platform for value co-creation are discussed and this section also demonstrates the important components of this process: Relationship, Process, and Resources. This understanding is extended to discuss how brand communities act as independent resource integrators which allow consumers to co-create value by themselves through the 3Es process: Engaging, Educating and Enriching. From the interaction between individuals and collective group, the dynamic movements of individual consumers within communities of practice are
demonstrated through the levels of engagement and resource intensity. In the discussion, how the value co-creation process works is explained by showing that consumers perform two main roles within it (provider and beneficiary) and that the value co-creation process is itself a continuous learning process among consumers.

Chapter Eight employs the forms of capital (human capital, social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital) to understand how individuals negotiate the value co-creation process as members of brand communities. This chapter is also informed by the critical perspective of power. Inequalities between the resources of consumers in brand communities are discussed as causes of conflicts among them and how these conflicts may stimulate community members to co-create value, individually and collectively, through the forms of capital. The emergent of each form of capital from social interactions is demonstrated in order to solve conflicts among members through a continuous learning process.

Chapter Nine concludes this dissertation by discussing the conclusions of each chapter. The dissertation contributions are discussed to current theoretical and managerial understandings of the value co-creation process and also brand communities. Finally, the limitations of this dissertation and also some possible directions for future research are discussed.
CHAPTER TWO: SERVICE-DOMINANT LOGIC OF MARKETING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Undeniably, the focus in marketing has shifted from the exchange of tangible value to one that increasingly includes intangible value. In response to this, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) have proposed an emerging marketing paradigm: S-D logic. They emphasise the importance of consumer-centricity in a company’s value creation process, and discuss value-in-use, rather than value-in-transaction.

This dissertation has extended Vargo and Lusch’s (2004a) value creation by demonstrating value creation process among consumers through the concept of CCT (see Arnould and Thompson, 2005, 2007). This chapter has demonstrated the basic concept of S-D logic and explain what S-D logic is and what it is not in order to provide a guide to theory and a path of research. Moreover, this chapter also discusses the difference between ‘service’ and ‘services’ in order to understand value creation process. Thus, the discussions of service, value creation, and theoretical foundations in this chapter are mainly developed within the notion of S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a).

S-D logic is a marketing evolution which shifts from the old paradigm, the company-centric or goods-centred view, to a new paradigm, the consumer-centric or service-centred view (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). The idea is presented through a resource-based theory which explains companies’ operant and operand resources. Operant resources are used for activating operand resources or other operant resources. Furthermore, they are invisible and intangible variables: companies’ core competencies (skills and knowledge) which are employed to create results. Meanwhile, operand resources are used for producing effects, and include factors of production or collection of material resources such as raw materials or goods.

In the goods-centred view of marketing, companies primarily focus on operand resources and make-and-sell or production and distribution. Alternatively in the service-centred view, companies focus on operant resources, which concern sense-and-response, in order to gain advantages over their competitors. In the S-D logic, consumers are companies’ operand and operant resources because they are not only the best judges of what they value, but also active participants in the value creation process. Co-creation of value can be investigated by asking how consumers engage in the value creation process. This approach emphasises customisation.
over standardisation and consumer participation in consumption. However, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) view this process S-D logic from manufacturers’ perspectives which does not fully portray the value co-creation process. Arnould et al. (2006) offer a parallel view to Vargo and Lusch by adopting the perspective of the CCT to explain how companies engage in cultural schemas in ways that allow consumers to act as value co-creators as well. In the other words, value creation does not only limit to exchange process, but also interpretive process among consumers (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006).

This chapter aims to understand S-D logic and the core concepts of this marketing evolution. In this chapter, value-in-use is considered as the focal of value creation process, but Vargo and Lusch (2004a) have limited value-in-use of S-D logic within the exchange process. They overlook the importance of meaning and cultural reproduction within the interpretive process. Thus, the theoretical foundations in this dissertation have been developed through the reconciling of S-D logic and CCT in order to inform and guide for understanding the roles of value and service in value creation process. To illustrate this emerging dominant logic, this chapter is presented in three parts: Firstly, an overview of the shift from a goods-centric to a service-centric marketing paradigm; secondly, the definition of S-D logic and the fundamental idea of service-centricity; and finally, the reasons of synthesising S-D logic with CCT.

2.2 GOODS-DOMINANT LOGIC OF MARKETING (G-D LOGIC): A TRADITION MARKETING PARADIGM

Marketing has continuously evolved as a discipline. It faced a new challenge at the beginning of the twenty-first century when Vargo and Lusch (2004a) proposed a new marketing paradigm which ignited controversy among both academics and practitioners. Many scholars respond to debate in ‘Invited Commentaries on Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing’ (Bolton, 2004) as a paradigm driven. Levy (2006) believes that this debate is an important process for driving the new paradigm.

Although not all scholars support Vargo’s and Lusch’s paradigm, their contributions to the debates on it in a wide variety of works in the field have furthered our understanding of Vargo’s and Lusch’s ideas. A crucial contribution to the debate has been made by Lusch and Vargo themselves in their 2006 book, The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions. Concerns were raised at an early stage in the discussions on S-D logic about whether it was a new marketing paradigm or merely a new account of old ideas.
(Lusch and Vargo, 2006a). Vargo and Lusch responded to this in *Service-Dominant Logic* by reaffirming the originality of S-D logic as a marketing paradigm.

Given this controversy, it is necessary to examine the prior dominant model of marketing, G-D logic, in order to determine the originality of S-D logic or indeed if S-D logic is in fact a new paradigm or merely a reformulation of G-D logic.

### 2.2.1 Goods-Dominant Logic of Marketing: a Tradition and Fundamental of Marketing

Before proposing S-D logic, Vargo and Lusch bring readers back to an earlier stage of marketing thought in the first decade of the twentieth century in order to view the distribution and exchange of commodities and then to the golden age of marketing in the nineteen fifties and sixties, when Marketing was viewed as a discrete discipline from Economics (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). From this period onwards, marketing became an important mechanism by which companies and many marketing scholars developed techniques and ideas for the management: for example, Burleigh B. Gardner and Sidney J. Levy’s (1955) *The Product and the Brand*, J.B. McKitterick’s (1957) *What Is the Marketing Management Concept?*, Sidney J. Levy’s (1959) *Symbols for Sale*, Jerome McCarthy’s (1960) *Basic Marketing*, Robert J. Keith’s (1960) *The Marketing Revolution*, Theodore Levitt’s (1960) *Marketing Myopia*, Philip Kotler and Sidney J. Levy’s (1969) *Broadening the Concept of Marketing, etc.* (Levy, 2006). In this section, I present the characteristics of G-D logic:

#### 2.2.1.1 Make and Sell Philosophy

As shown in Figure 2.1, G-D has traditionally been fundamental to marketing thought. It focuses on the qualities of goods in the production process and distribution system from the manufacturer’s perspectives and services are viewed as immaterial goods (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). Although G-D logic employs the concept of consumer orientation – by starting the marketing ideas from target marketing, making goods and services which can satisfy customers’ needs and wants, communicating to customers, distributing goods and services to customers, and measuring the feedback from goods by tracing customer satisfaction (Kotler, 2003), it is arguable that G-D logic scholars do not actually allow consumers to co-create value. On the other hand, consumers have less involvement in the value creation process. Hence, G-D logic is largely concerned with the processes of make-and-sell or production-and-distribution (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a).
2.2.1.2 The 4P’s as the Universal Framework

G-D logic uses the 4P’s framework to define the normative tasks for managing companies’ marketing functions. Although companies adopt and modify different techniques to manage their marketing programmes – product differentiation, consumer orientation, quality management, relationship management, and so forth: see Vargo, Lusch, and Morgan, 2006), they tend to maintain the 4P’s as a universal framework. Thus, in the present most companies manage their marketing programmes in terms of product, price, place, and promotion. Therefore, companies tend to base their marketing strategies on the same framework (Day and Montgomery, 1999) and the winner of the game is whoever can make better use of the 4P’s than their respective competitors.

2.2.1.3 Operand Resource as a Primary

G-D logic is a goods-centric view of marketing which considers operand resources or factor(s) of production as a primary. The traditional concept of resources is derived from a view of natural resources as finite and tangible. Moreover, nations, companies, or groups which possess greater resources have an advantage over those who have comparatively less resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). From this perspective, companies have to pay more attention to the factors of production (man, material, money, manufacture) and show utmost concern for tangible products from the manufacturing process in order to maximise quality against production costs.

2.2.1.4 Value Embedded with the Goods

Because G-D logic views goods as a unit of exchange, ‘value’ is embedded with goods as value-added in order to create a value of exchange. With this concept, marketing scholars and practitioners believe that customers judge the value of goods by evaluating the cost of goods (Kotler, 2003). Therefore, companies have to make and distribute goods to customers at the lowest cost. Moreover, companies also believe that they can add value to the goods as value-
added, but this contrasts with Gummesson (2004) who explains that customers are the best experts as far as their needs go, and therefore, they are the best judges or creators of value.

2.2.2 Marketing Evolution: a Catalyst of the New Paradigm

S-D logic is the convergence of recent marketing thought about ‘value’ (see also Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004a) in order to respond the call of new marketing paradigm from many scholars in the field e.g. Achrol and Kotler (1999), Day and Montgomery (1999), Rust (1998), Sheth and Parvatiyar (2000), Webster (1992). This school of thought in marketing began prominently with the functional school in the early nineteen-fifties, before focusing on customers in the nineteen-sixties by targeting the market and satisfying the desires of customers through the 4P’s framework (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). The 4P’s framework seems to be the universal marketing tool for companies competing in the current marketplace because it can be easily learnt, copied, and developed and modified. Therefore, the 4P’s has become a fundamental marketing tool for every company. The success of each company depends on how well they can use the 4P’s.

Accordingly, marketing scholars and practitioners have proposed managerial techniques for marketing in order to create competitive advantages over their competitors. Although they currently adhere to the concepts of customer orientation, customer relationship management, quality control, supply chain management, and so forth, marketing tasks remain largely involved with the production, distribution, and exchange of tangible goods which satisfy the needs or wants of customers (Kotler, 2003).

However, in the nineteen-nineties there were many views which fragmented from the main paradigm of marketing, which were chiefly concerned with companies’ competitive advantages in the dynamic marketing environment (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). Thus, the dynamics of the marketing environment has played an increasingly important role fielding marketing discourse by leading scholars and practitioners to think about companies’ competitive advantages, which has in turn led to calls for a new dominant logic of marketing.

2.3 SERVICE-DOMINANT LOGIC OF MARKETING: A NEW MARKETING PARADIGM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In the nineteen-nineties the increasingly fragmented thought and evolution of marketing discourse influenced marketing scholars and practitioners to call for the new paradigm. Vargo
and Lusch were the first scholars to respond to this, specifically with their S-D logic paradigm in 2004 (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). After proposing this paradigm, they went on to argue that S-D Logic is not absolutely new in the marketing history (Day, 2004; Prahalad, 2004). Rather, they claimed to have synthesised G-D logic with a variety of other more recent ideas in the field such as Resource-Based Theory and Competitive Advantage Theory (Vargo and Lusch, 2006). This section is to demonstrate some reasons why marketing needs a new paradigm, particularly by outlining the drawbacks of G-D logic. Following this, the definition of ‘service’ in the S-D logic is provided before explaining S-D logic itself.

2.3.1 Why Marketing Need A New Paradigm: S-D Logic of Marketing?

Marketing scholars have long discussed paradigm shifts in marketing (Venkatesh and Peñaloza, 2006). Vargo’s and Lusch’s S-D logic has recently contributed to these debates as various scholars have discussed if or how it can be made into a stable, workable, acceptable marketing paradigm. An important question is why we need a new paradigm instead of the traditional marketing paradigm, G-D logic. There are a number of reasons to support the development of new dominant marketing paradigm, some of which are as follows:

2.3.1.1 Goods Logic Limits Fully Understanding of the Exchange Process

Because G-D logic (goods-centric) takes the manufacturers’ view, marketing academics and practitioners working with it tend to view the tangible goods as the centre of exchange, while services are considered to be merely residual of goods embedded in value to customers (Vargo and Morgan, 2005). This perspective is a myopic view of marketing in that it deviates from the actual role of services and the centre of exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). The goods-centric view also directs the marketing perspective towards value in the transaction because companies are seen as focusing on production and distribution to target markets at the lowest cost. Furthermore, companies are seen as believing that customers receive more value from lower cost goods. Therefore, instead of determining what customers want, companies focus just on what they can make and how they can sell it.

G-D logic has influenced marketing thought for many decades and is available in many marketing text books or academic works. Marketing has recently been defined as the process of delivering value to customers (e.g. Kotler, 2003). This definition seems to demonstrate a good understanding of the exchange process, but it overlooks or misunderstands the meaning and details of value in the exchange process. This is because marketing activities have long
been influenced by the economic and marketing sciences which focus on exchanging tangible goods, in which regard value is defined by transactions (Vargo and Morgan, 2005).

However, value in the exchange process has been clarified by Gummesson (1995) who suggests that customers do not actually buy goods and services, but they buy offerings or ‘service’, and goods or services are merely service provision. The concept of goods can be explained by the concept of services, but the services concept cannot be explained by the concept of goods (Dixon, 1990). Service is not something that pertains to goods or something that can be added to goods to increase their value (Vargo and Morgan, 2005), but rather skills and knowledge which companies employ to create the best value for their customers.

### 2.3.1.2 Marketing Separates from Economic Science

The two works which have had the most impact on the development of marketing as a discipline are Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* ([1776] 1904) and *Newtonian Mechanics* (Vargo and Morgan, 2005) both of which were influenced by the British Industrial Revolution. These have formed the basis of ‘Economic Science’ since the nineteenth century (Vargo et al., 2006). Economic science plays an important role in G-D logic. This can be seen in many marketing textbooks specifically in regard to needs, wants, demands and supply (Kotler, 2003; Vargo and Morgan, 2005). This has concept affected marketing thought on methods for the production and distribution of goods to satisfy the needs and wants of customers.

Thus, economic science has historically been focused on the concept of tangible goods. As Lusch, Vargo, and Malter (2006: 265) state, “human senses are more attuned to tangibility and so abstract concepts are more easily understood in relation to tangible reference points.” However, they also stress that the economic world involves more than tangible goods, their production and distribution, and the maximization of profits. Crucially, Smith’s concept of the division of labour (Smith, [1776] 1904) drew attention to existence and importance of ‘service’ in economies, or in as Lusch *et al.* state: “[A]ll economic entities are service providers to one another” (Lusch *et al.*, 2006: 265).

Marketing has continually adapted as a discipline to the changing dynamics of modern economies. Over the past half century it has faced an intersection between the ‘Art’ and ‘Science’ of marketing (Brown, 1996). Brown (1996) has contributed to this debate by responding and contributing to Firat, Dholakia, and Venkatesh’s 1995 article, ‘Marketing in a Postmodern World’, by arguing that marketing scholars and practitioners are independent from the marketing science. Although this is still a controversial issue among marketing
scholars, an important outcome of this debate has been that marketing as a discrete discipline from economics.

An important change that has come about as a result of this is that marketing people have become increasingly aware of the difficulties inherent in trying to predict the behaviour of consumers strictly by demographic factors such as gender, social class, income, education, or other kinds of statistical analysis. Instead, they are now more aware of cultural and social schemas on the behaviour of consumers (Arnould et al., 2006; Firat et al., 1995; Arnould and Thompson, 2005, 2007). Therefore, a new dominant logic of marketing is necessary for both academics and practitioners in the twenty-first Century.

2.3.1.3 Standardisation: Obstruction of Customer Involvement

In contemporary marketing philosophy, marketing people claim to be focused on customer orientation: ‘[C]ustomers are the centre of the marketing process’ (Andreassen, 1994; Brady and Cronin, 2001; Kotler, 2003). But practically speaking, the logic of marketing still focuses on the production and distribution of goods, and minimisation of costs and maximisation of profits. Therefore, companies have to focus on ‘standardisation’ rather than customisation in order to generate production costs to the units of goods.

Marketing people claim that this is consumer orientation because they develop goods and services in response to what they perceive to be the wants and demands of consumers. This is in spite of the fact that consumers are the best judges of their own wants and demands (Gummesson, 2004). Moreover, with the advance technology and communication, twenty-first-century consumers are too wise to be trapped by marketing campaigns, promotions, and propaganda. Therefore, the claims made by marketing scholars for consumer orientation are unjustified because they do not practically act from a consumer-centric perspective.

Instead of providing greater opportunities for consumers to be involved in the marketing process, companies interpret consumers’ needs and wants by conducting marketing research techniques and developing marketing campaigns, and focusing on the standardisation of goods in order to minimise their production costs. Furthermore, in order for companies to produce standardised goods and to maximise their profits, they need to maintain stable patterns of production. Therefore, consumers have no chances to be engaged in the production (G-D logic) or value creation processes (S-D logic).

In conclusion, traditional marketing concepts, specifically G-D logic, are no longer adequate for the purposes of the current marketing environment. The traditional emphasis in marketing
on tangible goods as the center of exchange has led companies to employ ‘standardisation’ as a strategy for minimizing production and distribution costs. However, it has become increasingly clear that demographic factors are not good predictors of consumers’ behaviour or which goods they decide to buy. Thus, marketing academics and practitioners now require a new paradigm which contributes to the management of marketing by providing a framework or managerial philosophy which creates the best service or value to consumers. Importantly, S-D logic is not developed for goods or services, but for all activities in the exchange process.

2.3.2 The Definition of ‘Service’ in Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing

In the early period of the history of marketing, marketing tasks were about the movement of goods from manufacturers to customers (Arndt, 1985) because it was influenced and emerged from the economic sciences. After a number of scholars (Drucker, 1954; Kotler, 1967; Levitt, 1960; McCarthy, 1960; McKitterick, 1957) published works on marketing, the discipline had evolved and branched out into several sub-disciplines. ‘Service Marketing’ is one of these sub-disciplines (Vargo and Lusch, 2004b).

Shostack’s “break free” argument (1977) has been important to the development of service marketing as a subdiscipline: as he stated in 1977, “New Concepts are necessary if service marketing is to succeed” (Shostack, 1977: 73). In this way, he argued that service marketing should be approached as a discrete subdiscipline within marketing. Vargo and Lusch (2004b) agree with service marketing scholars about breaking ‘service’ free from goods marketing and they also state that all marketing should break free from the manufacturing perspective or G-D logic. Therefore, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) present ‘S-D logic’ as a model of exchange for the marketing discipline.

Vargo and Lusch (2004a) present the new dominant logic of marketing by defining new paradigm as service dominant. They use the concept of ‘service’ to explain the new paradigm by drawing together fragmented thoughts in the marketing discipline and environment which emphasise the impact of intangible goods, specialised skills, knowledge, and processes on the exchange process (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a: 2). On the other hand, the service is exchanged for service. Therefore, Vargo and Lusch define service as:

\[T\]he application of specialized competences through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself.

(Vargo and Lusch, 2004a: 2)
S-D logic was developed by Vargo and Lusch to fulfil the calling in marketing for a new paradigm which emphasises the importance of “service” to the creation of competitive advantages for companies. According to Vargo’s and Lusch’s definition of service quoted above, all companies are service business in which respect S-D logic is applicable to all companies. It is noteworthy that service in S-D logic is a “singular service”, which is to say a process of doing something for someone (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a, Grönroos, 2008). In this process, each party employs their skills and knowledge to interact and co-create benefits for each other. They also mention in their last refinement of S-D logic that service is ‘applied resources’ which each party employs to co-create value (Vargo and Lusch, 2008b). Therefore, S-D logic focuses on the process rather than the output from the manufacturing process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPs: Original</th>
<th>Modified in 2006</th>
<th>Modified in 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FP1: The application of specialized skills and knowledge is the fundamental unit of exchange</td>
<td>Service is the fundamental basis of exchange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP2: Indirect exchange masks the fundamental unit of exchange</td>
<td>Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP3: Goods are distribution mechanisms for service provision</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FP4: Knowledge is the fundamental source of competitive advantage</td>
<td>Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP5: All economics are services economies</td>
<td>All economics are service economies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP6: The customer is always a co-producer</td>
<td>The customer is always a co-creator of value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP7: The enterprise can only make value propositions</td>
<td>The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP8: A service-centred view is inherently customer oriented and relational</td>
<td>A service-centred view is inherently customer oriented and relational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP9: Organizations exist to integrate and transform microspecialised competences into complex services that are demanded in the marketplace</td>
<td>All social and economic actors are resource integrators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP10: Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary</td>
<td></td>
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**Source:** Developed from Vargo and Lusch (2004a, 2006, 2008a)
2.3.3 S-D Logic of Marketing: The World Is Service

To clarify the new dominant logic of marketing, Vargo and Lusch first presented S-D logic through eight fundamental premises (FPs) (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a: 6 – 12). They added a ninth fundamental premise to these in their 2006 paper ‘Service-Dominant Logic: What It Is, What It Is Not, What It Might Be’ (2006: 53), and then a tenth fundamental premise in their 2008 paper ‘Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution’ (2008a: 7), Table 2.1 shows how these fundamental premises can be used by marketing scholars to understand S-D logic.

Figure 2.2 shows Vargo and Lusch’s (2004a) service-centred view which highlights companies’ operant resources, and also the original and modified fundamental premises. In a goods-centred view, companies focus on operand resources in order to produce goods and services and distribute to them consumers. By contrast, S-D logic shifts the focus to operant resources. Companies have to focus on understanding how consumers engage in the value creation process by viewing consumers as one of their operant resources. Moreover, companies have to employ their core competencies to co-create value with consumers by interacting with them through the “value proposition”. This paradigm is a shift from make-and-sell to sense-and-respond and from material to intangible value. In the sense-and-respond paradigm, companies need to engage with consumers as the co-creators of value, and thus to use consumer involvement in business processes. These processes are illustrated by Figure 2.2

**Figure 2.2: The Companies’ Operant and Operand Resources**

![Diagram](source: Developed from Vargo and Lusch (2004a))

2.3.3.1 Service is a Centre of Exchange.

According to Vargo and Lusch (2004a, 2008b), in S-D logic ‘service’ is not ‘services’ in the service marketing discipline. Instead of viewing ‘service’ as residual goods, service industry, or value added to goods, S-D logic views ‘service’ as a managerial perspective of ‘doing
something for someone’ process for all companies in the exchange process and all companies as service companies (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). In the other words, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) recommend companies to focus on ‘service’ by employing companies’ skills and knowledge to co-create value with consumers. S-D logic focuses on ‘service’ as a centre of the exchange process because participants in the market exchange their services among one another. Therefore, service is primarily defined as activities in the exchange process (Vargo and Morgan, 2005).

The ‘service is a centre of exchange’ perspective is influenced by Adam Smith’s ([1776] 1904) notion of ‘the division of labour theory’ whereby each party is understood to use their services in exchange for goods from other service providers. For example, service for tables or chairs can be exchanged with carpenters, transportation with bus drivers, education with teachers, food with farmers, and so forth.

The exchange process is crucial to S-D logic. Therefore, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) and Vargo and Morgan (2005) have tried to clarify ‘what is exchanged’. In their 2005 paper ‘Services in Society and Academic Thought: A Historical Analysis’, Vargo and Morgan examine the history and development of economic and academic thought in order to understand the exchange process in general and demonstrate the shift from exchange of tangible goods to exchange of activities. Influenced by Adam Smith’s ([1776] 1904) notion of ‘the division of labour theory’, they believe that each party in the exchange process employs their specialisation to exchange services. Therefore, they conclude that service is “the exercise of specialisation” (Vargo and Morgan: 2005: 51).

Although the current business environment differs from that of Smith’s time, many companies also employ their skills and competences through indirect exchange or employees to produce the exchange or service provision (see also FP2, Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). The skills and knowledge that consumers employ to co-create value correspond to Cova’s and Dalli’s idea of immaterial labour in ‘Working Consumers’ (Cova and Dalli, 2009), or Zwick et al.’s idea of ‘general intellect’ (Zwick, Bonsu and Darmody, 2008). Therefore, ‘service’ is whatever each party in the exchange process exchanges. Or in the words of Dixon, ‘service is exchange for service’ (Dixon, 1990).

2.3.3.2 Shifting from Operand Resources to Operant Resources

In order to establish the new dominant logic of marketing, Vargo and Lusch made use of Resource-Advantage Theory (R-A Theory) which tries to explain how companies create
competitive advantage over their competitors (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). R-A Theory draws on a range of theories from disciplines outside of marketing, such as, evolutionary economics, “Austrian” economics, the historical tradition, and industrial-organization economics etc. (Hunt and Madhavaram, 2006: 68), in order to provide a theory for the creation competitive advantages for companies.

R-A theory views resources differently from more traditional marketing theories which tend to view them as finite, tangible, and visible. To conclude from this, countries, companies, or people who possess more resources can create more value and advantage than others (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). By contrast, R-A Theory views ‘resources’ as anything that creates value: e.g. land, labour, skills and knowledge, customers, a collection of production, money, management, or organisation (Hunt and Madhavaram, 2006). So following R-D theory, resources in the S-D logic can be tangible, intangible, visible, invisible, and infinite.

Thus, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) developed S-D logic by viewing companies’ resources as both operand and operant (Constantin and Lusch, 1994). They shifted the focus in this way in order to keep pace with a broader shift in marketing from a goods-centric to a customer-centric perspective and growing emphasis on the prominence of service in the exchange process.

Therefore, companies need a managerial perspective which is able to create value for consumers merely produce low cost product for them. On the one hand, *Operand resources* are resources used for producing effects (Constantin and Lusch, 1994), and include factors of production or collection of productive resources such as raw materials, 4P’s or goods. In the good-centred view, companies primarily focus on operand resources because they are largely concerned with making and selling or the production and distribution of their products. On the other hand, *Operant resources* are resources used for activating operand resources or other operant resources in order to produce effects (Constantin and Lusch, 1994). These operant resources can be invisible and intangible variables: For example, in the construction business, operand resources are workers, tools, cement, and so on which require operant resources – project management technique, management skills, or cementing technique- to run or activate those operand resources.

In the S-D logic, companies focus on operant resources (*i.e.* skills and knowledge) which they can employ to create competitive advantages for themselves by supplying through the value creation process. Moreover, in this concept consumers are considered to be operant resources which companies are able to involve in the value creation process because they can define and
co-develop value by themselves. Therefore, the crucial task for companies is to select the appropriate entities (consumers) to involve in the value creation process. However, in order to do this, companies must learn and continuously develop the value of their product with the participation and cooperation of their customers. In this way, marketing becomes a process of finding the best solutions for companies and consumers.

2.3.3.3 Focusing Value-In-Use

In S-D logic, ‘service’ is defined as the application of specialized competences (operant resources – skills and knowledge) (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a: 2): That is, it is a ‘thing’ in the exchange process or a unit of exchange. Because of this shift in focus from tangible to intangible and from value-in-transaction to value-in-use, consumers are seen to be buying the usage value of products and service and thus gaining experiential benefits in the exchange process.

Both value-in-use and value-in-exchange have long been discussed by marketing scholars (Alderson, 1957; Beckman, 1957; Cox, 1965; Dixon, 1990). Vargo and Lusch present S-D logic as a managerial framework by which companies may create competitive advantages for themselves by focusing on value-in-use. According to S-D logic, this requires a shift in focus from tangible to intangible products. It is noteworthy that any controversy between tangible and intangible value can be addressed with the concept of ‘marketing myopia’ (Levitt, 1960).

According to Kotler (2003), marketing myopia draws attention to the core product concept in order to show the intangible values of goods and services. For example, consumers buy drills because they want ‘holes’ or consumers go to hotels because they want comfortable beds, quiet rooms, swimming pools, a nice atmosphere, and so on. The hidden agenda within goods and services is what the consumers really want. Consumers want ‘value-in-use’ from the drills and hotels rather than value-in-exchange. In this case, companies need to employ their operant resources to sense-and-respond consumers and service is a process of doing this.

Both ‘holes’ and ‘nice bedrooms’ are service or values which are rendered from operand resources, while in S-D logic companies have to consider how to make holes or a nice atmosphere in a hotel by adding consumers as co-creators in the value-creation process. However, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) have limited the boundary of value-in-use in the exchange process by focusing the interaction of company and consumers and overlooked the meaning system of the market. In the other words, consumers may not only consider functional utilities from products as value, but also consider ‘meaning’ of their consumption.
(Lawrence and Phillips, 2002). For example, consumers may stay in the five stars Hotel because it can increase their symbolic status among other consumers.

### 2.3.3.4 Offering Value Proposition, Not Value-Added

Grönroos (2000) and Gummesson (1998) both argue that value-in-use can only emerge when goods and services are consumed and that it is co-created by customers. As mentioned in Table 2.1, Vargo and Lusch support and extend this view by adding that “the enterprise cannot deliver value but can only offer value propositions; the consumer must determine value and participate in creating it through the process of coproduction [co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2006)]”. As mentioned earlier, consumers are the best judges of what they value, in respect to which companies cannot completely embed value in their goods and services. Companies need consumers to co-creation the value of their products and services: They can only employ their skills and knowledge to facilitate consumers in value co-creation process.

Importantly, value proposition plays an important role in operant resources by activating consumer schemata: cultural, social, and physical (Arnould et al., 2006). These resources include images, symbols, and myths which inspire the imagination of individuals or consumer communities (Arnould et al., 2006: 95). Because consumers in the twenty-first century are unique, companies have difficulty attracting consumers effectively through hard-sale techniques. On the other hand, consumers are living in the cultural world within a system of meaning (Lawrence and Phillips, 2002; Schroeder, 2009).

One important theory which helps to explain value proposition within cultural schemata is ‘Brand Culture’ which provides cultural, sociological, and anthropological frameworks by which marketing and branding scholars are able to understand brand-management in the “brand world” (Schroeder, 2007; Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling, 2006). This corresponds to S-D logic in as far as companies and consumers are seen to be cooperating in the branding process in order to create meanings for brands. Like in the S-D logic, customers in brand-cultures participate in the branding process. Furthermore, cultural codes constrain how brands work so as to produce meaning (Schroeder, 2007: 352), by negotiating between marketing environment and consumers’ life projects (social, cultural, and physical aspects) (Arnould et al., 2006; Schroeder, 2007).

Therefore, in the S-D logic companies cannot provide the values which are embedded with goods and services, but they can employ their skills and knowledge to create value propositions which draw consumers into the value-creation process (Lusch and Vargo,
According to this view, companies can only offer value propositions to consumers through a system of brand culture which in turn require myths or brand images which can be related to consumers’ life projects (social, cultural, and physical aspects) and thus provide value to them.

### 2.3.3.5 Marketing as the Consultant

This paradigm shift has turned the marketing perspective from goods marketing to service marketing and also from a goods-centric to a consumer-centric point-of-view. Consumer-centric does not only refer to consumer-orientation but also to greater consumer involvement in the creation of value for products and services. Consumer-centricity is an important factor in the creation of competitive advantages (Deighton and Narayandas, 2004: 19 – 20) because consumers are reconceptualised as co-creators of value (Prahalad, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). This changes the role of marketing in the exchange process as a consultant who is available to help consumers create the value. Meanwhile, companies are seen as experts in their specialisation while consumers are seen as the best judges of what they value. Therefore, it can be concluded that companies should provide consumers with more opportunities for creating the value of whatever they consume. In order to do this, they must use their indirect exchange service, employees’ skills and knowledge, to help customers to participate in the value-creation process (Gummesson, 2004).

Gummesson (2004) uses a physician metaphor to support the idea that value is created through interactions between companies and their customers. A physician cannot diagnose a patient without the cooperation of the latter. This is similar to the relationship between companies and consumers which is not as seller to buyer, but rather as partners. This relationship requires interaction and dialogue between both parties.

An example of the application of this idea has been provided by Phones4U, the UK’s fastest growing independent mobile phone retailer (Phones4U, 2008), whose staff act as phone consultants who are supposed to help consumers find solutions to their problems. Hence Phones4U staff act as marketing consultants rather than sales representatives. Phones4U staff ask customers for information about how they use their mobile phones and specific needs that they have before offering mobile phones to customers by using ‘Kushi’ (a data collection form) which records customers’ data. These processes help to engage customers in the value-creation process. Interaction or conversation is an important element in the value creation process. Lusch and Vargo (2006b) recommend that companies should focus on conversation
with customers and place greater emphasis on listening rather than talking to them or using advertising to sell their products and services.

### 2.3.3.6 Financial Feedback

In traditional marketing practice, performance is measured directly through consumers in who are invited to give feedback about their satisfaction on a quantitative scale, namely “Likert” scales (\textit{i.e.} 1 less satisfaction – 5 most satisfaction), and also about their loyalty through the repeated buying (Andreassen, 1994; Söderlund, 1998; Uncles, Ehrenburg, and Hammond, 1995). Nevertheless, these marketplace performance feedbacks focus on value-in-exchange and customer responses to prices and promotions as shown in the Profit-Loss Statement.

Vargo and Lusch (2004a) argue that marketplace feedback cannot be accurately judged by profit statements because profit-loss statements do not actually demonstrate the real financial health of companies. Moreover, service process in S-D logic is the continuing organizational learning process which Vargo and Lusch (2004a) derive from ‘a market-oriented and learning organisation’ (Slater and Narver, 1995). Therefore, this continuing learning process should be evaluated by financial performance or ‘Cash Flow’. This feedback provides basic information about continuous organisational improvements.

However, it has been argued that the financial feedback which Vargo and Lusch provide as marketplace feedback only works in the case of profit organisations: It is supposedly unworkable for non-profit organisations. This is absolutely a misunderstanding of Vargo and Lusch’s idea. Financial feedback is not the profit of the company: It is the company’s cash flow (the movement of cash-in and cash-out of it). They focus on cash flow because it provides options for companies to generate value and financial performance in the future by providing their services (Vargo and Lusch, 2006).

Financial feedback is a potential performance feedback because consumers may rebuy or be more highly satisfied when they deal with lower prices (which, conversely, represent high costs for companies). Repeat buying or higher satisfaction may not reflect the real financial performance of companies. Therefore, cash flow is the best alternative for measuring marketing performance and, moreover, it reflects the ways in which companies perform in the value creation process and their core competencies. However, it is arguable that this financial feedback does only concern the economic perspective and overlook other aspects \textit{e.g.} consumer-brand relationship, sustainability, brand value, and so forth.
2.4 INTEGRATION OF SERVICE-DOMINANT LOGIC OF MARKETING AND CONSUMER CULTURE THEORY

Vargo and Lusch (2004a) have appropriated ideas from many disciplines into S-D logic, including relationship marketing, service marketing, market orientation, quality management, supply and value chain management, resource management and networks. This work creates a comprehensive framework and makes a contribution to the field of marketing by focusing on value-in-use, but Vargo and Lusch (2004a) do only limit value creation within the exchange process. They seem to focus on the company resources and actors in the value creation process. Moreover, S-D logic tends to focus on service between company and consumer whereby company has to employ skills and knowledge to provide value proposition in order to help consumers co-create value. However, this notion seems to overlook the thirty years of consumer research which marketing scholars have contributed works on meaning creation through interpretive process (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006).

Moreover, consumers are much more active and creative in that they can co-create social interaction or brand community in order to express their identities and symbolic meaning of consumption by themselves. Therefore, this dissertation has brought CCT to extend value creation in S-D logic by focusing on the interpretive process and consumers’ cultural schema. In CCT, the co-creation value is viewed in terms of a cultural framework that focuses on how consumers perceive, interpret, understand, and interact with the market offering (Holt, 2002). For example, consumers can adapt brand to co-create their local context of meaning (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2007; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006).

As a form of consumer agency (Arnould et al., 2006), consumers in the communities do not only add holistic values to the process: They also consistently co-create value for each other. Therefore, consumers’ experiences play an important role in the value co-creation process between themselves over time. This is analogous to Hirschman’s and Holbrook’s (1982) alternative marketing paradigm, ‘consumption experience’, whereby they argue that consumers can consume value and gain hedonistic experiences by using products and services.

It is also similar to Holt’s argument in his article, ‘How Consumers Consume: a Typology of Consumption Practices’ (1995). In this, he proposes four metaphors of consumption in order to demonstrate the symbolic meanings of consumption: Consuming as Experience, consuming as Integration, consuming as Classification, and consuming as Play. Holt’s essay lends support to the idea that customers focus on the value of what they consume rather than value-
in-exchange (monetary value). In addition to this, it also supports the idea that value only appears when consumers use products and services in the respect that this is what allows consumers to perceive and experience value. Therefore, according to this view value is defined and co-created by consumers: It cannot be embedded in goods themselves (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a: 6).

Therefore, this dissertation does not only consider service from S-D logic as a process of ‘doing something for someone’, but also considers service from CCT as the process of value creation whereby consumers socialise, interact, or enact with consumption objects or other consumers for their own sakes or the collective community. In the other words, this dissertation has considered what Peñaloza and Venkatesh (2006) mentioned as consumers’ work on producing meaning. These issues will be demonstrated in Chapter Three and Four.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Marketing academics and practitioners have mostly viewed marketing through the G-D logic lens, which tends to focus on tangible goods, production process, and value in transaction since marketing first emerged in the nineteen-twenties. Although marketing academics and practitioners have developed and adapted many marketing concepts (i.e. product differentiation, customer relationship management, supply chain management, customer orientation etc.) in order to manage their research and marketing programmes, G-D logic offered them a managerial framework along with the 4P’s. Until the late of twentieth Century, marketing scholars and practitioners were largely focused on competitive advantages because the 4P’s framework itself could not create them.

Shifts in marketing focus have also led to marketing scholars and practitioners’ calling for a new paradigm. Vargo and Lusch were the first scholars to respond to this call with their Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing or S-D logic. S-D logic shifts the focus in marketing from production and distribution to the exchange process and views ‘service’ as a centre of exchange. Instead of using ‘service’ in its more traditional sense in services marketing, Vargo and Lusch explain that ‘service’ is the application of skills and knowledge to other people’s problems and also that people always employ their service in exchange for service. In the other word, service is a process of doing something for someone.

However, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) proposed S-D logic as the new paradigm from a manufacturers’ perspective by focusing on process, resources and actors in the exchange
process. They have overlooked the meaning production of consumers whereby consumers can co-create meaning for their own sake and the social group. Therefore, this dissertation has extended value creation of S-D logic by employing the interpretive process to understand value creation process.

Synthesising S-D logic with CCT provides an opportunity to understand value co-creation through a cultural lens (Pongsakornungsilp et al., 2008a). The value creation process, as viewed through this cultural lens, illustrates how companies have to employ their core competencies, skills, and knowledge to create the value proposition which activates consumers’ operant resources (i.e. their set of life projects). Once these have been activated, consumers deploy their operand resources (i.e. money or economic value) to achieve their social life projects.
CHAPTER THREE: CONSUMER VALUE CO-CREATION PROCESS – RECONCILING S-D LOGIC WITH CCT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Value co-creation is increasingly discussed in marketing literature, primarily in regard to value-in-use and the active roles of consumers. It is a collaborative process between companies and consumers whereby consumers play the role of value co-creators with companies. Consumers are aware of their powers to control the symbolic meaning of products and services that they buy and how they use these to represent their self-identity (Firat et al., 1995) and form social networks (Holt, 1995). This value co-creation paradigm is viewed and discussed from different perspectives, but always in regard to S-D logic, working consumers, co-production, “prosumption”, consumer empowerment, consumer resistance, consumer agency, consumer tribes, and so forth.

How does value emerge? Many scholars have construed the value co-creation process as a game involving consumers and companies. Examples of this include S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a), “working consumers” (Cova and Dalli, 2009), and “free consumers” (Zwick et al., 2008). In contrast to the value added idea, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) and other scholars who have supported the idea of value creation (i.e. Etgar, 2006; Flint, 2006; Holbrook, 2006a, b; Jaworski and Kohli, 2006; Lusch and Vargo, 2006a, b, c; Payne, Storbacka, and Frow, 2007; Woodruff and Flint, 2006) agree that companies cannot create value wholly by themselves because consumers are the best judges of whatever they value. Companies can only act as facilitators for the consumers who co-create the value of their products and services. These scholars help us to understand how companies and consumers engage themselves in the value co-creation process, which requires interaction, dialogue, involvement, and consumption from both parties.

However, most of this work has focused the value co-creation process at the individual level of consumption. There has been very little work done on how the value co-creation process works at the group level of consumption or how this influences the exchange process or consumption in brand communities (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001; Muñiz and Schau, 2005; Schau et al., 2009), consumer tribes (Cova and Cova, 2002), or subcultures of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Baron (2006) and Pongsakornrungsilp et al. (2008a) have shown how consumers conceptualise the value co-creation process with other consumers.
through the marketplace interaction and also investigated the nature of consumers resources in the whole exchange process. Therefore, the focus here is on how consumers do collectively co-create value because there is already plenty of research available on the relationship between companies and consumers in value creation process.

In order to provide a theoretical foundation for this study, this chapter is aimed to explain how consumers co-create value through the reconciling of S-D logic and CCT. This in turn will contribute to the development of a framework for understanding and investigating how consumers co-create value at the social level of consumption (i.e. in the “brand community”). This chapter has been informed by synthesising the concepts of S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a), customer value (Holbrook, 2006a, b), and CCT (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) in order to make its definition and notion less subjective. In this study, the definition of value as ‘Phenomenological’ from Vargo and Lusch (2008a), whereby value is viewed as unique depending on the personalities and personal circumstances (culture, location, and so on) of consumers (Holbrook, 2006a, b) is employed to understand the context of value in this dissertation. Moreover, value does also rely on consumers’ interpretation by employing cultural perspectives, therefore, this study has synthesised cultural perspective of CCT to understand the notion of value. A broad view of value is adapted throughout this study in order to take account of the different ways in which people perceive and experience value. It contributes to develop the better understanding of the value co-creation process in the brand community.

The cultural frameworks have been taken account in this study in order to understand the value co-creation process, due to dynamic and multi-dimensions of value depending on how consumers interpret the consumption of objects (Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2008a). Additionally, Lawrence and Phillips (2002) suggest that we (both companies and consumers) are living in the cultural industries where the consumption does much regard to ‘meaning’ and ‘interpretation’. The cultural industries mean to all participants in the marketplace which can provide or constitute meaning to the objects. These may include company, consumer, advertising agency, media, journalist, and so forth (Lawrence and Phillips, 2002). In other words, we are living in the society where brand and product can provide meaning itself and especially by consumers. For example, consumers may interpret the meaning of brand ‘Armani’ which can provide the luxury status. Meanwhile they can co-create the symbolic meaning of brand through their consumption. Meaning is created through ‘service’ of company and also consumers that can understand by S-D logic and CCT. Therefore, Theis chapter synthesises S-D logic with CCT, not because these two
concepts are ‘natural allies’, but rather because they offer complementary insights into value co-creation (Arnould, 2007a).

Both S-D logic and CCT require interpretive perspectives, along with a cultural framework which accounts for the co-creation of meaning through consumption or value (Holt, 2002; Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006; Schroeder, 2009). This dissertation also concerns the concept of working consumers (Cova and Dalli, 2009). This recent work has argued that there is no harmony relationship within value co-creation process, namely ‘double exploitation’.

This chapter starts by discussing the whole exchange process (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008a), which represents the synthesis of S-D logic and CCT by integrating company resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a) and consumer resources (Arnould et al., 2006) in order to explain the overview of the exchange process and the roles of companies and consumers in the value co-creation process. Secondly, this section demonstrates customer value and discusses about the notion of customer values from different perspectives. Finally, the discussion of value creation within the collective community is added to our understanding of how companies and consumer co-create value and also provide a research gap in the context of collective community.

3.2 THE WHOLE EXCHANGE PROCESS: INTEGRATING COMPANY AND CUSTOMER RESOURCES

As mentioned in S-D logic, Vargo and Lusch did not provide a way of understanding how companies can go about co-creating value with consumers. Arnould et al. (2006) have formulated a cultural resource-based theory of consumption which shows how consumers engage themselves in the value creation process. They employ the concept of the CCT to complete the whole exchange process by accounting the experience and meaning in the cultural life-worlds of consumers (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008a).

Synthesising S-D logic with CCT provides an opportunity to understand value co-creation through a cultural lens (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008a). The value creation process, as viewed through this cultural lens, illustrates how companies have to employ their core competencies, skills, and knowledge to create the value proposition which activates consumers’ operant resources (i.e. their set of life projects). Once these have been activated, consumers deploy their operand resources (i.e. money or economic value) to achieve their social life projects. To accomplish this process, companies have to focus on the sets of life
projects entertained by their customers and explore how they engage with their social connections in order to co-create value among themselves. This perspective adds co-consuming groups as value co-creators to the whole value-creation process.

Figure 3.1 shows the whole exchange process, integrating both Vargo’s and Lusch’s (2004a) notion of company resources and Arnould et al.’s (2006) notion of consumer resources. This figure shows how companies and consumers are able to engage with each other in the value co-creation process (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008a). Thus, in this section, the discussion of consumer resources; social, cultural and physical resources, has been demonstrated to complete the whole exchange process of value creation. Peñaloza and Mish (2010) have called this whole process as Market Culture Theory (MCT).

**Figure 3.1: The Whole Exchange Process**

3.2.1 Consumers’ Operand Resources

Like Vargo and Lusch (2004a), Arnould et al. (2006) focus on consumers’ operand resources because according to CCT consumers buy and use goods or services in order to experience the activity of consumption itself and also to satisfy their life goals. This is as opposed to them buying goods or services for purely utilitarian or economic reasons. They view consumers’ operand resources as economic and material objects that have some bearing on their life goals. In this respect, economic resources may be anything that grants consumers purchasing power such as credit cards, debit cards, vouchers, income and so forth, while
material objects may be marketed goods and services, gifts, space, and so forth (Arnould et al., 2006).

Furthermore, differences in quality and quantity of operand resources available to individual consumers result in them having different life goals. Therefore, in addition to the economic value or purchasing power available to consumers, companies must also focus on their operant resources and the cultural schemata that influence how they use these. This allows companies to gather insights into the desires or values that consumers entertain and therefore to help them create value in use.

3.2.2 Consumers’ Operant Resources

In contrast to consumers’ operand resources, consumers’ operant resources are the cultural schemata (social, cultural, and physical—their “authoritative capabilities”: Arnould et al., 2006) that influence how consumers employ their own operand resources and other operand resources supplied to them by companies in order to co-create value or to satisfy their life goals. These schemata help companies to understand how and why consumers consume. Thus, the three kinds of operant resources that consumers employ in value co-creation process are discussed in this section.

3.2.2.1 Social Operant Resources

The first of these is social operant resources (e.g. relationships or social ties within the communities or places to which consumers belong). These can be further classified as “primary” group or “traditional” demographic groups (e.g. families, ethnic groups, social class: Arnould et al., 2006) and “secondary” or “emergent” groups (e.g. brand communities, subcultures of consumption, consumer tribes: Arnould et al., 2006). These groups apply to the variety of ways in which consumers buy and use goods and services for the purposes of creating social connections and relationships with other members of the groups to which they belong. For example, Liverpool FC (hereafter LFC) supporters wear a LFC jersey, not only as a show of support for LFC on match days, but also in order to create a broader social experience by influencing the behaviour of other LFC supporters. In some football matches, like the away derby match against LFC’s main rival club, Everton FC, Liverpool supporters put a LFC pin on their chests instead of wearing a jersey in order to influence group-behaviour and avoid violence with Everton FC supporters.
3.2.2.2 Cultural Operant Resources

Cultural operant resources are the skills and knowledge that consumers gain about how they consume. Importantly, consumers who have a high level of cultural operant resources tend to consume in response to more subjective criteria (e.g. emotions, abstraction, imagination, or hedonism) than those who have lower levels cultural operant resources (Arnould et al., 2006; Holt, 2002). Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of taste and distinction can also shed light on the nature of cultural operant resources. Holt (1998) has extended Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of ‘taste and distinction’ by using ethnographic techniques to examine how the notion of taste can be used to distinguish between high and low cultural capital resources among consumers. In this way, consumers may construct meanings for their consumption (Thanksgiving Party; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991) and relationships between brands and objects (Brand Relationship; Fournier, 1998). Therefore, companies need to understand how consumers use cultural operant resources in the exchange process.

3.2.2.3 Physical Operant Resources

The last resources in cultural schemata are physical operant resources (e.g. physical and mental endowments). Differences between physical and mental endowments may result in differences between the ways in which consumers employ their operand resources to co-create the value with companies (Arnould et al., 2006). Lower levels of physical operant resources, such as deafness, weakness, or blindness, should make consumers more able to develop a strategy for co-creating value with companies. Therefore, companies need to provide these consumers with operand resources that can help them to participate in the value co-creation process.

To facilitate consumers in the value co-creation process (as shown in Figure 3.1), companies need to employ their skills and knowledge (through their indirect services or staff) to understand the operant resources that consumers bring into the exchange process. Moreover, companies need to understand how they should deploy these resources in the exchange process in order to develop the value proposition. Arnould et al. (2006: 95) state that the value proposition can provide operant resources such as images, symbols, and myths which inspire the imaginations of individuals or broader consumption communities and facilitate consumers in the value creation process. The value propositions that companies employ will draw consumer operant resources or cultural schemata into the value co-creation process. At the same time, consumers will employ their operant resources to activate their operand resources in order to satisfy their life goals. However, it is worth noting that these consumer operant
resources are similar to the various kinds of capital proposed by Bourdieu (1986) (social capital, cultural capital and human capital) which individuals employ in the value co-creation process (discussed in more detail in Chapter Four).

3.3 CUSTOMER VALUE: WHOSE VALUES – COMPANY OR CUSTOMER?

The definition of value is one of the most controversial issues in marketing literature because value is complex and multi-dimensional (Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). Moreover, consumers are in the world of ‘meaning’ whereby they emphasise on symbolic consumption (Lawrence and Phillips, 2002). Therefore, value can be perceived to have different meanings (i.e. value as interactive relativistic preference experience: Holbrook, 2006); as a symbolic meaning (Richins, 1994a; Shankar Elliott and Fitchett, 2009), as value added concept (Woodruff and Flint, 2006), or value-in-use (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a) through the idea of fragmentation, whereby postmodern consumers may customise value and meaning to achieve their life goals (Firat et al., 1995). For example, while consumers may worry about finances when they go shopping at the end of the month, they may also feel happy to go shopping at the end of the month for gifts for their friends or family in spite of their finances.

Although contemporary marketing focuses on value, marketing scholars and practitioners using G-D logic have focused too narrowly on lowering costs and profit maximisation. According to this view, value merely represents low costs and high profits to companies. Marketing scholars need to investigate the value creation process in order to answer the question: “Can companies create value for the customers?” This question was addressed by Vargo’s and Lusch’s (2004a) notion of S-D logic which emphasises the importance of value in use. Vargo and Morgan (2005) expanded on this with a further study in which they examined the history of economics in order to shed light on the concept of value in economics as it was defined by Adam Smith ([1776] 1904). They argued that many economic scholars have misinterpreted Smith’s concept of value. They point out that Smith originally argued in his work of the division of labour that labourers generate the original base of the wealth of nations through their productivity: “[L]abour was the fund which originally supplies [the nation] with all the necessities and conveniences of life which it annually consumes” (Smith, [1776] 1904: 1).

Vargo and Morgan (2005) also use Smith’s ([1776] 1904) views on value to address their rhetorical question: ‘Why marketing scholars derive marketing value as value in transaction?’
Smith ([1774] 1904) allocated value to goods because he believed that people are more able to understand the quantities and quality of things than the quantity or quality of labour. So that later, value is viewed as monetary value attached to the goods. In this way, Smith’s argument has led to two concepts of value: value as object (Smith, [1776] 1904) and value as usefulness (Say, 1821; Mill, 1848). According to the former view, value can be added to the wealth of nations through the production of valuable goods (value in transaction) whereas the latter view asserts that value corresponds to the usefulness or utility of things (*i.e.* “value in use”). However, before looking at how value emerges, it is necessary to explain the distinction between the definition of value in S-D logic and those proposed by other perspectives.

### 3.3.1 What Is Value?

From their analysis of Smith’s concept of the *Division of Labour* (Smith, [1776] 1904), Vargo and Morgan (2005) note that there are two views of value: value as objects (value-in-transaction) and value as utilities (value-in-use). However, there are other ways in which value has been defined: For example, as a value added concept, the economic worth of a customer, the economic worth of a seller’s product/service offering, or value-in-use (Woodruff and Flint, 2006).

Through the perspective of S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a) and multi-dimension of value (Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007), it is arguable that there are only two kinds of value. First at all, value-in-transaction, it is mentioned in the first three values by Woodruff and Flint (2006). This kind of value is typical value applied in business, accounting or economics (*e.g.* stock value, company value, profit value and so forth). This kind of value can be recorded in the balance sheet. Second, value-in-use, this kind of value is the main issue of discourse within the value co-creation process. It is not only goods and services’ functional utilities, but also its symbolic meaning (see also Lawrence and Phillips, 2002). Furthermore, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) formulated S-D logic from a consumer-centric perspective. Therefore, it is vital to note that the notion of ‘value’ in S-D logic corresponds to what some marketing scholars call ‘customer value’ (CV).

#### 3.3.1.1 Customer Value (CV)

Holbrook (2006b) explains that customer value is an important aspect of the consumption experience and thus for understanding consumer behaviour:
Customer value serves as the foundation for all effective marketing activities..., surprisingly the problem of defining what we mean by customer value or analyzing its various types receives little attention. (p.2)

He also defines ‘customer value’ as “an interactive relativistic preference experience [which] involves an interaction between an object (e.g., a product) and a subject (e.g., a consumer) (p.2).” Holbrook (2006a, b) explains that objects and subjects interact in three ways (comparative, personal, situational) in order to create value for the consumption experience. In this way, Holbrook’s (2006a, b) notion of ‘customer value’ construes value as something that consumers experience as they interact with objects.

In order to extend this concept of value, Woodruff and Flint (2006) integrate Holbrook’s notion of customer value with Richins’s (1994a, b) notion of ‘value as a symbolic meaning’ which also relates to objects. From this perspective, value can be seen as a symbolic meaning of consumption which can be assigned by individual consumers to whatever they consume or by other consumers within a social network. Or as Belk (1988: 152) has stated: “[W]e exist not only as individuals, but also as collectives”. For example, Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) have discussed how consumers construct meaning through a Thanksgiving Party, while Pongsakornrungsilp et al. (2008b) have shown that local LFC fan groups construct their football fandom through a hierarchy of “hardcorers”, “compromisers”, and “fansumers” (see also Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b). Each group of fans has co-constructed their identity of football fandom. They have their own definition of football fandom and different perspectives about other groups of fans.

3.3.1.2 The Definition of Value

The notion of value has been discussed by many scholars, specifically in regard to the relationship between companies and consumers in the value co-creation process: For example, see Ballantyne and Varey (2006); Etgar (2006); Flint, Woodruff and Gardial (1997); Holbrook (2006 a, b); Jaworski and Kohli (2006); Kalaignanam and Varadarajan (2006); Lawrence and Phillips (2002); Payne et al. (2007); Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007); Wikström (1996); Woodruff and Flint (2006). Lusch and Vargo (2006c: 281) explain that value co-creation process

occurs when a customer consumes, rather than when output is produced through manufacturing. …from the customer’s perspective, they [goods] are transmitters of value only when they are employed as appliances to fill functional and higher order needs. Marketing should therefore focus on value-creating processes that involve the customer as a co-creator of value.
From Vargo’s and Lusch’s (2006c) perspective, the work of Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) and Holbrook (2006 a, b) demonstrates the characteristics of value and shows that value can emerge through a variety of consumer experiences. This corresponds to the focus in CCT (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) on emotional and symbolic consumption. For example, Holt (1995) has shown that two young baseball fans may value the game differently depending on how they experience it and therefore gain different emotional feelings and knowledge about the baseball world.

Holbrook’s (2006a, b) *interactive relativistic preference experience* offers a relativistic account of value which corresponds to how value is understood in S-D logic and CCT. He states that value can be relative depending on the *comparative, situational, or personal* contexts in which they can assign value to goods or services. For example, Holt’s study of baseball fans (1995) can be used to explain the characteristics of value in the following ways.

Firstly, value is *comparative* when people compare something that they consume with something similar (e.g. when baseball fans compare baseball to other sports) or when they compare two different kinds of things that they consume (e.g. when baseball fans compare baseball to shopping, drinking alcohol, smoking or travelling).

Secondly, value is *situational* when consumption is experienced from different situations. For example, fans gain excitement and happiness from baseball when they attend games and social connections when they join baseball fan groups (i.e. symbolic consumption). Furthermore, it can be *situational* at different times. For example, baseball fans may prefer to talk about the game when they join their peers at work or school, while they prefer to talk about travelling or taking a holiday with their families.

Finally, value is *personal* when the consumption or activity is adopted by different people. For example, a father might prefer to take his son to watch baseball games on Saturdays, whereas a mother might prefer to take her daughter shopping on Saturdays. Furthermore, a wife may prefer to see her husband attending baseball games instead of socializing with his friends at a bar, whereas a husband may feel that attending baseball games at weekends gives him an escape from the serious concerns that he must cope with during the week.

In light of these understandings of value (Holbrook, 2006a) and Vargo’s and Lusch’s assertion that “value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary” (2008a: 7), value would be defined as ‘uniqueness’. It is the definition of value at
least less subject to different perspective. Value can have different meanings and characteristics depending on people, situations, and activities.

It is worth noting that ‘value’ is not only utility value, but also includes symbolic meaning value (Lawrence and Phillips, 2002). Miller (1998) adds that consumers are able to construct the symbolic meaning of ‘Love’ through the specific products or services that they buy for a specific person during their shopping time. For example, if a mother is concerned about her son’s health, then she may decide to buy healthy foods for him as opposed to say chocolates or sweets, or instead she decide to buy his favourite food.

3.3.2 The Typology of Value

This chapter has employed S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004a), the CCT (Arnould and Thompson 2005), and customer value (Holbrook 2006a, b) to develop the less subjective definition. Value is defined as ‘Uniqueness’ which is transmuted to be unique meaning for each person, situation, or activity; Therefore, it is arguable that value is multi-dimensional and be able to constitute different contexts.

Value is the central marketing idea in S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a; Woodruff, 1997). Marketing scholars are now becoming increasingly interested in the value creation process (Payne et al., 2007). This can be seen from the new definition of value given by the American Marketing Association (AMA, 2007). The focus of value has moved from ‘marketing as exchange’ (see also Bagozzi, 1975) to ‘value creation’ (Sheth and Uslay, 2007). This trend is reflects by the literature on customer value research (Band, 1991; Gale, 1994; Holbrook, 1994, 2006a, b; Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991; Williams and Soutar, 2000; Zeithaml, 1988), although a variety of different conclusions about value have been reached in all of this.

Holbrook (1994, 2006a,b) has identified three discourses of value (extrinsic/intrinsic, self-oriented/other-oriented, and active/reactive) which he has in turn used to identify a further 8 types of customer value: Efficiency, Excellence (quality), Status (fashion), Esteem (materialism), Play (fun), Aesthetics (beauty), Ethics (justice, virtue, morality), and Spirituality (rapture, ecstasy). Alternatively, Sheth et al. (1991) have suggested that there are five types of value: functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional. More recently, Smith and Colgate (2007) have also identified four kinds of value: functional/instrumental value, experiential/ hedonistic value, symbolic/expressive value, and cost/sacrifice value. Ulaga (2003) defines value in terms of business relationships product quality, delivery, time to market, direct product costs (price), process costs, personal interaction, supplier know-how,
and service support. Meanwhile, referring to recent attempts to define value, Woodruff and Flint (2006: 186) have stated: “[W]e are not aware of any research that has resolved these differences.”

According to Holbrook’s (2006a: 212) relativistic notion of value, value is ‘uniqueness’ in regard to consumption, activity, situation, and person, due to there is no holistic definition and static meaning to assign with value. Therefore, the notion of value would draw on Holbrook’s (2006a) typology of value which is the most comprehensive to explain the characteristic of value. In Table 3.1, Holbrook (2006a) develops eight types of value from his prior tripartite distinction: 1) Extrinsic: an object or experience serves as the means-end performing functionality and Intrinsic: an object or experience serves as a prize for its own sake, 2) Self-Oriented: an object or experience is valued for by individuals and Other-Oriented: an object or experience is valued for social collectiveness, and 3) Active: customers employ objects to assign value and Reactive: objects provide value or symbolic meaning to the subject.

<p>| Table 3.1: Typology of Customer Value |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extrinsic</th>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Oriented</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>EFFICIENCY (O/I or O-I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>EXCELLENCE (quality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other-Oriented</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>STATUS (fashion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>ESTEEM (materialism)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Holbrook (2006a)

In response to all this, is it worth asking whether we need a typology of value. From the value definition, the typology of value can provide more understanding of value. However, it is arguable from different perspectives because value is dynamic and can be transmuted in different situations or contexts. For example, Smith and Colgate (2007) have argued that one of Holbrook’s (2006a) types of value, namely ‘spirituality’, is self-concept or self-oriented rather than other-oriented in as far as consumers adapt the objects for themselves individually. But Holbrook (2006a) actually views spirituality from three dimensions: other-oriented whereby consumers adapt objects for social collectiveness or for self-expressing, intrinsic whereby consumers adapt objects for their own sake, and reactive whereby objects provide ‘spiritual’ value for consumers. These multi-dimensions of ‘spirituality’ also found in line with the amulet consumption in Thailand (Pongsakornrungsilp, Pusaksrikit, Schroeder, 2010).
Therefore, it is arguable that we do need a typology of value as a framework for understanding customer value in the value creation process because consumers are the best judges of value.

So in short, value can be only defined by consumers and typologies of value should be viewed as frameworks that help marketers to understand the value creation process in different environments.

3.4 HOW VALUE EMERGE IN VALUE CREATION PROCESS

The idea that companies and consumers act as value co-creators is not new marketing. It has been widely discussed in the academic and business environments. It does not only shift the focus of marketing from products to consumers (‘marketing orientation’: Jaworski and Kohli, 1993): It also demonstrates the idea that consumers can create the symbolic meanings or actual values of their consumption (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). Wikström (1996) also suggests that marketing philosophy focuses on how companies create value with consumers rather than for them. This marketing revolution marks a change from a producer-consumer perspective to a co-creation perspective (Wikström, 1996).

Though this perspective, consumers are active players of the game that can construct, resist or form their realm of consumption without predictable or controllable (Gabriel and Lang, 2008). This leads to the blur relationship between production and consumption (Arvidsson, 2005, 2008; Firat et al., 1995, Humphreys and Grayson, 2008; Pettinger, 2004; Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2010). Therefore, consumers can actively co-create value for themselves, companies, brands, and also consumption community (see also Schroeder, 2010). In this case, brand is one of value embodied within products that consumers can co-create its meaning (Askegaard, 2006).

As defined by S-D Logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a), the relationship between companies and consumers has shifted from producer-consumer to co-creators of value. In order to do this, each party needs to employ its skills and competences to create value or benefit for the other. In the other words, skills and competences can be viewed as ‘immaterial labour’ which consumers employ into the social and cultural production (Cova and Dalli, 2009; Hardt and Negri, 2004; Zwick et al., 2008). Moreover, such consumption allows consumers to co-create their identities as members of groups (Firat et al., 1995): That is, consumers may use their consumption to modify their identity. However, it went on to argue that we cannot state that
consumers can co-create value by themselves because they need marketplace objects (e.g. brand, product, services, and so on) as mediate to co-create value.

3.4.1 Value Co-Creation between Company and Consumers

Figure 3.2 shows that the value creation process requires balanced participation and cooperation between companies and consumers in order to create desired values or benefits. A wide range of literature on value co-creation argues that interaction, dialogue, involvement, and consumption between companies and consumers play important roles in the co-creation of value. Recently, Cova and Dalli (2009) have introduced the concept of working consumers by asking three basic questions: 1) Who is responsible for value co-creation? 2) How is value created, communicated, and transferred to the market? 3) What is the role of the community in the value co-creation process? In this study, these questions are extended to understand the value co-creation process works. Therefore, in order to understand the value co-creation process between companies and consumers, we need to understand each process as it is shown in Figure 3.2. The following section presents how companies and consumers co-create value through interaction.

**Figure 3.2: Value Creation Process between Company and Consumers**

![Value Creation Process between Company and Consumers](image)

3.4.1.1 Co-Creation of Value through Interaction

According to the available literature, as shown in Table 3.2, value can be co-created by companies and consumers through interaction and both parties are able to create value for
each other. Although we can understand that companies and consumers can co-create value through interaction, there is little knowledge of how they do this in practice. Furthermore, our understanding of the respective roles of companies and consumers in the value co-creation process remains unclear (Gummesson, 2004; Woodruff and Flint, 2006).

Table 3.2: Literature Reviews about Co-Creation of Value through Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Co-Creation</th>
<th>Illustrative Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Ballantyne (2004); Gummesson (2004); Jaworski and Kohli (2006); Lusch et al. (2007); Payne et al. (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialog</td>
<td>Gummesson (2004); Kalaignanam and Varadarajan (2006); Lusch et al. (2007); Prahalad (2004); Varki and Wong (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Baron (2006); Flint (2006); Holt (1995); Holbrook (1994, 2006a, b); Holbrook and Hirschman (1982); Korkman (2006); Overby et al. (2005); Payne et al. (2007); Prahalad (2004); Schroeder (2010); Woodruff and Flint (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In S-D logic the value creation process involves the creation of benefits for other parties by employing the skills and knowledge of each party (see also FP1 in Vargo and Lusch, 2004a: 6). This process needs the parties to interact with each other in order to produce the best outcome. In Figure 3.2, companies and consumers have their own desired values which need to be balanced through the interaction. In the value creation process, companies and consumers can interact through dialogue, involvement, and consumption, and consumers can perceive value when they consume the objects. However, during the consumption process, the value proposition plays an important role in co-defining value, because it effects how consumers perceive value (Flint, Woodruff and Gardial, 1997). Flint and Mentzer (2006: 142) explain the value proposition as

[P]articular products and services potentially could be of value if the customer finds a way to utilize them toward goal achievement; that is, it is proposed that the products and services could help the customer create value for himself or herself.

In this respect, we can see that value propositions are promises made by companies to consumers. Value proposition projects images, symbols, and myths onto the products or services that consumers buy. However, they can also be seen as a means by which companies help consumers to co-create value. For example, in the brand culture system (Schroeder,
2007, 2009; Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling, 2006) the value proposition plays the role of the brand identity that companies want to advertise, while value perception plays the role of the brand image that consumers perceive.

Much like in S-D logic, Schroeder (2007) presents brand culture as a co-creation between companies and consumers. For example, Gummesson (2004) provides an excellent metaphor of the relationship between a physician and a patient in order to explain the value co-creation process. Each party has his or her own knowledge that needs to be communicated and considered in order to find a solution to the patient’s problems. The physician cannot cure the patient without information about the patient’s symptoms hence they both have something to gain by communicating with each other. Gummesson (2004: 21) calls this process a win-win relationship and views both parties as partners rather than only physician-patient or producer-consumer.

### 3.4.1.2 Dialog: Two Way Communication for Co-Creating of Value

In every transaction or exchange process, companies and consumers must have a conversation or maintain a dialogue in order to co-develop a solution for consumers. In Gummensson’s physician-patient metaphor (Gummesson, 2004), dialogue plays an important role for both parties in the co-creation of a solution for the patient who wants to be cured. Likewise, in order to co-create the best solution in the value creation process, consumers need to engage themselves in that process at all stages. This point is covered by FP1: The application of specialised skills and knowledge is the foundation unit of exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a: 6) and expressed by Vargo’s and Lushe’s assertion that “[s]ervice is the fundamental basis of exchange” (2008a: 7).

As shown in Figure 3.1, companies need to employ their skills to understand consumer operant resources by gathering knowledge about their customers and then bring this into the value creation process. After the exchange process, this knowledge would become an operand resource (i.e. companies’ experiences). This process increases the opportunities available to both parties for building knowledge and value (Jaworski and Kohli, 2006; Priem, 2007; Wikström, 1996), which Vargo and Lusch (2004a). This can be seen as a continuous learning process.

Dialogue is the first interaction between companies and consumers in the value creation process. This encounter requires the sharing of information from both parties in order to balance their desired values and co-create a solution. Jaworski and Kohli (2006) call this ‘the
customer-needs identification process.’ In this process, companies need to employ their skills (through indirect service) to gather data or knowledge about consumers which can lead to benefits for both the companies and consumers.

Jaworski and Kohli (2006) recommend that companies use several methods of research (e.g. interviews, surveys, observation) in order to engage with consumers. For example, a mobile phone retail store, such as Phone4U, employs an open dialogue which is conducted by staff members who invite customers into their workplace. They use the computer programme, Kushi (which records customer behavior and desired value), in order to identify consumer needs and present the company’s value proposition to them as a solution to their needs. During this process, a Phone4you staff member investigates the consumer’s needs or values by talking to them, asking them questions, or observing them in order to co-create the best solution (product choices) for both parties. This dialogue between consumers and companies play an important role to define the solution for consumers (Cova and Salle, 2008).

This solution finding also found in Business-to-Business relationship which require the dialogue between company and customer (Blazevic and Lievens, 2008; Brady, Davies and Gann, 2005). This process requires the discussion of business problems as strategic partners.

3.4.1.3 Involvement: Consumer Participation in the Co-Creation of value

Many marketing scholars and practitioners would argue that their marketing philosophy is consumer-centric because they provide consumers with an opportunity to be involved in the production process. For example, IKEA provides consumers with opportunities to assemble their furniture at home by themselves (Wikström 1996) in order to reduce delivery and worker costs. Argos, a UK outlet store, also employs this strategy to service the needs of their customers. This strategy is also applied to self-service kiosks in supermarkets. It is arguable that this is not part of the value creation process because the main objective is to achieve the companies’ goal of profit maximisation or cost minimisation (Ritzer, 2004); not the goals of consumers, whatever they may be.

Moreover, involvement is not merely consumer participation with the business process. It is also the consumer experience (Carù and Cova, 2007) in order to engage consumers with the brand. For example, Nike employs consumer experience to engage consumers with the involvement process for co-creating value with consumers (Ramaswamy, 2008). In S-D logic, consumers are involved in the value co-creation process for the purposes of satisfying their desired values. Involvement allows not only for the co-creation of value between companies
and consumers, but also the co-creation of long-term relationships between them. Consumers tend to construct long-term relationships with companies when they have a high level of involvement in the value creation process (Varki and Wong, 2003). Consumer involvement can include consumer experience, co-design, co-production, and inventiveness. For example, at the BMW factory in Greenville, South Carolina, customers may co-design their vehicles to fit their behavior or lifestyle. In other businesses, consumers may be involved in the value co-creation process at different levels (Berthon and John, 2006) depending on the flexibility of the production line or service providers.

### 3.4.1.4 Consumption: Emergence of Value

When does value emerge? Many scholars (e.g. Baron, 2006; Berthon and John, 2006; Etgar, 2006; Holbrook, 2006a, b; Payne et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a; Woodruff and Flint, 2006) argue that value emerges at the point of consumption rather than from the company. As shown in Figure 3.2, companies and consumers co-create value through dialogue, or in different words, reciprocal communication intended by the company to gather knowledge about consumers and to find the best solution (i.e. value) for both parties. Consumers participate in the value creation process by co-designing or co-creating products. These processes create value that will emerge only when objects are consumed. Etgar (2006) supports the idea that value emerges through consumption and that consumers are able to perceive value when they consume and experience goods or services. He argues:

> [P]roduction and consumption are not two separate activities but one continuous whole, and consumers are not recipients of a completed output but are involved in the whole value-creation process. (p.128)

Experience is the fourth part of Holbrook’s (2006a: 213) definition of customer value. He argues that “value resides not in an object, a product, or a possession, but rather in and only in (on inn) a consumption experience.” This supports the view of S-D Logic that value emerges through consumption. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) argue that the concept of ‘consumption experience’ is an experience paradigm whereby consumers focus on the emotional aspect of consumption in order to satisfy their hedonistic goals. Moreover, experience also plays an important role to drive consumers into the realm of production (Carù and Cova, 2007).

In his study of baseball fans, Holt (1995) shows how consumers consume experiences (i.e. ‘consuming as Experience’); consumers construct meanings which they connect to objects by accounting (knowledge), evaluating (judgment), and appreciating (emotion) them. This
concept helps marketing scholars to understand how and why in which people consume things for the sake of enjoyment or pleasure.

Holt (1995) also shows that value emerges when consumers assign meanings or symbolic value to objects. According to this view of consumption, derived from CCT, consumers allocate meanings to material resources by negotiating between their cultural lives and social relationships (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Lawrence and Phillips, 2002). Therefore, it is arguable that value emerges not only at the time of consumption, but also when consumers possess material resources to which they assign symbolic meanings through the cultural world. For example, BMW X6 owners may perceive value of their cars as they are driving them while also perceiving the symbolic value of their cars within their social group.

Richins (1994b) supports this idea, stating that “a possession’s value derives from its meaning” (p. 505) and also that “…meaning can be public in the sense of being assigned by others, such as members of a social group or a culture (p. 181)”. Another example of this can be seen from the MG car subculture, whose members construct the authenticity and symbolic meanings of their consumption through the MG cars that they own (Leigh et al., 2006).

So in short, the value creation process is the interaction between companies and consumers in order to co-create value. Although many scholars have stated that there is little known about how the value creation process works (Woodruff and Flint, 2006), the works of other scholars reveal that companies and consumers can co-create value through dialogue, involvement, and consumption. Importantly, value is misunderstood by scholars who argue that it can emerge as value-added, or through participation with self-service or computer-aided programs. In order to co-create value, the whole process of value co-creation is necessary as well as reciprocal communication between companies and consumers. Value can only emerge when objects are consumed or used, to which I would also add that value can only emerge when consumers possess material objects.

3.4.2 Value Creation within the Brand Community

Many works have discussed how companies and consumers co-create value (see 3.4.1 Value Co-Creation between Companies and Consumers). There is currently very little work on how consumers co-create value through C2C interactions. This is in spite of the fact that consumers have become increasingly powerful and can create both opportunities for, and threats to companies. Members of these brand communities create not only holistic values in the marketplace, but also value for each other (Arnould et al., 2006).
Value can be problematic in S-D logic inasmuch as it can be perceived differently depending on who the consumer is. Thus, marketing scholars require a cultural framework which can help them to understand the value co-creation process. In order to do this, this dissertation has synthesised S-D logic with CCT. CCT refers to the co-productive actions of consumers, markets, and cultures (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). From this perspective, scholars view the co-creation of value in terms of a cultural framework which focuses on how consumers perceive, interpret, understand, and interact with the market offering and other consumers (e.g. Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Holt, 2002).

Unfortunately, as a form of consumer agency (Arnould et al., 2006), we know very little about how consumers co-create value with other consumers. Thus, this section has discussed social connections and the idea of value co-creation in brand communities within the cultural frameworks of S-D logic and CCT. The purpose of this is to provide a conceptual framework for this study. However, this dissertation does not overlook the importance of producer even the consumer community is the context of the study. Although this dissertation does not directly focus on the social interaction between producer and consumer, it considers how producers are transformed within the brand community by consumers in order to co-create value for their own sake or the social groups.

3.4.2.1 Social Connection: An Important Aspect of Brand Community

Arnould and Thompson (2005) have reviewed the literature on consumer research on social groups from the perspective offered by CCT. Within the framework of S-D logic, these consumer groups are social operant resources which play an important role in determining how consumers behave or set about achieving their life goals. Arnould et al. (2006: 94) have outlined the benefits or value of these groups thus:

1) representing a form of consumer agency, 2) representing an important information resource for participants, 3) exhibiting a sense of moral responsibility that translates to socialisation of other co-consumers, and 4) bringing a relatively celebratory ethos to the consumption context.

Therefore, brand communities are among the consumer operant resources that companies need to understand, not least because their power can be a tremendous threat to companies. Importantly, the power of brand communities encourages their members to possess or consume particular material objects in order to construct identities both for themselves and the groups to which they belong (Belk, 1988). Arnould et al. (2006) explain that such groups
[a]re networks of relationships with others including traditional demographic groupings (families, ethnic groups, social class) and emergent groupings (brand communities, consumer tribes and subcultures, friendship groups). (p. 93)

Consumer research on social connections or co-consuming groups seen from the perspective of CCT demonstrates how and why groups are formed, and also reveal the re-emergence of communities (Boorstin, 1973; Cova and Cova, 2002; Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). Brand communities call for social connections which have been diluted in modern societies: This has been termed ‘the loss of community’ (see Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001: 413). The modern world has isolated individuals from traditional communities (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993). However, recent advances in telecommunication technologies (i.e. internet, video conference, 3G Mobile) have resulted in the formation of new kinds of communities, some of which call for a return to older kinds of social relationship.

Pongsakornrungsilp et al. (2008a) have shown that consumers are now able to participate in activities and share their interests and information with one another even when they do not live in close proximity. Consumers can engage in online communities from their homes or workplaces. It is difficult to estimate numbers within these communities because the borders of the World Wide Web are effectively infinite. But even though these communities have different forms or boundaries, they broadly share the same purpose (i.e. to create social ties or relationships among their members).

3.4.2.2 Value in Brand Communities: A Form of Consumer Agency

Consumers are seen as being increasingly powerful in consumer research inasmuch as they are increasingly forming groups (Baron, 2006) that create opportunities for them as consumers and pose a potential threat to companies (Denegri-Knott et al., 2006; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Wright et al., 2006). Therefore, as mentioned through the idea of ‘working consumers’ (Cova and Dalli, 2009), consumers need to be analysed as members of groups (Arnould et al., 2006) as well as individual consumers (e.g. brand communities, subcultures of consumption, consumer tribes, etc.).

According to the concept of value as uniqueness, value in brand community is the benefit that members receive from their social connections. For example, if one has a problem with her Macintosh computer, then she can access Mac Group, an online community of Macintosh computer users, in order to ask other members of the community for suggestions about what my problem might be and how to solve it. Her value is the solution to her problem, while at the same time a fellow member who gives her advice may also see value in the act of sharing
or ‘gift-giving’ (see also Belk and Coon, 1993). For example, his/her value might be in the expression of group membership or the contribution that s/he has made to the solidarity of the group as a whole.

The brand community is one of the tribal perspectives which consumers form by ‘linking value’ in order to co-construct their consumption, resistance, or empowerment (Cova and Cova, 2002). In order to try to understand the power of brand communities, many scholars have investigated the emergence and characteristics of collective communities (Belk and Tumbat, 2005; Cova and Cova, 2002; Leigh et al., 2006; McAlexander et al., 2002; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001).

Many studies have found that reciprocity and gift giving are important components in the co-creation of value (e.g. Virtual communities and online gift economies; Belk (2007), Napster music file sharing; Giesler (2006), Peer-to-Peer community; Mathwick et al. (2008)). Moreover, marketing scholars have addressed how value is co-created within brand communities through different perspectives e.g. the activities of relating, communicating, and knowing (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006), the concepts of social capital (Mathwick et al., 2008), theory of practice (Schau et al., 2009), and working consumers (Cova and Dalli, 2009; Zwick et al. 2008). All of these studies have found that consumers may co-create value by themselves; however the individual roles in which they do this and the roles of consumer communities are less well understood.

Recent value creation studies illuminate the collective process of value creation within brand communities. For example, Schau et al. (2009) have revealed the macro-perspective of value creation from multi-brand communities and demonstrated how consumers collectively co-create value through a set of 12 collective practices. Muñiz and Schau (2005) present the story of the Apple Newton brand community in which the stigma of an ‘abandoned’ brand leads to co-creation of brand meaning – thus extending the brand’s life. For Apple Newton, faith toward brand emerges through the co-creation of myth and religiosity among loyal consumers.

Whereas a myriad of brand community studies have focused on collective issues, such as reciprocity of problem solving (Mathwick et al., 2008; Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001; Muniz and Schau, 2005), consumer empowerment (Leigh et al., 2006; Muniz and Schau, 2005; Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b), brand engagement (Cova and Pace, 2006; McAlexander et al., 2002), roles of practices in value creation process (Schau et al., 2009), there is less work on the roles of individual participants in the value co-creation process. A noteworthy
microcultural analysis explored the roles of consumers by focusing on ‘expert’ and ‘novice’ consumers (Sisri, Ward and Reingen, 1996), however, this study generally focused on the static role of communication between experienced and less experienced consumers.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed how the notion of value and the value creation process may be used as a framework for understanding how consumers co-create value among themselves in brand communities. This chapter began with a discussion of the exchange process as it is understood within S-D logic, which integrates the focus on company operant resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a) and consumer operant resources (Arnould et al., 2006), in order to complete the whole exchange process by adapting the interpretive process; experience and meaning in the cultural-life world (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008a). Consumer research and CCT suggest that companies need to focus on consumer operant resources (i.e. their authoritative capabilities) because they play an important role in determining how consumers set about achieving their life goals.

Therefore, companies need to use their skills and knowledge (through indirect services or staff) to gather information about consumers which they can use to develop the value proposition. The terms, ‘consumer’ and ‘consumption’, are not typically used in S-D logic because they suggest destruction rather than creation (Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, 2007). However, as mentioned in regard to the value co-creation process, consumption is one of the value co-creation: That is, value emerges from consumption and possession. In this chapter, value creation process of S-D logic, i.e. dialog and involvement, has been synthesised with CCT, i.e. consumption and possession. Therefore, consumers and consumption are able to create rather than destroy value.

It is worth restating here that value is a controversial issue in the marketing discipline. Value is a dynamic perspective which can be understood to be perceived as having different meanings. Building on Adam Smith’s ([1776] 1904) Theory of Value, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) have argued via S-D logic that there are two ways of viewing value: value in transaction and value in use. In order to understand value in S-D logic, this chapter has employed interpretive framework of CCT by discussing Holbrook’s concept of customer value (Holbrook, 1994, 2006a, b) and used his typology of value (interactive, relativistic, preference, experience). In this way, it is arguable that value is ‘uniqueness’ in that it provides
intangible value and different meanings for different people or in different situations and activities.

This chapter also explains how companies and consumers may co-create value by interacting with each other through dialogue, involvement, or consumption. It is arguable that the co-creation of value is a process that companies use to help consumers to co-create value rather than reduce their costs. Therefore, the customer participation programmes, computer-aid programmes, or means of self-service that are used by companies as managerial tools for increasing profitability are not be considered as value creation because they view the value creation process from the perspective of G-D logic. Many scholars have suggested that value will emerge when objects are consumed. This idea has been extended to possession because consumers can assign meanings derived from symbolic or socio-cultural values to whatever they consume. Therefore, value can emerge when consumers possess material objects.

In order to complete the whole business process, companies cannot co-create value without consumers because they, rather than companies, define value through their life projects. Therefore, companies need to develop value propositions that correspond to consumers’ life projects. This is an absolutely consumer-centric point of view which proves that the ‘Customer is a king’ because according to it only the consumers are able to create value. Companies may facilitate this process but ultimately they cannot create value.

Marketing scholars in consumer research and CCT (e.g. Denegri-Knott *et al.*, 2006; Holt, 2002) have enquired into the empowerment of consumers through social connections or co-consuming groups, both in terms of the opportunities and threats that it poses to companies. Therefore, marketing scholars and practitioners need to focus on this. Even though it is a very important issue for companies, very little work has been done on how consumers co-create value among themselves. Furthermore, there is no research that has solved this problem. Therefore, my research focuses on this process in order to understand consumer operant resources which are one of the most important influences on consumer behaviour.

However, there is the divergence of S-D logic and CCT which Maglio *et al.*, (2009), Vargo *et al.*, (2008) and others from IBM Research Centers have advanced S-D logic as foundation of service science, and moved S-D logic beyond multi-dimensions of value and interpretive framework of CCT. Within service science, scholars view value creation process as a systematical process whereby value creation seems to be a predictable achievement of a job or a particular project. They view value creation process between service systems through a
normative model, ISPAR (Interact-Serve-Propose-Agree-Realize), which can provide 10 different results (Maglio et al., 2009).
CHAPTER FOUR: ACTIVE ROLES OF CONSUMERS WITHIN SOCIA L NETWORKS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Brand communities are collaborative social networks whereby individuals group together in order to form their collective consumption. In this respect, they may be seen as communities of practice which is a group of people who share the similar passion and knowledge (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Three aspects to the practices of these groups have been identified by Warde (2005): understanding, procedure, and engagement. Through this social network, there are negotiations between the individual members and social pressures applied to them by the group in order to perform practice (Schatzki, 1996). In this chapter, in order to understand the influence of social phenomena on the value co-creation process and the active role played by consumers in it, the conceptual framework of working consumers, brand community, consumption experience, and forms of capital are applied to the LFC fan community. By doing this, this chapter intends to gain a balanced view of the value co-creation process between the contributions made by individual and group behaviour.

Although brand communities are collaborative networks whose members follow similar patterns of consumption, the individual perspective within them remains an important point of concern. This is highlighted by Holt’s (1995) notion of ‘Consuming as Experience’. By doing this, individual consumers can enjoy their individual proximity through the concept of experience for enjoying their hedonistic and playful. Therefore, the discussions in this chapter will use the conceptual framework outlined previously and the idea of consuming as experience to explore the nature of brand community and how they impact on the creation of value. As mentioned by Arnould et al. (2006), consumers have employed the cultural schemata: social, cultural, and physical schemas to co-create value with company and also other consumers. These are similar to the forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) which individual consumers employ these resources into the social interaction in order to gain something in returns e.g. experience, hedonistic, recognition, goodwill, knowledge and so forth. Moreover, these have been applied to social phenomena by many CCT scholars (e.g. Holt, 1998; Mathwick et al., 2008) in order to understand the nature of social interactions.

This chapter is aimed to develop the theoretical foundations for answering research questions. Therefore, this chapter has begun by demonstrating active roles of consumers in order to demonstrate consumer agency within consumer research. In order to understand the roles of
consumers and the value creation process, the individual and collective level of consumption have been addressed by demonstrating the idea of experience whereby individuals participate in the brand community for the purpose of achieving their own sake, and using the concept of brand community to define the boundaries of the community. Finally, the forms of capital have been discussed for guiding our understanding of how individual consumers negotiate with others in order to co-create value. Moreover, the forms of capital also contribute us to understand how consume schemata (Arnould et al., 2006) influence the co-creation of value within brand community.

4.2 ACTIVE ROLES OF CONSUMERS

Cova and Dalli have cited research streams as evidence of consumer research to formulate the notion of ‘working consumers’. According to this perspective, consumers are gradually gaining more power and control over the marketplace and their own consumption (see also Cova et al., 2007). Through consumer agency, consumers need to negotiate between primary (individual level) and secondary levels of sociality (Cova and Dalli, 2009; Holt, 1995; Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b). The idea of working consumers states that consumers are able to ‘work’, ‘produce’, ‘create’ and ‘consume’ their consumption through ‘immaterial labour’ (Arvidsson, 2005; Cova and Dalli, 2009; Zwick et al., 2008). This idea is used in this study to explain the active roles of consumers in the value creation process.

Cova and Dalli (2009) have argued that a number of different research streams (i.e. consumer tribe, S-D logic, consumer agency, co-production, consumption experience, and so forth) are all concerned with what they describe as the realm of working consumers. From this perspective, consumers play active roles in different strategies to co-create value. However, Cova and Dalli (2009) have mentioned only research streams related to consumption and the marketplace. They do not consider resources that consumers employ into social interactions (i.e. knowledge and forms of capital: social capital, cultural capital, human capital, symbolic capital, economic capital). Therefore, this chapter would consider the literature on active consumers from two perspectives: consumers as producers and consumers as providers.

4.2.1 Consumers as Producers

It is worth to noting that the consumer–producer relationship is not a new issue in marketing discipline (Brown, 1996; Fırat et al., 1995). It has concerned Wikström since the mid-nineties (1996). Cova and Dalli have noted the relevance of this issue to their work on working
consumers (2009). In this sense, consumers may control and create their own boundaries of consumption but according to different strategies. Although these boundaries remain blurred (Arvidsson, 2005; Firat et al., 1995; Pettinger, 2004), scholars using this perspective clearly view consumers as producers (Berthon, Pitt and Campbell, 2008; Cova and Dalli, 2009; Grönroos, 2008; Pini, 2009).

‘Consumers as producers’ can be viewed through the notion of consumption rather than the notion of production within the factory. As mentioned in Chapter Three, consumption is an activity of value creation. From Marxists, consumption refers to the circulation of commodities which generates wealth and value to other parties (Arvidsson, 2005). This notion seems to correspond with CCT rather than S-D logic. However, consumers are not viewed as production workers in the factory, but instead consumers are viewed as immaterial labours which Lazzarato (1997) derives from Marx’s term ‘General Intellect’. It refers to the process of ‘interaction’ and ‘socialisation’ that each party shares knowledges and competences in order to co-create value (Arvidsson, 2005).

Recently, Cova and Dalli (2009) have proposed another concept which concerns consumers and producers from a working perspective. They argue that all consumer activities are working activities. This conclusion is supported by employing the work of Vargo and Lusch (2004a, 2008b) and Grönroos (2008), all of whom view consumers as value co-creators. As Vargo and Lusch (2004a, 2008b) argue, ‘service’ is exchanged for service. It is their view that ‘service’ is a means of providing benefits through skills and knowledge (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). This is supported by Grönroos (2008) who argues that ‘service’ is an activity or process of doing something for someone. Drawing on both of these views of ‘service’, Cova and Dalli (2009) suggest that consumers are putting to work either for themselves or for company.

4.2.2 Consumers as Providers

In contrast to the consumption perspective, this perspective focuses on knowledge management and the learning processes by which consumers act as providers in community of practice or co-consuming groups (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Mathwick et al., 2008; Schatzki, 1996; Wasko and Faraj, 2005). In this community, members create and share the collective knowledge regarding to their consumption to new members (see also Schau et al., 2009). Wenger and Snyder (2000: 139) explain a communities of practice is
“Groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise…”

This perspective uses ‘the theory of practice’ (Warde, 2005), which poses three processes (understanding, procedures, and engagement) by which consumers facilitate the co-creation process without directly producing anything. As Kozinets et al. (2008) have argued, consumers are able to co-create value as a collective through ‘practice’ (i.e. doing and learning).

Consumers can play different roles in the value co-creation. For example, Blazevic and Levens (2008) have shown that consumers are able to play active, passive, and bidirectional creator roles in the formation of solutions to problem in the computer service environment. In an active role, consumers are providers of knowledge, experience, and solutions for others. This is similar to Mathwick et al.’s (2008) paper on ‘social capital within P3 community’ in which they argue that members in networks of practice collaborate to provide knowledge or information to fellow members. Social capital is of the product of peer-to-peer interactions in community of practice. Another study by Sirsi et al. (1996) has demonstrated the social interaction between experts and novices to explain the negotiation between individual, social and cultural sources of variation in the sharing of causal reasoning about behaviour. Therefore to summarise, it is arguable that in their active capacity as ‘providers’, consumers can contribute to the formation of different forms of capital.

In short, consumers have gradually moved into the realm of production or co-creation by taking charge of these roles from companies. In Chapter Three, the first basic question posed by Cova’s and Dalli’s (2009) idea of ‘working consumers’ is addressed by arguing that consumers are responsible for value co-creation. By viewing working consumers from socio-cultural and socio-economic perspectives, it can be seen as the balance between consumption and production. In addition to consumption experience and cultural perspectives of consumption, Cova and Dalli (2009) have also discussed the economic benefits of value co-creation from consumers’ perspectives. In regard to this, they have raised the issue of ‘double exploitation’ whereby consumers work to co-create symbolic meanings or value for consumption while not being paid for their (immaterial) labour.
4.3 EXPERIENTIALISM: A BOUNDARY OF INDIVIDUALS

Over the past forty years, the significance of consumption has shifted away from the functional utilities of objects toward symbolic value (Brown, 1996; Firat et al., 1995; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Vargo and Lusch 2004a). This idea has led to shift in the dominant marketing paradigm from positivism to interpretivism (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006). Moreover, over the past quarter of a century it has led to the formulation of a new marketing logic which aims to understand consumer behaviour accurately (Brown, 1996; Firat et al., 1995), particularly in socio-cultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological terms (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

‘Experience’ is a shift from functional utilities. It was first presented in Holbrook and Hirschman’s (1982) notion of ‘fantasy, feeling and fun’ by focusing on the impact of hedonism and the imagination on consumer behaviour. It has turned consumers, markets, and consumption into the experience economy (Pile and Gilmore, 1999). Additionally, it focuses on the emotional context beyond consumer behaviour and the significance of symbolic consumption. Therefore, consumers can create meanings to go with their consumption which help them to identify who they are (Belk, 1988). By doing this, consumers can co-create experience by themselves and also with companies (Carù and Cova, 2007).

To understand the individual level of consumption, this chapter has demonstrated consumption experience in order to provide our understanding on the way consumers co-create value for their own sake. In this section, the details of consumption experience are examined by beginning with a discussion of definitions and typologies of experientialism. Following this, an example of drawn from football fandom is provided to shed light on how football fans consume and experience the act of consuming their fandom.

4.3.1 Definition of Experience Paradigm

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) pioneered the experiential approach to understanding consumption by posing the three Fs (3Fs), fantasies, feelings, and fun, which follow each other as a flow of experience. They (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982: 132) have stated that the “[e]xperiential perspective is phenomenological in spirit and regards consumption as a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and aesthetic criteria.” Following this definition, experiential consumption is concerned with the emotions and views of consumers who are regarded as animals rather than computers or machines (Holbrook, 2000).
Drawing from many works on this perspective (Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Havlena and Holbrook, 1986; Holbrook, 2000; Holbrook, 2006; Holbrook at el., 1984; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), it is arguable that experience is the way in which individuals seek to satisfy their hedonistic behaviour. Hedonism in this regard may emerge through product usage (Hirschmand and Holbrook, 1982; Mano and Oliver, 1993; Nowlis et al., 2004; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), participation in sports (Arnould and Price, 1993; Holbrook et al., 1984; Holt, 1995; Hopkinson and Pujari, 1999; Mano and Oliver, 1993), purchasing decision making (Nowlis et al., 2004), activities (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991; Holbrook, 2006) or football fandom (Farred, 2002; Giulianotti, 2002; Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004; Hornby, 1996; King, 2000; Nash, 2000).

Experience has gained increasing acceptance since the nineteen-eighties from marketing scholars as a conceptual framework for understanding consumption (Hopkinson and Pujari, 1999). However, it remains a problematic term due to the conflicting or overlapping senses of the word as it is used in different fields, including such as science, philosophy, sociology and psychology, anthropology and ethnology, or management science (Carù and Cova, 2003). All of these fields have a congruent focus on the subjective nature of experience, in which regard experiences may be formed by the performance of activities, learning, or everyday events.

4.3.2 A Typology of Experientialism

According to changes to the dominant marketing paradigm, consumers seek value in addition to functionality from their consumption. They consume in order to satisfy their hedonistic desires to extend their self (Belk, 1988), challenge their day-dreams (Firat et al., 1995), or join with their peers (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001) through communities (e.g. Punk, Biker, Surfer, Sport Fandom), celebrations or parties, or by participating in activities (e.g. theme parks or adventure holidays). These experiences are created by consumers and marketers and happen inside and outside of the market. Furthermore, these experiences are consumed naturally in consumers’ everyday of lives or sought out by consumers for the sake of excitement or hedonism. Importantly, all typologies of experience can satisfy their hedonistic experience through their consumption (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2002).

According to different definitions in several fields (Carù and Cova, 2003), experience can be distinguished into four typologies of experience from two dimensions: ‘Market Dimension’ and ‘Activity Dimension’. First, market dimension divides between consumption experience, (experiences that Carù and Cova (2003) have argued emerge outside of the market) and consumer experience (which Pile and Gilmore (1999) and Smith and Wheeler (2002) have
argued are created inside the market by marketers within the experience economy). Second, activity dimension divides between *extraordinary experience* (whereby consumers seek to free themselves from their normal lives and social norms: Arnould and Price, 1993) and *ordinary experience* (which Rosen (1995) states emerge from everyday of life).

### 4.3.2.1 Market Dimension

This dimension distinguishes experience into consumption experience and consumer experience by considering from the market offering. *Consumption experience* refers to experiences that emerge outside the marketplace and without the market offering (Carù and Cova, 2003). Therefore, consumption experiences result from consumers seeking pleasure through consumption without market relations. Examples of this may include leisure activities, game playing, and sport playing (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook et al., 1984). Like these activities, football fandom is a form of consumption experience. In Long Distance Love, it concerns the author’s love of LFC even though he lives thousands of miles away from UK in South Africa. In spite of this distance, he was able to follow news and match results for LFC from newspapers, television, and the internet and in this way he was able to invest his emotions in and develop a passion for LFC (Farred, 2002).

Although consumption experience refers to consumption that takes place outside of the marketplace, products in the marketplace provide the means for enjoyment in this context. For example, Hornby (1996) has stated that a young Arsenal FC fan exchanged his excess football cards of Arsenal FC players with his school friends. In this case, he used football cards as a means for consuming and enjoying his football fandom.

Meanwhile, *consumer experiences* emerge inside the marketplace and are planned by marketers. Schmitt (1999) has integrated aspects of marketing theory and experientialism (he has labeled this experiential marketing) in order to create experiences for consumers in the marketplace (*e.g.* theme parks, Disneyland, festival events and so forth). This is one of the marketing strategies used by marketers to differentiate between their products or services from those of their competitors and to escape from commodity goods (Schmitt, 1999).

For example, LFC has developed the ‘Anfield Experience: Ultimate Christmas Programme’ in order to encourage their fans to join the club and its former players for a Christmas celebration (Liverpool Football Club, 2006). Fans have an opportunity to have meals, play football, and talk with legendary club players. As a marketing strategy, this programme is intended to create memorable experiences and relationships between LFC fans which in turn
help them to enjoy their lives as LFC supporters and extend these experiences to their friends or family. Additionally, it is another way to turn customers to be advocators (Smith and Wheeler, 2002).

Moreover, consumer experiences may also create positive relationship between consumers and companies both satisfaction and loyalty (Smith and Wheeler, 2002). Therefore, many companies such as Disney, Southwest Airlines, Starbucks, and Amazon.com try to create experiences for their customers in order to attach additional values to their products or services (Smith and Wheeler, 2002).

In short, it can be argued that people consume products or services for the sake of gaining pleasurable experiences and that there are two means by which this may occur; either consumption experience or consumer experience. As consumption experience, people may enjoy their experiences of consumption at any place, time, or situation, and by themselves or with friends or family. In contrast, marketers employ the concept of consumer experience in order to develop programmes which increase consumer satisfaction and strengthen relationships between consumers and companies by differentiating themselves from their competitors. Therefore, consumer experience is a commercial experience which may be conducted by marketers.

4.3.2.2 Activity Dimension

This dimension distinguishes between experiences of activities. Extraordinary experiences are experiences whereby consumers seek to free themselves from their normal lives and social norms (Arnould and Price, 1993). They involve a flow of experiences, or ‘maximum psychic energy’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), and a balance between skills and challenges (Arnould and Price, 1993). Consumers consume extraordinary experiences because they want to escape from their routine lives (“getting away from it all”) by gaining a sense of “newness of perception and process” (Arnould and Price, 1993: 24 - 25).

Importantly, Arnould and Price (1993) go against concepts of extraordinary experience by comparing flows of experiences (i.e. experiences which emerge from unusual events and high levels of emotional intensity) with peak experiences and peak performance (extraordinary experiences do not involve superior levels of effort and independent relationship; see Celsi, Rose, and Leigh, 1993). They argue that “[a]n important trigger for this experiential state is interpersonal interaction” (Arnould and Price, 1993: 25). Participants share commitments and involvement with experience and other participants naturally (Hopkinson and Pujari, 1999).
and create self-narratives and rituals of their experience (Arnould and Price, 1993). For instance, Hornby’s *Fever Pitch* (1996), a popular novel which relates the true story of a football fan, illustrates his experiences in football fandom from his childhood to maturity.

From this process of experience, a sense *communitas* is formed. This is defined by Arnould and Price (1993: 34) as “[a]n evolving feeling of communion with friends, family, and strangers.” Meanwhile, extraordinary experience is an unpredictable form of consumption whereby people are able to create their extended selves (Belk, 1988). In this form of consumption, consumers are concerned with their imaginations, expectations, and emotions.

By contrast, *ordinary experiences* emerge passively from the routines of everyday of life (Carù and Cova, 2003; Rosen, 1995). Although ordinary experience is a passive and routine activity in everyday of life, symbolic value is also consumed by consumers for identifying who they are (Holt, 1995). They construct meanings for their consumption in many ways. For example, consumers go shopping out of love for their families, couples, or children (Miller, 1998) or because they are concerned for the feelings, health, or preferences of family members. Dalli and Romani (2007) also provide an example of meaning co-creation through experience of consuming pasta associated with individual consumers and also their friends or families.

Another example is that people construct meanings for Thanksgiving Day by celebrating with and eating a meal with their family members (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). Food preparation and the meal are rituals which stimulate enjoyment among family members through product use (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). Therefore, ordinary experiences can create memorable impressions and be enjoyable during the act of consumption.

This dimension frames experience by activity and distinguishes between the simple pleasures of everyday of life (Carù and Cova, 2003) or mundane experiences (Schmitt, 1999) and exciting and unpredictable experiences (Arnould and Price, 1993). These experiences can create enjoyment and memorable experiences through unique objectives for each experience and activity.

**4.3.3 Example of Experience in the Football Fandom**

In globalisation and commercialisation (Giulianotti, 2002; King, 2000), English football clubs have been floated from the social and cultural institutions into capital institutions since 1992. The term consumer is used as a substitute for fan or supporter. Fans are viewed as consumers or clients of clubs and are expected to spend their money in order to expand their market
share (Chen, 2005). Football clubs were primarily social institutions for fans over the century, but they have recently become more commercialised and their fans are increasingly treated as consumers (Hamil, 1999).

Committed fans try to watch as many of their team’s home matches as possible and they also feel opposition to rival teams (Pimentel and Reynolds, 2004). It seems that football fans are crazy because they show loyalty to clubs by traveling hundreds of miles to attend matches, buy the higher price season tickets, and stand with the club in every situation (Ingle, 2005). Therefore, in this section, the case of football fandom is used to illustrate how consumers experience their consumption.

**4.3.3.1 Experience in Football Fandom**

In football fandom, football fans consume experiences outside the market which may thus be categorised as extraordinary experiences for the following reasons: football fans consume 1) excitement, enjoyment, and emotions through their fandom, 2) a flow of experiences which emerge during their fandom, and 3) communitas which is formed among supporters of the same club. Although football supporters do not challenge experience with the match by themselves, they invest their psychic energy (Pimentel and Reynolds, 2004) and use their skills as Holt (1995) has stated that sport spectators use their knowledge and understanding of social world to judge the game. Importantly, it should be noted that football fans cannot predict the results of games or their feelings afterwards.

**4.3.3.2 Forming Process of Experience**

Since football fans devote their emotions to their chosen clubs, the experiences have in response to them are an important part of what or how they consume football. There are different processes involved in this. Holt (1995) has examined consumption among baseball fans by employing primary and social understanding of consuming objects. He has argued that ‘consuming as experience’ helps to explain why sport fans invest their emotions in sports teams. In this way, he has argued that baseball spectators consume experiences of baseball in three ways.

Firstly, *accounting*, which is when spectators try to understand with the game and its rituals – phenomenon during experiencing as Hoch and Deighton (1989) stated that consumers learn their experience of using product or consumption. This is the first stage of experience consumption whereby consumers come to understand the context of their consumption and progress to the next stage, evaluating. Secondly, *evaluating* is when spectators use their
everyday of life (primary world) experiences to make judgements about events in the baseball world (social world). The more experience spectators can easily evaluate their experience and help them understand their context of consumption. Finally, appreciating is when spectators engage their emotions with their consumption. Spectators share their feelings both in positive (e.g. happiness, excitement) and negative ways (e.g. sad, sorrow).

### 4.4 Co-Consuming Group as Brand Community

Communities primarily consist of individuals who share intentions, interactions and activities at a specific place or geography (Kaufman, 1959). Although there are obviously three different perspectives or forms of consumer community (brand community (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001), subculture of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), and consumer tribe (Cova and Cova, 2002)), brand communities are seen as a means for understanding the value co-creation process in that their boundaries are related to online communities. In this context, Internet has opened up the boundaries of brand community.

Originally, communities are defined by geographical borders. To form as communities, they require three important elements or community markers: consciousness of some kind, shared rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). With the advance of telecommunication technologies, communities have been formed on the online boundary and contribute to create the huge and different consumption communities. Thus, in this section, the concept of brand community is used to shed light on co-consuming groups, specifically by using it as a context in which to understand the active roles played by consumers in co-consuming groups. Following this, a view of brand communities is presented for understanding the characteristics of social interaction or macro perspective of value creation. In this way, the characteristics of virtual brand communities are presented as a context of this study.

#### 4.4.1 Why Brand Community?

Considering social networks of consumption as brand communities, subcultures of consumption or consumer tribes is controversial among scholars in the field. Cova and Cova (2002) have argued that a group of consumers tend to be a consumer tribe rather than a brand community because blood-relations are an important component of the community. Following the Latin school of thought, they have asserted that ‘[t]he link is more important than the thing’ (Cova and Cova, 2002: 595). This is to say that social bonds are the focal point in
consumer societies whose members tend to seek value from consumption rather than mere product utility or value in use. Therefore, according to this view consumers seek communion with other consumers by way of the products or services that they consume. Cova and Cova (2002: 603) define the linking value as “[t]he product’s or service’s contribution to establishing and/or reinforcing bonds between individuals.” Cova and Cova (2002) have found this to be an important aspect of the consumer tribes that they have identified with in-line roller skates and the LOMO group. Both activities provide a linking value among which integrates the members of the tribe through an ‘interest or activity’, rather than merely individual pleasure.

Subcultures of consumption are another type of consumer community which demonstrates the rebellion of non-conformity against the main society (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). This type of community helps consumers to pursue their life projects and thus to construct social identities which distinguish them from society in general: For example, see Schouten’s and McAlexander’s (1995) study of Harley Davison bikers and Elliott’s and Davies’ (2006) study of Punk music fans.

Moreover, the advances in mass communication provided by the internet have led to greater opportunities for the emergence of new brand communities by breaking down geographic or ethnic constraints on brand communities (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). On the other hand, brand communities are constructed around symbols, icons, or motifs that allow consumers to share their interests, information, and experiences with other brand enthusiasts. Consumers can participate in these communities in spite of physical isolation from one another. Hence this type of community is a “Brand Community” (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001).

The notion of brand community forms part of the framework of CCT and plays an important role in contemporary marketing theory by presenting a clear understanding of social solidarity, experiential consumption, the symbolic meaning of consumption, and the value co-creation process (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, 2007). Moreover, brand community creates further insights by shifting the focus of research on consumer behaviour and consumption from the individual to social dynamics. This movement has helped marketing scholars to effectively understand the nature of relationships, loyalty, consumption, and the power of words among consumers (Belk and Tumbat, 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002). Therefore, brand communities can provide additional insight for reengaging the relationship between producers and consumers (Szmigin, Carrigan and Begin, 2007).
Therefore, the concepts of brand community and co-consuming groups are applied to a specific brand on virtual space: The online LFC fan community. In the context of this study the LFC fandom should be viewed as a brand community rather than a consumer tribe because LFC supporters form their social network around the particular brand pertaining to LFC (this is as opposed to general football consumption).

4.4.2 Definition of Brand Community

According to Kaufmann (1959), communities consist of individuals who share intentions, interactions, and activities at specific places. They engage in consumption as communities through celebrations, rituals, or traditions in order to create identities for and relationships among themselves (McAlexander et al., 2002; Schau and Muñiz, 2007). Internet has recently removed certain constrains on the formation or expansion of existing communities. Additionally, communities are as much mental phenomena as they are substantive as an imagined community (Anderson, 2006). The brand community is an example of a modern community that transcends traditional limits on the ways in which people socialise as Muñiz and O’Guinn have stated (2001: 412):

[B]rand community is a specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand.

The concept of brand community rests on a triadic consumer-brand-consumer relationship in which the brand is situated at the centre of the community (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). McAlexander et al. (2002) emphasise the relevance of the brand community as a means to understanding consumers’ relationships and loyalties and the associated co-creation between consumers and brands. This consumer-centric relationship means that communities emerge and construct meaning around consumption experiences. McAlexander et al.’s (2002) perspective shows how brands are used to cement relationships among consumers in order to create consumption experiences and communities. Amine and Sitz (2004) have studied the feelings of individual members of brand communities towards each other and thus defined the brand community as

“[A] self-selected, hierarchical and non-geographically bound group of consumers that share values, norms and social representations and recognise a strong feeling of membership with each other members and with the group as a whole on the basis of a common attachment to a particular brand…”

Therefore, even if views presented above reach different definitions of brand community, they share in common an emphasis on the absence of geographic boundaries, free choice, relationships, sharing emotions, norms and values, and the construction of communities
around branded goods or services as important aspects in the formation of brand communities. Furthermore, Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001) suggest that brand communities are similar to traditional communities in that they are also characterised by the community markers. In the following section, the community markers will be discussed as the elements of brand community.

4.4.3 The Elements of Brand Community

To incorporate as brand community, it requires three elements of brand community: consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions and moral responsibility (McAlexander et al. 2002; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001). However some communities may not obviously be complete by all of the three elements. These elements create a sense of unity and identity among group members which distinguish them from other brand communities. Therefore, these markers bond members of brand communities into collective groups. These elements or community markers are explained as follows:

4.4.3.1 Consciousness of Kind

*Consciousness of kind* has been proposed by Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001) as the most important community marker, whereby community members share a sense of belonging and identify themselves as members of a group in contrast to others who are not members of their group. This corresponds to Abel’s (1930) view that people tend to identify themselves by asserting the differences between themselves and other people.

This is to say, members of communities tend to identify themselves negatively against objects they do not possess or use, activities they do not engage in, or people who are not like them because they are not members of the same communities. However, consciousness of kind does not only differentiate members from perceived others. It also generates a sense of community (Talen, 1999) through shared emotional connections, neighbourhood or place attachments, formal membership, influence member behaviour, and reinforcement social interaction. Moreover, Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001) have stated that consciousness of kind emerges from two components: legitimacy and oppositional brand loyalty.

These are the main characteristics of consciousness of kind whereby members who consume brands in the wrong ways or for the wrong reasons are separated from the real members. However, Muñiz and O’Guinn’s (2001) have suggested that legitimacy tends to be a feature of more trendy brands, as opposed to low market share or non-trendy brands. Non-targeted consumers may employ brands to construct their self identity or status.
Furthermore, oppositional brand loyalty helps community members to strengthen the unity of their group by encouraging members to create their identities in opposition to competing brands. However, in some circumstances legitimacy and oppositional brand loyalty may have a negative impact on the brand community by discouraging prospective new members who fear not being able to fit in with the community or differences between themselves and existing group members (McAlexander et al., 2002).

4.4.3.2 Shared Rituals and Traditions

*Shared rituals and traditions* are the basis of consciousness of kind and contribute to the creation of myths within brand communities that serve to strengthen them. Rituals and traditions are the means by which community members share their consumption experiences and thus promote the brand, community and its culture (Schau and Muñiz, 2007). Moreover, they reproduce not only the meanings and cultures of brand communities among their respective members (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001); they also help to recruit new members (McAlexander et al., 2002).

Celebrating the history of brands is one of the shared rituals and traditions which can be found in brand communities (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). This involves telling stories about the history of brands which serve to animate brand communities by reproducing the myths or cults that form around them. This in turn strengthens loyalty among their members. This is evidence of the important role that word-of-mouth plays in the life of brand communities (Kozinets et al., 2010). Brand stories link community members by allowing them to share their experiences of brands. Importantly, shared rituals and traditions help to build a sense of brand ownership among community members in that they are led by them to believe that brands belong to them rather than manufacturers.

4.4.3.3 A Sense of Moral Responsibility

A *sense of moral responsibility* is an obligatory duty which members commit to the community as a whole as well as to individual members of the community (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). It is a sense of sharing which can create “feeling of community” (Belk 2007: 5) and effects the long term survival of the community. In the other words, it is ‘a sense of duty or obligation’ for all community members (Luedicke and Giesler, 2007).

Through their sense of moral responsibility, community members are able to share experiences, knowledge, information, spirit, and work which contribute towards collective feelings and unity within the group. Integrating and retaining members, and assisting in the
use of the brand, are the benefit of moral responsibility (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). For example, members of P3 community always commit to contribute information or solve problems for other members (Mathwick et al., 2008).

Moral responsibility demands that community members help other known and unknown members without rewards or incentives. Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001: 425) have asserted that “[m]ost of informants report having helped others, both known and unknown...without thinking, simply acting out of a sense of responsibility that they felt toward other members of the community.” For example, members of online file-sharing or computer communities (Belk, 2007) tend to help fellow or new members solve problems with their computers or share files. Therefore, it is arguable that a sense of moral responsibility plays a role in the ‘organisational culture’ of brand communities.

4.4.4 Virtual Brand Community

Like consumer communities, virtual brand communities are consumer-created and unsponsored by the owners of the brands to which they correspond. However, they differ from more traditional communities in that they have no fixed location. These communities are created in cyberspace hence their members can interact outside of the constraints of physical space. Examples of virtual brand communities include ‘The Apple Newton Community’ (Muñiz and Schau, 2005), ‘The Nikonians brand community’ (Amine and Sitz 2004), and ‘The Basketball Shoes Community’ (Füller, Jawecki, and Mühlbacher 2005).

Online communities are not constrained by geography or space because members who live in different places are able to interact without ever meeting face-to-face. Moreover, new online users can continuously access to the community. Membership in online communities tends to reduce the opportunities available for consumers to do other activities or interact with offline network members because online users usually concentrate and focus on computers and the internet. However, by participating in online communities consumers are also able to gain social capital: norms of reciprocity, voluntarism, and social trust (Mathwick et al., 2008). These social capitals contribute to the social bonds that tie members of online communities together. Moreover, these social capitals allow consumers to extend their interactions to offline interaction (Wellman et al., 2001).

In short, brand communities are social networks that draw people together through meaningful experiences of brands. These communities are formed around specific brands and socially significant objects while their members are actively involved in shaping the
community (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001) by expressing and fostering emotion ties that
strengthen loyalty among community members towards each other and the brand (Bagozzi
and Dholagia, 2006; McAlexander et al., 2002).

Brand communities create value among consumers and marketing in different forms and
activities. However, most researchers are interested in the emergence process of different
products or services, such as Nutella community for consumer goods (Cova and Pace, 2006),
Nikonians and Powershot community for digital camera (Amine and Sitz, 2004), Harley-
Davidson and Jeep community for automobile (McAlexander et al., 2002). There is currently
very little interest in how value emerges from co-consuming groups. Consequently, answers
of this question make the contributions towards the new idea of brand community which is
created by consumers to possess subjective or symbolic values, and also demonstrating how
value co-creation works.

4.5 CAPITAL IN THE NETWORK OF COLLABORATION

As mention earlier, the active role of consumers as providers has contributed to the co-
creation of different forms of capital. Capital is one of the most useful theories for studying
social relations. It contributes to our understanding of how individual consumers negotiate
with others by employing their social, cultural and physical resources (see also Figure 3.1,
page 46) to co-create value both for their own sake and social group. A great contribution on
this, *Das Kapital*, was written by Marx in 1867 after he and his long-life friend and colleague,
Friedrich Engels, published the ‘Communist Manifesto’ in 1848 (McLellan, 1995). Although
the concept of capital was initially understood in terms of the tools or labour used in the
production process, it has since been used by sociologists and economists to shed light on
social relations in societies, organisations, firms, online communities, and so forth.

The concept of capital has recently been expanded to include different forms of capital:
economic capital, social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus,
the concept of capital concerns much more than the mere material or means of production. It
also includes the value of social interactions, especially surplus value (Marx, [1867, 1885,
1894] 1995). According to surplus value, capital can be divided into investment and profit
(Lin, 2001).

In this study, the theory of capital is crucial for understanding social interactions within online
communities. Thus, this section begins by clarifying the definition of capital and then
different forms of capital in order to provide a broader perspective on the theory capital. Finally, this section also outlines the characteristics, benefits, and processes relevant to each form of capital and how these affect social relations.

4.5.1 What is Capital?

The term ‘capital’ was initially used by Marx ([1867, 1885, 1894] 1995) to explain the surplus value between the bourgeoisie and labour through the production and distribution of commodities. In this way, Marx’s notion of capital was largely about economic capital and exploitation within society because during that time, the world economy was dominated by the production of commodities in order to create wealthy of the nation. Early discussions of capital were focused on different perspectives related to economic value and productivity: e.g. the materiality in the production process (Ricardo, 1821), labour, wealth, and its productivity (Mill, 1848; Senior, 1836; Smith, [1776] 1904), labour, production, and surplus value (Clark, 1888; Jevons, 1957; Marx, [1867, 1885, 1894] 1995).

Thus, the authors of these works focused on labour, wealth, production, productivity, surplus value, and so forth, because these were important mechanisms for the development of nations and societies during the nineteenth-century. More recently, most scholars have adapted the concept of capital to take account of social relations: e.g. Bourdieu (1986) on cultural capital and symbolic capital or Burt (1992); Coleman (1988); Lin (1999); Portes (1995); Putnam (1995) on social capital.

Before discussing the forms of capital, this section would like to explore the idea of capital further. The understanding of capital is based on Lin (2001) who defines it as “[i]nvestment of resources with expected returns in the marketplace (p.3).” Lin has traced this back to Marx’s ([1867, 1885, 1894] 1995) ‘Capital’, which focused on surplus value and the circulation of the commodities. From Marx’s perspective, labourers are exploited by capitalists because they have been paid wages lower than the cost of the commodities that they consume. In this way, capital can be seen as a social relationship in the exchange process (i.e. between investors and labourers) or as one of its outcomes (i.e. profits) (Marx, [1867, 1885, 1894] 1995). This is to say, capital can be viewed either as an outcome of the production and exchange process or as resources that somebody invests in these processes in the expectation of gaining something in return. Or in other words, capital can be both investment and profit in relation to the production process (Lin, 2001).
These economic capital and social capital played through social relation are profits of the social production process. It is noteworthy that to complete the process of social capital (both investment and gaining profit) it requires time and accumulation to provide profit or return (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, to gain social capital, individuals need both human capital and commitment to engage in the social interaction which cannot be done within the short-time, or to success in the market, businessmen need time to accumulate experience and trust within the market.

Cova and Dalli (2009) have discussed the active roles played by consumers (i.e. ‘working consumers’) in sociocultural and socioeconomic terms. However, this study does not include economic value as my theory and method are based on S-D logic and CCT which focus on social relations. The next section discusses the following forms of capital by which individuals invest in the social process: human, social, cultural, and symbolic. Moreover, it demonstrates how the field of social interaction has contributed to the capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

### 4.5.2 Forms of Capital

According to the definition of capital given above, capital is the resources that individuals or groups invest in social interaction and from which they expect profits in return. Thus, capital can be viewed as a part of surplus value (Lin, 1999). Along with the concept of surplus value, capital has been used to shed light on the forms of capital available to individuals or groups in the modern world and how they use them: For example, they may invest human capital and social capital in companies (Burt, 1992) or families (Coleman, 1988), cultural capital and symbolic capital in education (Bourdieu, 1986), social capital and intellectual capital in companies (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998), social capital within the online community – Peer-to-Peer community (Mathwick et al., 2008), forms of capital in leadership (Spillane et al., 2003), social capital in cyberspace (Lin, 1999), and so forth.

Lin (1999, 2001) has classified these studies as ‘neo-capitalist’. She has also argued that Marx’s ‘classic theory’ is a fundamental component in neo-capitalist theories. Bourdieu’s theory of capital is about the social world which relates to the game of society (Bourdieu, 1986). In this sense, different forms of capital control consumers’ stake in the game by defining the positions of social actors within the field. In his theory of capital, society consists of social fields, while forms of capital play a crucial role in internalising social actions. It is worth stating that these forms of capital are multi-dimensional and overlap in their meanings, forms, and how they emerge.
This study focuses on the four forms of capital which emerge in online communities; human, social, cultural, and symbolic. This study also considers how capital represents an accumulation of labour and surplus value and the level of consumption (individual and group). These forms of capital are described below.

4.5.2.1 Human Capital

Human capital is an extension of Marx’s classical theory of capital (Marx, [1867, 1885, 1894] 1995) which highlights the importance of labourers in capitalism (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Human capital draws attention to the value of skilled and educated labourers. Thus, human capital highlights the importance of investment in individuals in order to gain benefits or economic capital from their labour. Unlike physical capital (capital embodied in the material of tools and production equipment), human capital is embodied through the skills and knowledge of individuals and is thus useful to the production and exchange process (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001).

In this sense, human capital is not only about increasing payments to labourers or raising wages, etc. It also represents higher productivity for their employers. Moreover, although it emerges through a process of investing in individuals, human capital is also a form of social relation (Lin, 2001). Therefore, human capital can be viewed as certain qualities or abilities pertaining to individual labourers (e.g. skills, knowledge, and experience) which are mutually beneficial to them, the production process, and their employers.

Human capital can be invested in individuals through education (Becker, 1964; Coleman, 1988; Schultz, 1961). Schultz (1961) has also noted that human capital may be invested in labourers’ health (the healthier the more available labourers can work) and the immigration to higher labour demand area. Another means of acquiring human capital is through work experience whereby individuals accumulate skills and knowledge from work in general or on-the-job training (Becker, 1964). Because these kinds of investment help labourers to earn higher wages against their living costs, labourers may themselves be seen as capitalists who gain surplus value from their labour (Lin, 2001).

This neo-classical theory of human capital clearly diverges from Marxists theories of capital which focus on the exploitation of labourers by capitalists (Marx, [1867, 1885, 1894] 1995). Human capital helps to explain why labourers get unequally by their employers. In regard to this, Burt (1997) has noted that differences in the levels of skill, knowledge, or ability
pertaining to labourers are the main reason for discrepancies in how much they are paid. In this way, human capital is a useful indicator of the earning potential of individual labourers.

Like embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), human capital cannot be transmitted to other parties. It is accumulated and retained solely by individuals. In spite of this however, it is convertible into economic capital or other forms of capital. Individuals who have greater skills, knowledge, or experiences are better able to earn higher levels of income than others. The higher income or surplus value which individuals receive by virtue of their human capital allows them to access other forms of capital in society and higher standards of living.

For example, somebody who has a high level of human capital may be able to adopt a higher standard of living and have more time to socialise with friends or colleagues. Moreover, human capital is not only convertible to other forms of capital. It is also influenced by other forms of capital. Human capital in itself does not ensure the success of a given individual in their career. Burt (1997) has stated that a lack of social capital may be a bar to success in spite of a high level of human capital. This can be extended to the relationship between suppliers and customers.

However, most of these studies in human capital explore the relationship of capital between companies and staff in the development of company capabilities and staff income, or companies and customers or suppliers. In this study, human capital (i.e. skills, knowledge, or experience) is viewed as resources which individuals or consumers bring into social interactions within online communities or what Arnould et al. (2006) have called consumer schemata.

These resources can be viewed as individual consumers’ operant resources (resources activating economic resources and decision making) and co-consuming groups’ operand resources (individuals’ resources within the co-consuming group needed to be activating by the collective resources) within S-D logic of marketing (see also Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). This dissertation does not intend to investigate how consumers gain human capital. Rather, it focuses on how individuals employ their human capital to participate in social interactions which create value.

### 4.5.2.2 Social Capital

In contrast to human capital, social capital emerges from social relations within groups or social networks. Although these forms of capital emerge through social networks, they also depend on the social relations among individuals within them. Social capital is among the
most widely mentioned ideas in sociology and related fields over the past two decades. Although it was first used in studies of communities and neighborhoods (Jacobs, 1965), social capital has more recently been used to investigate social phenomena relevant to other fields such as economics, business, organisation, geographic region, nation, etc. (Nahiphat and Ghoshal, 1998). Recent work on Peer-to-Peer community published by Mathwick et al. (2008) has demonstrated the co-creation of social capital within the online community.

**Perspectives on Social Capital**

Table 4.1 illustrates two pairs of different perspectives on social capital: individual and collective and external and internal. Social capital can emerge at either the individual or collective level (Lin, 1999). It is something that people are able to invest and gain returns from, specifically by engaging themselves in the social interactions which gain for them trust, recognition, or goodwill. From this perspective, individuals participate in the social relations for the purposes of accumulating goodwill or trust from other members of society.

**Table 4.1:** Different Perspectives of Social Capital

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<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Theorist</th>
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<td><strong>Level of</strong></td>
<td><strong>Capital</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Perspective</strong></td>
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Meanwhile, at the group level social capital is the collective products (relationships and resources) that networks or groups are able to create and invest through the social relations (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). From this perspective, members of a society or group are able to maintain and reproduce norms and other collective resources by interacting socially and forming relationships with other group members or the group as a whole. These collective resources help members to form solidarity and reciprocity.
within their communities (Mathwick et al., 2008). In this study, these perspectives are integrated in order to understand how individuals employ their resources in groups and how this leads to the co-creation of value.

Social capital can be viewed as bridging and bonding forms of capital within communities or groups (Adler and Kwon, 2002). More specifically, as bridging form, social capital is a resource embedded in groups which draws their members together as a social network. On the other hand, as bonding form, these resources are social ties which exist within social networks in forms such as friendship, families, or membership (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). And in this way, these resources dominate individual and group actions.

For example, as a member of the LFC fan-site, it is easy to access or connect other members without engaging them in face-to-face conversation. In contrast, bonding forms of capital or internal perspectives focus on the collective products of social networks, specifically in regard to how they draw group members together and lead to solidarity within the network. These resources are the community norms, trustworthiness and reciprocity among members, voluntary contributions towards the group and obligations placed on members to cooperate and participate in the group (Coleman, 1988; Cova and Cova, 2002; Mathwick et al., 2008). However, this study takes a neutral perspective by viewing social capital from both directions. Therefore, social capital is embedded in the resources and collective products of the social networks which tie or bond their members together.

The term ‘social capital’ is used here to refer to social phenomena by which individuals make use of resources that are invested in social relations. However, social capital also refers to opportunities for success or the achievement of life goals (Lin, 1999). That is, social capital is an opportunity to access social resources which are formed by and invested in collective relationships. Social capital may also allow individuals and groups to access information, knowledge, and other resources.

Lin (1999) supports this idea by providing an example of an individual who has high level of social capital which allows him/her to borrow resources from friends or other acquaintances. This example shows that individuals who have a high level of social capital are more able to be successful because their social capital provides them with access to opportunities through social networks. For example, in an organisational study, Burt (1997) has described how a manager who has a high level of human capital, requires social capital in addition to this in order to access network ties. So in short, individuals who have more social capital have access to more opportunities to achieve success.
**Definition of Social Capital**

Taking account of all the dimensions of social capital described above (individual or collective, and external or internal), I propose the following definition of social capital:

Social Capital is resources of individuals and groups which are invested through a combination of embedded and accumulated resources within relational networks.

Thus, according to this definition, there are two kinds of resources within the social relation: embedded (i.e. social ties—friendship, membership, etc) and accumulated (i.e. resources that form from collective actions—norms, obligations, trustworthiness, etc.). Thus, to gain returns from social investments, individuals need to pursue two main actions: instrumental actions and expressive actions (Lin, 1999; Mathwick et al., 2008).

*Instrumental action* is a process of developing resources within the social networks. At the collective level, it provides returns as found in the peer-to-peer community – norms of reciprocity, voluntarism, and social trust (Mathwick et al., 2008). However, at the individual level, wealth, reputation, and power are examples of returns from instrumental actions (Lin, 1999). Another action is *expressive action*, played by preserving embedded resources. Lin (1999) suggests that close networks effectively contribute to the preservation of resources. At the collective level, a strong sense of community, consciousness of kinds, rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility, such as may be found in brand communities (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001), are examples of returns from expressive action (Mathwick et al., 2008). Meanwhile, physical and mental health and life satisfaction are examples of returns at the individual level (Lin, 1999).

**Dimensions of Social Capital**

Like the concept of value, social capital a multi-dimensional concept depending on the level of relationships and group characteristics (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Putnam, 1995). As found in different forms of social capital (e.g., obligations, trust, norms, voluntarism, reciprocity, goodwill, reputation, recognition, etc), they can be categorised into three interrelated dimensions of social capital: structural, relational, and cognitive (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998).

The *structural dimension* of social capital emphasises the places in which social interactions or networking occur (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998). This dimension of capital is in the bridging form of social capital or external perspective whereby social ties and social structures play an important role in enhancing the interpersonal interactions among
individuals in social networks. The places of individuals within the structures of social networks are also a structural dimension of social capital (Burt, 1997). Coleman (1988) and Lin (1999) have also suggested that the density or hierarchy of groups or society is another aspect to this.

The *relational dimension* concerns the connections between actors in social networks. It is a kind of personal relationship which is formed from social interactions (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). In contrast to the structural dimension, the relational dimension can be viewed as a bonding form of social capital whereby individuals form personal relationships from their social interactions. This dimension can be found in Coleman’s (1988) forms of social capital (obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness) and also in Mathwick et al.’s (2008) different norms (reciprocity, social trust, and voluntarism).

Much like the relational dimension, the *cognitive dimension* is a bonding form of social capital. This leads to the creation of collective resources which help individuals to achieve the individual and collective goals. It is the way that individuals within social networks share codes of conduct as insiders. This dimension can be found in football fandom where football fans form and share their traditions, culture, and rituals with other fans (Richardson, 2004).

**Benefits and Risks of Social Capital**

According to the theory of capital mentioned above, social capital is resources for social investment in order to gain outcomes (Lin, 2001). These outcomes can provide benefits and risks to individuals and groups. The *first* direct benefit is a flow of information (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 1999) which helps individuals to access sources of information. Social capital can help individuals convert their human capital into economic capital through network of connections, including depth and richness of information (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Burt, 1997; Lin and Dumin, 1986). Moreover, it helps to reduce transaction costs or provide better opportunities (Lin, 1999).

Social capital can provide individuals or groups with greater and better opportunities to achieve their goals through ‘influence, power, and control’ (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 1999). Individuals who possess high social capital (e.g. recognition, goodwill, obligation, *etc.*) are able to become powerful actors within social networks. Moreover, it is convertible into symbolic capital which also makes individuals more powerful (Bourdieu, 1986).
Social capital can endorse the credibility of individuals through social ties and their relationships within social networks. It contributes to the solidarity of networks and also increases the norms of trustworthiness (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Finally, social capital reinforces identity and recognition of individuals as insiders (Lin, 1999). It allows individuals to access embedded and accumulated resources through social interactions.

Like two sides of the same coin, social capital also provides risks to the collective group. Firstly, social capital may cost inefficient investment (Adler and Kwon, 2002). For example, in order to gain social recognition and credibility, individuals or organisations may invest more of their budgets in less worthy social networks due to difficult to access and high cost of social relationship maintenance. Secondly, many social ties or connections may dilute the solidarity of groups or communities. As Ahuja (1998) has suggested, individuals may lose close connections or relationships in social networks if they have too many contacts.

Thirdly, individuals who have high social capital may dominate others and obstruct the flow of information or other collective resources (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Fourthly, solidarity networks may contribute to employment myopia or corruption (Fukuyama, 2001). In the case of employment myopia, a collective group or some organisations, especially family businesses, may not be open-minded enough about outsiders, which may reduce their chances of gaining new information and becoming more competitive. Finally, group solidarity may be viewed as a threat or negative to people outside of the group or society at large (e.g. football hooligan (King, 2001), Ku Klux Klan (Fukuyama, 2001), hardcorer football fans (PongsakornrungSilp et al., 2008b), etc.).

In short, social capital in this study is both individual and collective resources which individuals and groups invest in social relations. They are embedded and accumulated resources which individuals and groups pursue through instrumental and expressive actions. These concepts are employed as a framework to observe social interactions within the online LFC fan community.

4.5.2.3 Cultural Capital

Cultural capital, which is used by individuals to create distinctions among members of groups or society, is a system of symbolism and meaning (Jenkins, 1992: 104). It is similar to human capital in the way that individuals accumulate it through a pedagogic system. However, cultural capital grants individuals higher status and reproduces the symbolic meanings of the dominant classes within social networks and societies.
Cultural capital was originally formulated in response to the unequal educational achievements of children from different social classes (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, Bourdieu’s followers have tended to adapt the theory of cultural capital to study cultural capital and education: e.g. Crook (1997), De Graaf et al. (2000), Ganzeboom (1982), Lareau and Weininger (2003), Sullivan (2007), etc. Moreover, it has been used to study gender in other fields (Dumais, 2002; McClelland, 1990; Mickelson, 1989; Robinson and Ganier, 1985), neighbourhood (Bridge, 2004; Landry, 1997), country (McCrone, 2005).

Although cultural capital has been adapted for the purposes of different fields, its main foci are the relationships between cultural capital and other forms of capital and the ways in which individuals and groups reproduce the distinctions. These studies have adapted the theory of cultural capital to explain the origins and destinations of class relationships through the pedagogic system. Therefore, Bourdieu’s (1986) definition of cultural capital is used to inform this study:

[S]kills, knowledge, and experience which individuals possess within the dominant class whereby it is collectively accumulated and reproduced to express the distinction class or group.

According to this definition, cultural capital is similar to human capital in that it emerges from the educational system and more specifically, the skills, knowledge, and experience that individual possess. However, cultural capital is different from human capital in the way that it is able to reproduce class or group distinctions, whereas human capital can only demonstrate the specialisations of individuals.

However, many studies (e.g. Dumais, 2002; De Graaf et al., 2000; Shaw, 1999) have found that cultural capital can increase human capital in that individuals who have cultural capital (such as familiarity with art, culture, classical music—i.e. the ”Mozart effect”: Shaw, 1999) tend to have higher competencies by comparison with those who do not. In addition to the educational system, cultural capital also depends on domesticity (Holt, 1998). For example, individuals from the dominant classes are more familiar in the cultural capital of art, music, or clothes than people from the lower classes due to the parental support provided to them during their childhood.

**Different Forms of Cultural Capital**

Cultural capital is the accumulation of skills, knowledge, and experience through the family and educational system. It reinforces the dominant classes or groups by reproducing symbolic meanings through subjectively embodied forms of cultural capital or ways of feeling,
thinking, and acting (Holt, 1998). This psycho-social action has been labeled *habitus* by Bourdieu (1984), who states that:

[H]abitus is constructed as the generative formula which makes it possible to account both for the classifiable practices and products and for the judgements, themselves classified, which make these practices and works into a system of distinctive signs (Bourdieu, 1984: 170).

According to Bourdieu’s (1984) ‘*Distinction*’, social action or practice is the sum of capital, field, and *habitus*. He defines ‘field’ as ‘network’ or ‘a social arena’ which posits the actions of individuals through forms of capital. On the other hand, cultural capital and other forms of capital define the distinct positions of actors within the field (Holt, 1998). Fields can be politics, business, religion, education, sport, or the arts. For the purposes of this study, online communities are one of the fields in which individuals gather together and engage in social interactions around football. In order to distinguish themselves from other group members or communities, individuals compete in the social relations through three forms of cultural capital: embodied state, objectified state, and institutionalised state (Bourdieu, 1986).

**Embodied State**

Embodied cultural capital is in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body (Bourdieu, 1986: 47). Like human capital, embodied cultural capital is the fundamental state of individuals’ skills, knowledge, and experience. It can be accumulated and cultivated through domesticity and educational systems.

Therefore, it is the resources embodied in individuals which obtain in personal costs and cannot be transmitted to others. It is noteworthy that embodied cultural capital is directly linked to *habitus*. Thus, in order to acquire cultural capital, individuals need to invest in both social relations and money which accumulate capital culture for them through time, society, class, and the unconscious (Bourdieu, 1986). By doing this, embodied cultural capital can appear in the tastes, habits, and styles, including both self-identity and “we-ness” (Kapitzke, 2000; McCrone, 2005). In conclusion, embodied cultural capital is the way that individuals attach cultural meanings to themselves by learning and accumulating skills, knowledge, and experience.

**Objectified State**

Objectified cultural capital occupies cultural objects, such as art, books, pictures, or music, which require the existence of embodied cultural capital within individuals in order to
understand and reproduce their symbolic meanings. At the objectified state, cultural capital is embedded in material objects and music (Bourdieu, 1986). In contrast to the embodied state, objectified cultural capital is transmittable through the exchange or transaction of material objects. However, individuals who possess material objects need to have embodied cultural capital for understanding its symbolic meanings and reproducing them through their consumption.

Moreover, the exchange or transfer of cultural objects does not only transmit cultural capital, but also converts it into economic capital. For example, in the MG car community, individuals consume the authenticity and cultural capital of their MG cars (Leigh et al., 2006). This objectified cultural capital can only be transmitted to other members through the exchange or transaction of MG cars if the new owner already has embodied cultural capital relating to MG cars. Hence at this stage individuals who have accumulated embodied cultural capital are able to assign cultural codes to objects so that those objects contain symbolic meanings which reflect back on the individuals and groups who consume them.

**Institutionalised State**

Institutionalised cultural capital refers to qualifications or degrees which endorse individuals’ value and capital (Bourdieu, 1986). It provides individuals with academic credentials which are necessary for them to seek employment in the labour market. Institutionalised cultural capital is similar to embodied cultural capital in the way it draws from educational systems and cannot be transmitted to other people. It may only be converted into economic capital.

However, institutionalised cultural capital does not only relate to academic certifications. McCrone (2005) mentions in ‘Cultural Capital in an Understated Nation’ that cultural capital may also relate to informal institutionalisation. He has noted how people in Scotland view themselves as Scottish rather than British because they are domesticated in a Scottish way, which he takes to show that institutionalised states are not necessarily guaranteed by degree certificates as they may also be derived from people’s subjective worldviews.

As it is embedded in the three forms mentioned above, cultural capital can reproduce its symbolic meanings in two ways: status-seeking and information process (Ganzeboom, 1982). The former comes from *the status-seeking theory* which asserts that individuals possess cultural objects in order to access higher status in society. In this sense, individuals are influenced by social identities in which individuals collect or consume exclusively cultural objects in order to gain status or social capital from their peers. This can be found in football.
fandom, in which football fans need to express cultural capital through making gestures (e.g. chanting, singing and clapping during matches) and also possess cultural objects related to a football club (e.g. football jerseys, pins, hats, and so on) (Richardson, 2004).

Meanwhile, the information process theory concerns how individuals and their peers cohere and cooperate in the formation groups or societies. The information process is necessary for all society members to appropriate cultural knowledge and to accumulate experiences through participation. This is similar to the notion of institutionalised state whereby individuals can internalise and be institutionalised through social relations. Moreover, it is a way in which members of societies or groups try to balance differences in the levels of information, skills and knowledge among their members. These processes have been adapted here to understand how individuals and groups of online communities affect cultural capital. In this study, cultural capital is adapted to understand how individuals form and transmit their cultural capital and also consider the relationships among the three forms of cultural capital.

4.5.2.4 Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital is similar to human capital in that it cannot be transmitted to other members of society, but it can convert into other forms of capital in some instances (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, a company can invest enormous budgets in social responsibility so that symbolic capital is gradually formed through company behaviour which in turn leads to an increase in social acceptance and profits for the company (Fuller and Tian, 2006). In the following sections, a definition of symbolic capital and its aspects are demonstrated by explaining the differences between symbolic and social capital. Then, the works on symbolic capital are presented by pointing a convergent concept from different studies. However, before demonstrating how symbolic capital emerges as a shared value within society, the unique forms of symbolic capital are discussed.

Bourdieu’s (1990) notion of symbolic capital refers to the honour, prestige, and renown of individuals, all of which accumulate over time as the results of social actions. Hence symbolic capital is the credit which individuals accumulate through social interactions. It is possessed by individuals, but it is processed collectively by groups or society. However, symbolic capital is more than merely the symbolic power developed by individuals through their reputations, prestige, honours, credits, or shared values. It is also an investment from which returns beyond economic capital are expected (Bourdieu, 1986; Henry, 2002). Thus, it seems that symbolic capital is similar to social capital in that both are formed by social relations intended to gain reputation or recognition.
Fuller and Tian (2006) demonstrated distinctly that social capital relates to the nature of power and meaning in social structures and plays a role as a guide for social practice. And they have also shown that symbolic capital relates to the ways in which individuals are valued by others and how this leads to the accumulation of symbolic power for them. It is worth noting that this symbolic power allows individuals to dominate other members of their groups or societies (Uhlíř, 1998).

Symbolic capital has been adapted to understand how symbolic power functions in different areas of society (not only social relations). One of these is the “place of meaning” (Dovey, 1992; Hagen, 2007; Rose-Redwood, 2008) which uses symbolic capital to understand how the symbolic power of locations such as streets, buildings, or regions is constructed through historical narratives about those places. Symbolic capital has also been used to understand human capital within organisations by exploring how staff benefit from high levels of human capital and how this impacts on their personal careers (Cronin and Shaw, 2002; Doherty and Dickman, 2009; Henry, 2002). Moreover, it has been adapted to understand symbolic power within social relationships, including those in organisations or societies (Bliege Bird and Smith, 2005; Fuller and Tian, 2006; Järvinen and Gundalech, 2007).

Furthermore, symbolic capital has been indirectly employed within the marketing discipline to study the symbolic meanings or values of consumption in co-consuming groups (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001; Holt, 1995; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). It is worth noting that symbolic value in different studies has converged through the idea of a shared value among social actors.

**Contexts of Symbolic Capital**

Following the studies mentioned above, symbolic capital can be used to understand social relations in different contexts, but according to the convergent concept – a shared value of reputation, prestige, honour. Evidence for this shared value is provided from two viewpoints: objective and subjective (Özbilgin, Nord and Tatlı, 2005). Subjective views are perception and appreciation toward individuals or organisations in terms of the prestige and honour accumulated as a result of their behaviour – Corporate Social Responsibility behaviour (Fullter and Tian, 2006) or their positions in society – bureaucratised professional (Henry, 2002). In contrast, symbolic capital can be seen in objects such as academic certificates, buildings, citations, trophies, etc.
For example, citations given by the academic community are a shared value of symbolic capital and offer links to the prestige, honour, and reputation of scholars (Cronin and Shaw, 2002). Interestingly, there is more than one dimension to subjective and objective symbolic capital because the more precise nature of symbolic capital depends on the social context (e.g. organisation, society, network, etc.).

Therefore, it is arguable that social contexts serve to define symbolic value or symbolic capital. As it has already been stated, citations play an important role in helping scholars to gain acceptance and honour. Due to limited resources and legitimated power of symbolic capital (Flint and Rowlands, 2003), individuals who possess this shared value will tend to have greater symbolic capital than those who do not. Another example of this can be taken from Henry’s (2002) work on bureaucratic positions and unofficial qualifications.

There is a convergence of symbolic capital in terms of how it emerges or accumulates. Bourdieu (1986) suggests that symbolic capital is accumulated through social processes by investing time, money, and energy in social interaction without expecting money in return. On the other hand, symbolic capital may be recognised as shared understandings and meanings among actors within societies with distinct values (Doherty and Dickman, 2009).

Individuals or organisations may convert social and cultural capital into symbolic capital in order to gain the symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1977). A good example is provided by companies that advertise social responsibility as a part of their ethos (Fullter and Tian, 2006). This may help them to gain social capital in return for their investments in social responsibility (e.g. reducing consumer risks, working on environmental friendly programmes, creating good workplace communities, creating good business partnerships), which in more practical terms translates into trust, recognition, and respect. Social capital gradually forms into symbolic capital or prestige power among stakeholders which is in turn convertible by them into economic capital or profit. Mac, a cosmetics brand, is an example of a company which invests in social responsibility and earns huge returns in profit (Kerin and Peterson, 2003).

Hence, although symbolic capital is possessed by individuals, it emerges through social processes. As Bourdieu (1986) has suggested, symbolic capital may emerge in different forms depending on the field whereby members of society collectively define indices of symbolic capital. For example, among academics, citations, web hits, and media mentions are the indices of symbolic capital. These indices are evidence of the prestige, honour, or reputation which scholars possess.
4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has extended the conceptual of value co-creation and co-consuming groups by applying them to the idea of brand communities. The concept of brand community is employed as co-consuming group in order to understand how value co-creation works even though the ideas of brand community, subcultures of consumption and consumer tribes remain controversial in marketing. However, this dissertation does not intend to discuss which type of these social networks is a co-consuming group. Instead, this dissertation considers brand community as a context in which co-consuming groups can be better understood due to its community markers and community members.

In this chapter, immaterial labours or general intellect and capital rooted in Marxist are used to shed light on value creation process and S-D logic. Although resources which each party brings into the social interaction process are different from Marx era, both concepts can explain surplus value (see also Marx, [1867, 1885, 1894] 1995) which consumers or labours gain from the process. For example, consumers may gain experience from social interaction within brand community, and they may gain the collective resources (social, cultural, or symbolic capital) from the interaction.

This chapter has also demonstrated the negotiations between individuals and social groups through the experience paradigm (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). At the individual level, consumers co-create value by experiencing activities, people, products, or even their mundane lives. The example of football fandom is used to support our understanding of brand community in which consumers embed themselves with activities and other community members in order to co-create value.

To draw the concept of how consumers employ resources in the value co-creation process, the forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) (social, cultural, human and symbolic) are employed in order to provide understanding of consumer schemata; social, cultural, and physical (Arnould et al., 2006). To do this, consumer schemata play an important role as resources which consumers are able to use to achieve their life projects. The emergence of these forms of capital provides insights into the process of social interaction whereby consumers employ their resources to co-create value. Moreover, these forms of capital draw attention to the negotiations that take place between individuals and social groups.
CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research methodology which has been used to collect and analyse data from a brand community (the TIA community) in order to understand how consumers co-create value among each other. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, this study is informed by a number of different perspectives (S-D logic, CCT, value co-creation, brand community, and the forms of capital). Thus, this chapter is intended to clarify how this dissertation can demonstrate the value co-creation process and how these data was collected within the brand community. Furthermore, the subject of this study (the online LFC fan community) and why it was chosen as a case study are discussed in this chapter.

As Kozinets (2010) has noted, netnography is like ethnography in that it is a form of understanding social and cultural phenomena focused on online communities. The online community is a community of practice where a group of consumers are bound together in order to cooperate to achieve their individual and collective life goals. In order to understand this social phenomenon, a research methodology which can explore the actions and meaning of consumers within the online community is required. Therefore, this study has employed ‘netnography’ as a research methodology in order to collect data from the relevant online community. This form of data collection provides a rich in and natural information which allows researchers to understand and interpret consumer culture.

This chapter begins this chapter by discussing the netnography methodology in order to clarify why it is a suitable means of enquiry for my purposes to understand consumer insights from the online community. This chapter integrates Kozinets’s original paper on ‘Netnography’ methodology (2002b) and his updated ‘Netnography 2.0’ (2007b) with his more recent book ‘Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online’ (2010) in order to given an in depth explanation of this research method. Following this, the selection of the netnographic community is presented by discussing the reasons why the LFC fan community is an appropriate context for the purposes of this study. Next, data collection and analysis are discussed in order to understand how consumers can co-create value among each other. The research ethics of this study are presented in the final section.
5.2 NETNOGRAPHY

This study aims to determine how consumers co-create value in consumer-to-consumer relationships; therefore, the social interactions of consumers within groups need to be observed, analysed, and interpreted in order to explore the value co-creation process. In order to collect relevant and rich data, this dissertation requires a natural and unobtrusive research method (Webb et al., 1981). Hence Netnography (Kozinets, 2010), an online ethnographic method, have been employed in order to understand the behaviour of consumers in online communities and also the cultural phenomenon of online communities.

Online communities are able to be a place for understanding consumer behaviour. The number of internet users forming computer-mediated social communities, or ‘virtual communities’ is currently increasing. Observing behaviour of consumers within online community can help marketing scholars to understand consumers’ self-representation and the system of meaning (Kozinets, 2010). Before discussing the context of the study, and my methods of data collection and analysis, what netnography is and why it is a suitable method for this study need to be understood.

5.2.1 What Is Netnography?

Netnography is like ethnography in that it is the study of social and cultural phenomena; in such studies, the researcher can fully participate in the cultural group as a ‘recognised cultural member’ (Kozinets, 1998: 366). In this sense, Kozinets states that

> [N]ethnography is participant-observational research based in online fieldwork. It uses computer-mediated communications as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographic understanding and representation of a cultural or communal phenomenon.

(Kozinets, 2010: 60)

Kozinets also compares netnography to other research techniques and recommends it as being far less time consuming and elaborate, less obtrusive, and less costly in many instances. Netnography also allows the researchers to make direct observations of the co-consuming group in its natural environment. Kozinets (2002b) also recommends that the unobtrusive and naturalistic advantages offered by the netnographic method allow researchers to access aspects of online social life that other methods do not.

However, in order to employ netnography, researchers must be aware of its limitations. Netnography is absolutely focused on online consumers or virtual communities where individuals participate without face-to-face interactions (Kozinets, 2002b). Furthermore,
online communities are places where strangers can socialise as “free riders” who may come and go (Mathwick et al., 2008). Therefore, researchers require interpretive skills in order to understand online collectives of consumers and also familiarity with the triangulation method so that they can gather relevant information.

The capability and reliability of netnography have been shown by many scholars in the field (e.g., Avery, 2007; Giesler, 2006; Kozinets, 1998, 2002b; Langer and Beckman, 2005; Mathwick et al., 2008; Nelson and Otnes, 2005; Richardson, 2004). For example, Avery (2007) has studied an independent consumer brand community, namely Porsche automobile enthusiasts. She focused on how consumers in that brand community use their chosen brand as an instrument to achieve their identity projects.

Another relevant netnographic study is Mathwick et al.’s (2008) ‘Social Capital Production in a Virtual P3 Community’. They studied social relationships by understanding how consumers cement peer networks within online Peer-to-Peer communities through the formation of social norms. These studies have helped to establish netnography as an appropriate method for understanding the social phenomenon of online communities. Moreover, these studies provide guidelines for observing and gathering relevant data from online communities of practice.

5.2.2 Virtual Community: A Collective Group of Consumption

With the advance of telecommunications and the internet or World Wide Web (WWW), consumers in the 21st Century are facing an alternative place of socialisation; online or virtual communities (Kozinets, 2010). In 2009 approximately 25% of the world’s population (1.7 billion people) had access to the online world (Internet World Stats, 2009). This has corresponded with the emergence of brand communities through which consumers aim to socialise (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001): Accordingly ‘virtual brand communities’ (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008a), which also fulfill the desires of consumers to socialise among one another, have emerged. It was mentioned in Chapter Four that virtual communities emerged through the advent of computer-mediated environments (CMEs) which provide the crucial sources of online consumer culture; especially consumer-to-consumer (C2C) relationship.

As Kozinets (1999, 2007b) has noted, message boards are crucial sources of information and places where online members can participate in activities or discussions that interest them. Message boards can be found in most online communities; they allow their members to post and respond to messages. Nelson and Otnes (2005) have studied cross-cultural consumption
on wedding plan message boards because they are easily accessible and interactive. Because of their interactive nature, message boards have been used as places of study in a variety of research fields: For example, financial markets (Antweiler and Frank, 2004), health care (Newholm, Khan and Keeling, 2008), and so forth.

Another concern for netnography, which has been studied by Kozinets (1999, 2010), is the extent to which individual members of online communities are involved in them: For example, they may be classed as tourists, minglers, devotees, or insiders (in their respective order, the first being the least involved and the last the most involved). Kozinets (2007b) notes that message boards are full of insiders and devotees (the most important data sources: Kozinets, 2002b: 64), and also some minglers. Therefore, message boards are one of the best places to investigate collective consumption within consumption-related community. For the purposes of this research, the netnographic method has been employed to understand social interactions within a collective group of consumers (i.e. the TIA community). Thus, in this study the message boards of this online community have been used to collect data on how consumers co-create value with each other.

This dissertation has been able to collect textual data which sheds light on the nature of the value creation process. These texts provide understanding of the cultural meanings of social interactions through hermeneutical framework (Thompson and Hirschman, 1995). However, this form of data demands interpretative skills from researchers (Kozinets, 2002b). Researchers cannot extend their understanding beyond these texts. Research context or problems may be complex and difficult to understand from texts. In other words, researchers cannot access additional data from informants as much as provided by interview method (Askegaard, Gertsen and Langer, 2002). Therefore, in response to this concern, additional data have been collected through ‘Personal Messages’ or ‘PMs’ (private messages which are sent to specific online members much like e-mails).

The following section is to explain how a netnographic community, and also the context of the study were chosen.

5.3 NETNOGRAPHY COMMUNITY SELECTION

In this study, a virtual brand community, the TIA community [http://forums.thisisanfield.com/] (an unofficial fan-site for Liverpool Football Club supporters; Anfield is Liverpool’s home-stadium), was selected as a place of study. TIA was
chosen as a source of data because it appears as the highest ranking website on the Google search engine [www.google.co.uk/] in response to the search term [Liverpool fan-site]: it had 9,547 members, 15,932 topics and 485,375 posts as of 8 December 2008 (ThisIsAnfield, 2008). This fan-site is a virtual brand community which is found in the preliminary research (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b), that it is open to all LFC supporters (i.e. it does not restrict membership to specific groups such as LFC fans who live locally in Liverpool).

In this respect, TIA may be considered a ‘compromiser’ group because its local members are open-minded to all LFC supporters around the world. It strikes a balance between the culture of specifically English football (or ‘Soccer’ in the US), and the globalisation and commercialisation of football.

In other words, compromisers bring together both local and global fans. Compromisers are the local fans of LFC who are open-minded to fans from outside Liverpool City; this is as opposed to “hardcorers” who have a strong sense of local identity and thus disapprove of non-local fans. Open-mindedness is recommended by Pini as a crucial component of the value co-creation (Pini, 2009). Compromisers are happy with LFC having international fans as long as they learn and adopt the culture and traditions of LFC (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b).

The TIA community is an independent community operated by LFC supporters. Moreover, TIA members have united with other communities or fan-sites to form the Spirit of Shankly (SOS: this refers to one of the greatest LFC managers, Bill Shankly, who led the team from 1959 to 1974). This is a union of LFC supporters which is intended to empower LFC supporters as a group against LFC and its American co-owners. By organising this resistance against the American co-owners, TIA members have successfully sent messages or consumer voices to the LFC board executives. Moreover, by drawing on the unity of LFC supporters TIA members have also cooperated to empower themselves as a group against The Sun newspaper. These movements within the TIA community provide evidence of the active roles played by consumers in the TIA community.

Importantly, the characteristics of the TIA community and the social interactions between community members make a tremendous contribution to our understanding of the co-creation of value in brand communities. TIA also exhibits the three markers of brand community: consciousness of kind, sharing of rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001).
According to the forms of capital, as mentioned in Chapter Four, the TIA community provides social ties through a system of rankings. The rankings within the TIA community were viewed as social structures in order to understand social interactions within the TIA community. There are 7 rankings within the TIA community: TIA Board Members, TIA Legends, TIA First Team members, TIA Subs-Bench members, TIA Reserve Team members, TIA Youth Team members, and TIA New Signing members, respectively. In each structure or rank, TIA members tend to behave and participate in different ways.

TIA Board Member is a special rank because most of them are founding members of TIA and also because they act as moderators, who voluntarily manage the TIA community by enforcing its rules. TIA Board Members share their experiences and knowledge of LFC with their fellow TIA members and also commit themselves to compulsory duties such as answering questions, posting new information, and disciplining badly behaved members. In addition to this, they moderate all threads and posts on TIA. TIA Legend is the highest status or rank that a typical member can reach, while TIA New Signing member is the lowest status or rank within the TIA community.

Moreover, the characteristics and social interactions of TIA meet the netnography recommendations (Kozinets, 2002b); answering research questions, more traffic participations from different posters (see also low collective innovation concentration: Kozinets et al., 2008), richness of data, and more social interactions. Therefore, the TIA community is a useful case of a consumer community whose members co-create value and gain unique benefits by interacting with each other.

5.4 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

LFC, formed in 1892, is one of the oldest and most successful football clubs in the history of English football. LFC has both a large international fan-base, and a strong affinity with its local working-class supporter-base, even though LFC has not won the League title since the nineteen-nineties. LFC fans have co-created the myths and culture of their football fandom through their personal life history (Askegaard and Bengtsson, 2005; Schroeder, 2009). Its myths and culture are co-created through different circumstances whereby fans have shared stories and experiences with other fans. The strong fan-base of LFC has collectively contributed to the formation of the traditions and culture of LFC in a variety of ways. For example, after the Hillsborough disaster in 1989 (when a large number of LFC fans were
crushed to death during the FA Cup semi-final) *The Sun* newspaper claimed that the crush that led to the deaths was the fault of LFC fans, even though an official investigation had found that it was the fault of stadium management (Dunning, 2000). In response to these claims, LFC fans have co-created a strong sense of identity against *The Sun* through their campaign of boycotting it. Moreover, they have also co-created their empowerment against people or things that they consider to be enemies of LFC such as the club’s American co-owners. LFC fans are willing to mobilise themselves to support what they believe in, or resist what they do not (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b).

Another LFC fans’ myth or history was created at the UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) Champion League in 2005 when LFC recovered from being 3:0 down in the first half to ending the match with a 3:3 draw and then winning by a penalty shootout. This die-hard LFC myth and the two circumstances mentioned above have accumulated built the strong and well-known tradition of LFC. This tradition is “You’ll Never Walk Alone” (hereafter YNWA). The tradition of ‘YWNA’ began in 1963 when the local musicians, Gerry & the Pacemakers, sang this song (originally written by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II in 1945). Gerry Marsden went on to present it to LFC manger on the preseason tour and from there it became popular among the club, fans, and general public (Liverpool FC, 2009).

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the globalisation and commercialisation of football has transformed LFC into a global brand (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b). The result of this has been an influx of foreigner players and many multinational companies and businessmen in the English Premier league, both sponsoring and owning English football clubs. Moreover, international match-goers are attracted to the English Premier League. Because of cultural differences and their lack of proximity to Liverpool city, most global match-goers attend English Premier League games as a leisure or tourist activity (thus they are generally not well-acquainted with English football culture).

**5.5 DATA COLLECTION**

This data collection is based on over two years of observation that evolved from different strategies: e.g. attending games at Anfield, the home stadium of LFC, participant observation of LFC fans at a Pub near to the stadium before and after football matches, non-participant observation at a meeting of the SOS: LFC Supporter Union, and viewing different LFC fan-
sites. This immersion process has provided the researcher with an understanding of the research context of LFC fans. As a global LFC fan myself, it was very difficult to gain acceptance from some local LFC fans and even from some online communities of local fans. Based on these experiences TIA was chosen as a place of study because of the open-mindedness of the group towards international LFC fans.

Consumer-to-consumer interactions on the TIA community were observed through both as a participant and non-participant with the permission of the site-moderator and other members. Although participant observation may create a bias (Avery, 2007), it allows a researcher to form direct relationships with the other members of the group so that a researcher can be identified as a member of the brand community (or as a ‘recognised culture member’: Kozinets, 2002b). Moreover, as Pongsakornrungsilp et al.’s have found in their study, ‘Left Behind: Local Fans of Global Brands’ (2008b), there is a group of LFC fans known as ‘hardcorers’ who have a strong sense of local identity and thus they claim that only local people can be LFC fans in some true sense. Therefore, by embedding myself in the TIA community a researcher has been able to interact with the TIA community as an outsider who is an international or global fan in order to reflect or interpret the reaction of the local fans.

During the data collection process, the humanist inquiry method (Hirschman 1986) was adapted dividing into three stages. Firstly, ‘a priori conceptualisation’: the first stage was conducted for familiarising the LFC fan phenomenon, the context of this study. This stage provided the guidelines for understanding the LFC fan community, ThisIsAnfield.com or the TIA community. Secondly, ‘exploratory investigation’: at this stage a researcher identified himself with the TIA moderators and forum members in order to understand the TIA community as a humanist phenomenon. Participant observation allowed me to construct a relationship with TIA members and develop themes for this study. Finally, ‘personal immersion’: a researcher immersed himself in the TIA community phenomenon in order to collect relevant data. This is because a researcher is an outsider or global fan who may be viewed as a non-passionate fan by local fans. Being an immersed member allowed me to form strong bonds with other TIA members.

The manual netnographic data collection was employed in this study. Kozinets (2010) has provided an example of manual netnographic method through the case of Volkswagen. Research notes were written during this data collection. The most relevant online conversations were downloaded for the interpretation; they were directly copied, transcribed, and inscribed during the period of my observations (Kozinets, 2010). This manual data
collection helps to focus the particular elements of consumer culture. In the other words, these data were ‘distilled’ (Kozinets, 2010: 99) by researcher during the data collection process. This process was to develop the initial ‘themes’ for my data analysis.

The observations had begun since 1 July 2007 when a researcher joined TIA as a member and got permission from a TIA Moderator to conduct the study until obtained sufficient data for analysis and summary of the research findings. Active members of each ranking were observed and their roles in the social interactions of the community were recorded. On the other words, the flow of human and computer interaction were emphasised (Hoffman and Novak, 2009). As mentioned in literature reviews, interactions within the TIA community are viewed here as aspects of the value co-creation process. Therefore, the ways in which TIA members participated, shared information, argued, and conversed with each other were observed. Table 5.1 shows the observation profiles classified by ranking, the number of posts, and period of membership. The posting numbers from 310 observed members (3.25 % of all TIA members) account for 50.03 % of the total posts within TIA (ThisIsAnfield, 2008).

Table 5.1 shows that the TIA Legend group contributes the greatest number of posts to the TIA community. This is in spite of the fact that the average length of membership for a TIA Legend was 2 years and 10 months (in December 2008); this is less than TIA Board Members who on average have been TIA members for 4 years 11 months and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Average Membership period (yrs)</th>
<th>Average Post/Year</th>
<th>Average Post/Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIA Board Member</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>45,320</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>9,201.75</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Legend</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>93,051</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>32,323.86</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA First Team</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>21,575</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>6,811.37</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Subs-bench</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>26,353</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>12,625.57</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Reserve Team</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>33,406</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>17,270.95</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Youth Team</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>30.65</td>
<td>20,084</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>15,831.01</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA New signing</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>27.74</td>
<td>3,056</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>3,317.55</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>310</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>242,845</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.70</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,317.55</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Calculation from observation and ThisIsAnfield (2008)

TIA First Teams who on average have been members for 3 years 2 months (TIA was 5 years and 11 months old in December 2008). TIA Legends are a mixture of older members and newer members. With their strong commitment and time-dedication to the community, they contributed approximately 19.69 % of all posts to the TIA community and about 38.32 % of the date recorded for this study. On average, each member of this group made approximately 3.51 posts per day; as a group they contributed an average of 32,323.86 posts per year.
The second largest contribution to TIA is made by TIA Board Members who are the oldest members (many of them first became members when the TIA community was formed in 2003). There are only two members, ‘briankettle’ and ‘Dragonshadow’ who joined TIA in 2005 and 2006 respectively. This group posted about 9.61% of all posts in the TIA community. On average, each member of this group posted averagely about 2.57 per day and an average of 9,201.75 posts per year.

Interestingly, the third largest contribution in posts made to the TIA community comes from the TIA Reserve Teams; this group accounts for 6.93% of all posts made on the TIA community. They contribute a greater number of posts to TIA than the TIA First Teams and TIA Subs-Benches who have been in the TIA community for longer than the TIA Reserve Teams. On average, each member of this group made about 1.45 posts per day and an average of 17,119.36 posts per year. This is because the TIA Reserve Teams have more members than TIA First Teams and TIA Subs-Benches, and also because they are regular posters who would like to participate with their fellow fans so as to be promoted to the higher rankings. However, by comparing the TIA First Teams and TIA Subs-Benches, the TIA First Teams posted 567.71 posts per person per year whereas the TIA Subs-Benches posted 573.89 posts per person per year.

It is also found that there are 95 TIA Youth Teams, 86 TIA New Signings, and 53 TIA Reserve Teams. Table 5.1 shows that TIA New Signings make the least contribution to TIA in spite of the fact that there are many members of this group. This is because TIA New Signings seem to be ‘tourists’ or ‘minglers’ rather than ‘devotees’ or ‘insiders’ (Kozinets, 1999). They tend to pop in and out in order to look around the site rather than to participate in the online conversations; therefore, their posts make up only 0.53% of all posts. Unlike TIA New Signings, TIA Youth Teams and TIA Reserve Teams are more committed to TIA and would like to be promoted to the upper rankings; therefore, they spend their time participating in the TIA community. However, they are still less committed to TIA than the higher ranking groups which have formed a stronger relationship with the TIA community.

5.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The netnographic data from the TIA community was analysed through a hermeneutical process of interpretation (Thompson, 1997). This process was employed to understand the content of the value co-creation process by consumers. During the data collection phase, the
key themes of meaning in which consumers express their co-creation processes within the brand community were initially developed. As Kozinets (2002b) has suggested, the posts were categorised according to the community ranking system in which consumers co-create value. In contrast to Newholm et al. (2008), this study has considered all levels of involvement (tourists, minglers, devotees and insiders) because each individual member plays an important role in the value co-creation process. Therefore, analysing consumers at different levels of involvement or community rankings has allowed me to understand both consumer devotion and consumer behaviour in the value creation process.

As shown in Figure 5.1, Mathwick et al.’s (2008) iterative process was used to analyse my data. Moreover, the data were analysed through the hermeneutical framework of interpretation (Thompson, 1997) by retracing back and forth among the set of data, the conversations, and the literatures including individual and collective posts. The hermeneutical framework provides an opportunity for interpreting consumers’ consumption experiences as they relate to their everyday lives, self-construction, and meaning that they construct for their life-story (Thompson, 1997). Moreover, it is appropriate here to use hermeneutical interpretation as a framework for understanding the value co-creation process because, as Thompson (1997: 440) states, “[this framework] relevant to the phenomenological aspects of the person/culture relationship”

**Figure 5.1: Data Analysis Process**

However, hermeneutical interpretation cannot be done within a single read (Thompson, 1997). It requires an iterative process meaning that posts need to be continuously rereading, categorised according to their themes, and retraced in order to satisfy the interpretive
convergence (Kozinets, 2002b). Avery (2007) has employed this framework in a recent study to understand the phenomenological experience of Porsche owners. Moreover, Kozinets (2002b) recommends that netnographic researchers should employ different methods to collect data. Thus additional data have been collected in the form of personal messages between TIA administrators and ordinary members. Personal messages are a private communication channel within the online community.

Data analysis initially began since the data were collected, transcribed and inscribed as mentioned in the section above. Author characteristics (e.g. ranking, a number of posts, or period of membership) were also included into the focus of analysis process. This process has contributed the netnography immersion which allows researchers to gain the understanding of the social interaction (Avery, 2007). As guided by theoretical foundations, active roles of consumers were considered as meaning frames during this process. Thus, as the foregoing literature reviews, meaning frames, proactive and reactive, have been assigned to the data.

As recommended by Thompson (1997), the posts within each role were reread in order to gain the understanding of consumption meaning. Thompson (1997) suggests that it contributes to our understanding of whole data set. In this process, data were analysed by reading through posts and field notes on the TIA community and assigning the codes according to meaning frames. The open coding process has been conducted by following Avery’s (2007) the constant comparative method whereby codes were assigned from data and able to revise until completing the iterative process of analysis. During the data analysis process posts related to the roles of members and value co-creation process were reread and grouped; then codes were assigned to the groups of data.

After there is no additional code scheme found within the data set, its details were reread and analysed in order to form the meaning themes. However, in this process, the overlapped codes were found across the meaning themes. Therefore, the overlapped codes were reread, unfolded and reassigned into themes in order to demonstrate the prominent meaning themes. Moreover, these themes were continually revised in which consumers express their co-creation processes within the TIA community and observed these new themes. In this process, four themes: creative posters, brand warriors, reactive posters, and moderators emerge in which they were categorised from their actions within the social interaction.

Each theme relating to the roles of members and the value co-creation process was continuously modified until the interpretive convergence has been achieved. Members of the TIA community were voluntarily asked for their cooperation to read these themes and provide
additional suggestions. Sub-themes were developed to demonstrate unique roles such as LFC knights and tradition reminders within Brand Warriors, customer service and sheriff within Moderators, and so on.

5.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

A major concern regarding data collection is whether the inquiry method encroaches on the personal rights of informants by making them aware of the research project and thus influencing the validity of data (Webb et al., 1981). Kozinets (2002b, 2010) has argued that netnography is a naturalistic and unobtrusive research method. These characteristics may raise ethical concerns such as whether netnographic researchers should be aware of the privacy and conduct their research in an ethical way. These issues have been overlooked by some researchers (e.g. Langer and Beckman, 2005). In response to these issues, Kozinets (2010) has identified two ethical concerns which relate to netnography. Firstly, researchers need to consider whether netnographic data is public or private ownership. Secondly, researchers need to consider whether informants should be made aware of the fact that they are being studied or not.

Taking account of both concerns, this dissertation has taken a view that the TIA community is a public place which anyone can access and participate in. Moreover, the TIA community was treated as a private place for all TIA members. All contents of the TIA community belong to all TIA members. Therefore, the TIA Board Members, who manage and enforce discipline within the community, were asked for permission to conduct netnographic research within the TIA community.

Notifying these informants may influence the behaviour of TIA members who know they are being observed; however, as Kozinets (2007b: 135) has stated: “[A]cademics should be held to a higher standard”. A code of conduct or research ethics has been followed by asking permission from moderators and other members. However, it doesn’t matter whether a netnographic community is public or private, because in both cases researchers need to inform all participants about the project (Kozinets, 2007b).

To act ethically, on the one hand, I participated in the TIA community as a researcher by observing and collecting field notes. On the other hand, I interacted with other members as a TIA member in order to interpret and reflect on my insights into the TIA community. By taking on the role of an insider (Schau et al., 2009; Schouten and McAlexander, 2002) in the
TIA community, I have been more able to interpret and understand the relevant meanings, processes, and roles of TIA members. Moreover, this role has helped me to understand the phenomenon of collective action.
CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS – CO-CREATION OF VALUE THROUGH SOCIAL STRUCTURES

“In TIA community, it doesn’t matter how long you have been here or which social structure you are belonging because the most important aspect of value co-creation process within TIA community is members’ experience which members can employ to contribute knowledge through the quality posts or discussions. Noteworthy, the knowledge about LFC and the football world are the crucial resources to interact and co-create value within the community.”

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss how hierarchical structures (Lin, 2001) grant members of societies access to social resources, social and culture capital. For example, a football player in the English Premier League (the highest football league division) will tend to have a higher level of social capital or position resources than an equally skillful football player in the English Championship League (the second highest football league division). This discussion focuses on my research into consumer-to-consumer interactions on the unofficial Liverpool Football Club brand community fan-site, ThisIsAnfield [TIA].

In this chapter, social structures are viewed as resources which can be used to understand consumer roles in collective groups. Social structures have been assigned to seven TIA rankings in order to investigate how the different levels of involvement of consumers in the brand community enable value the co-creation process. Therefore, from this social theory the research proposition have been developed that ‘social structures or rankings are more important than the experiences of TIA members and the quality of the posts.’

Netnographic data on the roles played by consumers have been collected from the different social structures of the online LFC fandom in order to demonstrate social interactions within the virtual community. In this chapter the notion of brand community is synthesised with S-D logic and CCT in order to understand the value co-creation process. This chapter focuses on how participants in the value co-creation process bring their sets of life projects into service provision process to co-create value. In this way, the focus is on the phenomenon of value creation rather than how consumers individually value their sets of life projects.

Hirschman’s (1986) ‘humanist inquiry method’ has been adapted for the purposes of collecting netnographic data. Using this method, the roles played by members of each social structure or member ranking of the brand community in the value co-creation process were
observed. Mathwick et al.’s (2008) iterative process has been followed in the analysis by reading members’ posts and placing the data into the appropriate categories.

Lusch and Vargo (2006a) have argued that while many scholars (e.g. Berthon and John, 2006; Etgar, 2006; Flint, 2006; Flint and Mentzer, 2006; Jaworski and Kohli, 2006; Woodruff and Flint, 2006) recognise that value co-creation occurs as a process between companies and consumers, they have neglected the influence of consumer-to-consumer interactions on it. Therefore, this chapter, using the LFC brand community as a case study, will explore how members of different social structures contribute to value co-creation process.

Seven social structure types are presented here in order to understand the meaning of actions or interactions of different participants through each structure, respectively. The roles of members and prominent interactions are presented in each social structure. As presented in Table 6.1, members in different social structures can similarly perform the roles in the TIA community, but there are only differences in a number of members who perform the particular roles in each social structure. It does not matter which social structures members are because one member can perform several roles within this online community. For example, Matt, a TIA Board member, can perform a reactive role by experiencing the football fandom with the fellow members, a brand warrior by reminding members about the traditional of LFC fans, or a moderator by managing the forum and executing the community rules. On the other hand, redalways, a TIA Youth Team member, can also perform the roles of reactive poster and brand warrior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.1: TIA Social Structures and the Roles of TIA Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Structures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Board member**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Legend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA First Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Subs-bench</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Reserve Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Youth Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA New Signing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Calculation from observation profiles
* All TIA members are reactive poster but this data shows members who are only reactive posters
** Only TIA Board Members can perform the moderator role.
Table 6.1 shows the crosstab table between the social structure and the roles of members in value creation. As mentioned above, the netnography data are read and assigned role codes which emerge during the iterative process to each member in order to see how they co-create the value. It shows that a half of authors are only reactive posters – TIA members who tend to enjoy their experience of football fandom, and also include members who posts just only for upgrading their social structures (ranking). For the proactive posters, they are TIA members who provide a rich of information, analysis, knowledge, and experience about LFC, and the football world (creative posters), and also include members who tend to recall or remind other members about the tradition of LFC, and the spirit of LFC fans (brand warriors). The proactive posters can also be classified into three groups: (1) TIA members who are both creative poster and brand warrior; (2) TIA members who are only author poster; and (3) TIA members who are only brand warrior.

Table 6.2 shows the roles of TIA members in the co-creation of value within the LFC brand community: it shows that all of TIA members can co-create value but in the different ways. Details of these roles will be demonstrated within each social structure. Finally, this chapter is concluded by discussing the roles of social structures and participants in the value creation process. This would contribute our understanding of the different involvement level and different participants within the online brand community.

6.2 FIRST SOCIAL STRUCTURE: “TIA BOARD MEMBER”

TIA Board Member is a privileged social structure within the TIA Community pertaining to a group of TIA Community Founders and additional volunteers who have been promoted to Board Member status. Members in this social structure co-create a unique value by acting as community moderators. TIA Board Members are among the most passionate LFC fans; they have maintained strong ties with LFC over a long period and shown unwavering support for the club during bitter periods. Although LFC was one of the most successful football clubs in England in the 70s and 80s, it fell under the shadow of Manchester United in the early nineties when the English Premier League was formed. It has not yet won a Premier League title.

Table 6.2 shows that there are four ways in which TIA members co-create value; in the following section, TIA Board Members’ co-create value is demonstrated in four different ways: reactive poster, creative poster, brand warrior, and moderator.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Co-Creation</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Social Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proactive Poster</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer service</strong></td>
<td>• Volunteer duty&lt;br&gt;• Strong commitment to TIA&lt;br&gt;• Informing all members about TIA contents&lt;br&gt;• Managing members’ complaints and notifications</td>
<td>• TIA Board Members only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderator</strong></td>
<td>• Volunteer duty&lt;br&gt;• Strong commitment to TIA&lt;br&gt;• Controlling and executing the community rules&lt;br&gt;• Managing conflicts within TIA by banning and warning bad-behaved members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sheriff</strong></td>
<td>• Experienced members&lt;br&gt;• LFC and Football Gurus who contain high resources: information, knowledge, and experience in LFC and also football world&lt;br&gt;• Always sharing rich information, analysis, knowledge and strong reasons to support their posts</td>
<td>• All social structures, but there are more creative posters in the higher social structures (see figure 6.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creative Poster</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LFC Knight</strong></td>
<td>• Constructing LFC identity against LFC opponents – rival teams, <em>The Sun</em> Newspaper, Co-American owners, kneejerk fans <em>etc.</em>&lt;br&gt;• Arguing with internal opponents – kneejerk fans, and all opponents&lt;br&gt;• Creating the ‘brand legitimacy’ and ‘opposite brand community’</td>
<td>• All social structures, but there are more LFC Knight in the higher social structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand Warrior</strong></td>
<td>• Always recalling LFC and TIA spirit&lt;br&gt;• Always supporting LFC manager and players&lt;br&gt;• Co-creating LFC and TIA culture</td>
<td>• All social structures, but there are more tradition reminder in the higher social structure than the lower structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tradition Reminder</strong></td>
<td>• Making pointless posts in order to improve their status in the group&lt;br&gt;• Loose relationship with TIA&lt;br&gt;• Strangers to the community&lt;br&gt;• Contributing to the life of the community&lt;br&gt;• Co-creating only as reactive posters&lt;br&gt;• Tend to be kneejerk/glory-hunter fans</td>
<td>• In the lower social structures only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactive Poster</strong></td>
<td>• Co-creating the flow of experience&lt;br&gt;• Interacting as they do in their everyday of life or offline community in order to construct a sense of community&lt;br&gt;• Strong relationship with TIA&lt;br&gt;• Regular members&lt;br&gt;• Contributing to the life of the community&lt;br&gt;• Also co-creating as proactive posters</td>
<td>• All social structures, but most of them are in the higher social structures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.1 Reactive Poster within TIA Board Member

Like other members of the TIA Community, TIA Board Members share their experiences with fellow members who act as an audience or website consumers. They enjoy being LFC fans with TIA fellow members by creating a flow of experience with them. It is noteworthy that all members are reactive posters, but not all members are proactive posters (creative poster, brand warrior and moderator). Interestingly, TIA Board Members do not only discuss football within the TIA community; they also discuss their personal lives (e.g. birthdays, holidays, etc.) and TIA members who have disappeared from the community as though they are members of their families. The following posts are examples of reactive posts from TIA Board Members.

Ooh 34 years old. He's growing up quick! 😂
Happy Birthday redbj and GmanSenior!” (DanDagger, 10/27/08, TIA First Team member)

Happy birthday redbj, another year older and slightly grumpier 😞
Happy brithday gman!

Hope you both had the best of days 😊😊😊. (Chung, 10/29/08, Chief Moderator)

This post shows that TIA Board Members and a member of another community structure (TIA First Team) co-create value by enjoying their experiences of the TIA community and constructing a consciousness of kind within the TIA community similar to what they might experience in the offline community of their everyday of lives. This is in spite of the fact that they do not typically see other TIA members away from the TIA fansite, but within the same colour, the Reds, LFC fans can tie their relationship through the Liver bird crest, a logo of LFC. For example, Chung, as Chief Moderator, participates in the happy birthday thread with DanDagger by giving birthday wishes to Redbj and GmanSenior, using the emotional icons to express his emotions and actions. DanDagger uses a smiley icon to celebrate his friends’ birthdays with warmth and cheers, while Chung celebrates with a pint of beer. The winking smiley is also used to express Chung’s feelings when he teases Redbj about his age. Interestingly, these icons are used to express real emotions as they are in face-to-face conversations.

This is an evidence of consciousness of kind which members in brand community co-create through their social interaction. Although the social boundary has moved beyond the brand community to the everyday of life conservations, the centre of social interaction does still
emerge around the particular brand. In this meaning, LFC is linking value to attract all members to participate in.

Importantly, rather than only constructing social interactions as an offline community, TIA members create a flow of experience about LFC fandom in order to share and enjoy their LFC experiences as a “football fantasy”. Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, and Nakamura (2005: 600) have defined this flow as:

“[A] subjective state that people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of forgetting time, fatigue, and everything else but the activity itself.”

By participating in flows of experience, TIA Board Members and their fellow members are able to interact in TIA message boards by sharing their experiences of LFC and enjoying football fantasies in the same way that chatters enjoy the experience flow in the chat-room (Shoham, 2004). The following post is an example of how TIA Board Members construct the flow of experience:

I was 14 years old. Just finished my 3rd year at secondary school. Over the moon that we'd won the title - I didn't stop going on about it for weeks, which pissed my dad off, because he's a Man Utd supporter!!… (Dragonshadow, 01/19/09, TIA Forum Admin)

So, Dragonshadow, as Forum Admin, also shares his experiences about being a football fan when other members discuss the last title won by LFC in 1990. Like Chung and DanDagger, he also uses the smiley icon to express his pleasure and enjoyment. He shares his brand relationship with LFC to fellow TIA members in order to encourage them to strengthen their relationship with LFC. Another flow of experience is a football fantasy game in which TIA members try to guess the line-up before the match.

Anyone requesting Kuyt to be dropped, please explain why exactly? He was arguably our best player in the derby, came inside and caused Everton problems frequently, including Nando's second goal. He is deserving of his place in the side and should and will keep it. My team would be:

Reina
Arbeloa Skrtel Carra Aurelio
Kuyt Gerrard Masch* Babel
Torres Keane

* If fit. (Matt, 09/28/08, TIA Editor).

Matt, as TIA Editor, participates with other TIA members in a football fantasy on a pre-match thread by attempting to guess the first 11 players in the match line-up. He also predicts the performance of the players that he chooses for the team. Furthermore, he also joins the flow
of experience by posting on in-match threads (to provide information during game such as scoring, performance, players, injuries, booking, etc.), and post-match threads (to discuss the team, players, managers, opponent’s team, good and bad things from the match). The flow of experience also provides chances for LFC fans to experience being LFC fans through the internet and fan-sites where members always update and respond to threads on a minute-by-minute basis.

6.2.2 Creative Poster within TIA Board Member

As the most experienced members of the TIA community, TIA Board Members contribute to the community and fellow members by being creative posters. As creative posters, TIA Board Members always act as crucial sources of information and knowledge about LFC in their posts. They do not only post or create threads within the TIA community, but also provide statistics, records, analysis, and experience about LFC which they share with fellow members. I would say that they share their collective experiences or knowledge about LFC and the football world to other members. Importantly, they also give a chance to everyone in the TIA community to share or argue their opinions. Although there is a formal hierarchy or members’ ranks within the TIA community, this does not dilute the strength of the views or arguments put forward by lower ranking members.

In some circumstances, TIA Board Members also provide behind-the-scenes information: for example, Matt, one of the TIA Board Members (TIA Editor), provides knowledge about transfer policies. His argument is about Robbie Keane, who LFC bought from a rival club, Tottenham Hotspur, for £20 million, and Gareth Barry, who LFC wanted to buy from another rival club, Aston Villa, for £18 million. He points out that there is a conflict in the transfer policies being pursued by the LFC manager, Rafael Benitez, and the CEO of LFC, Rick Parry. Matt argues that Parry paid more for Keane than he was worth and in spite of the fact that Benitez’s would have preferred to Barry from Aston Villa. However, this conflict eventually led to Parry’s resignation as CEO, Keane’s returning deal with Tottenham Spurs, and Benitez’s contract as LFC manager being extended to 2014.

Moreover, as creative posters, TIA Board Members have to work or dedicate their time and energy to searching for information or data to support their views, and sometimes they need to provide additional comments, as seen from this following post:

In his first season Souness replaced Jimmy Carter with Mark Walters (ordinary beats awful), Gillespie with Mark Wright (made sense at the time), Venison with Rob Jones (good), McMahon with Michael Thomas (bad) and Beardsley with Dean Saunders
In his second season Mike Hooper made way for David James (should have been good), Ablett for Bjornebye (fair), Hysen for Piechnik (bad), Houghton for Kozma (laughable) and Saunders for Paul Stewart (appalling)… (Briankettle, 01/18/09, TIA Moderator)

This example from Briankettle (TIA Moderator) shows how TIA Board Members can act as creative posters by providing information and analysis of LFC players in the nineteen-eighties and nineties in order to support arguments about LFC’s current transfer policy. This is an example of a creative post because the information it gives is not commonly known among LFC fans; younger fans in particular will not have had the chance to see or hear about these players.

It is noteworthy that an important qualification of creative posters is an ability to ignite argument with their posts. This is because value cannot only be created solely through the posts or articles of TIA Board Members; it needs to be continually co-created through discussions and arguments with fellow members. It helps to understand the blur relationship between producer and consumer that consumers are able to act as ‘producers’ by initially providing ‘arguable posts’ or ‘materials’ for the fellow members to discuss or share their resources.

Creative posters tend to post information, analysis, or comments to start threads, or in response to other threads, which attract the attention of other kinds of TIA member and encourage them to participate in the community. They are important drivers of the community movement which expresses the community movement. However, these posts are only quality posts (i.e. posts that are rich in information, knowledge, and statistics). This is as opposed to the typical posts of reactive posters, who tend to participate in order to increase their post numbers for being promoted to higher ranks rather than for the sake of contributing to community life itself. Importantly, being branded as quality posts does not relate to the length or frequency of posts. Rather it is about the details, supported information, knowledge about LFC and the football world, and argument points of the posts.

6.2.3 Brand Warrior within TIA Board Member

Over the long history of LFC, traditions and a distinct culture have emerged and accumulated through many circumstances, such as, for instance, the Heysel memorial at the European Cup Final in 1985, the Hillsborough memorial at the FA cup Final in 1989, or at the fifth Champion of Europe in 2005 when LFC beat AC Milan after being three-nil down in the first half (Liverpool FC, 2009). One well-known tradition is the “You’ll Never Walk Alone”
slogan (YNWA) which is taken by LFC supporters to mean that the club, players, manager, former players and managers, and fans, are one, and that the fans always stand behind the team to support its players and manager.

In other words, LFC and its fan community are unified by the same colour (red) and crest (Liver bird). However, this unity may be diluted by the globalisation and commercialisation of football. The globalisation and commercialisation of football have recently begun to result in an influx of foreigner players to the club. Moreover, many multinational companies and tycoons have invested in English Premier League football clubs, both through sponsorship and ownership. This also includes international match-goers who are drawn to the English Premier League. Because of differences in culture and proximity, most global match-goers attend English Premier League games in order to satisfy their leisure time as tourists, by which they have never learnt or understood the English football culture.

Importantly, these global match-goers also participate in different football fan-sites as “glory-hunter” fans who do not show loyalty to any particular football club or fan community. They tend to express their bad behaviour complaining about the manager and players. On the one hand, these posts or actions within the TIA community may be viewed as causes of the negative social interaction within the brand community. On the other hand, in this dissertation, these are viewed as chances for the experienced members to form the strong community cultural capital – the cult of LFC and the TIA community. Therefore, to protect the stereotype of this bad behaviour, brand warriors play an important role in recalling the tradition of LFC in two ways – LFC knight and tradition reminder – in order to respond with those negative behaviours.

As LFC knights, TIA Board Members construct LFC identity against LFC’s perceived opponents: these include rival teams such as the “big four” (Manchester United FC, Chelsea FC, Arsenal FC and Everton FC), The Sun newspaper (which claimed that the Hillsborough disaster was the fault of LFC fans) and the American co-owners of LFC, Tom Hicks and George Gillett (who promised to support transfer budget, but buying LFC for making profit to their businesses). Boycotting The Sun has been a major tradition of LFC supporters since it made its infamous claims about the Hillsborough disaster in 1989. The TIA community also constructs the identity of LFC supporters by maintaining a forum in the Albert –LFC talk forum named “Hillsborough Memorial: Learn about the disaster and the fight for Justice For The 96 and why Reds Boycott The S*n newspaper” (ThisIsAnfield, 2008). The TIA community is against The Sun newspaper and therefore nothing about the Sun can appear on
the TIA community. The following post is an example of a TIA Board Member acting as an LFC Knight:

There is no real reason for debate on the $n$, the pain caused to the people and families directly involved in the tragedy won't go away. As supporters of Liverpool, our only contribution is not to buy the paper, whose mealy mouthed apologies have been too short of the mark. That contribution, of boycotting the rag won't close them down, but it shows solidarity with those who have been the most hurt and offended…

(Johnny T., 08/10/06, TIA Moderator)

Johnny T., TIA Moderator, shows why LFC fans hate *The Sun* newspaper by describing the emotional story of the Hillsborough tragedy: on the 15th April 1989 at the Hillsborough Stadium, Sheffield Wednesday FC, 96 fans died on the terrace at the Leppings Lane End during the FA Cup Semi Final match between LFC and Nottingham Forest FC (Liverpool FC, 2009). The Hillsborough disaster was a tragedy among LFC fans. Nevertheless, *The Sun* accused the LFC fans of being a cause of the tragedy in spite of the fact that the investigation by Lord Justice Taylor found that it had been caused by the allocation of tickets, the police’s administration of the crowd, the inadequate turnstile arrangements and the removal of critical crush barriers (Dunning, 2000; King, 2002). Therefore, LFC fans cannot forgive *The Sun* for its allegations against LFC fans. Although LFC fans know that this action cannot damage *The Sun*, they use it as a means of expressing solidarity among LFC fans against the club’s perceived opponents.

Many negative comments are posted on TIA when LFC do not play well in competitions (including when they draw against lower ranking teams). Another role for TIA Board Members is the tradition reminder who always recalls the LFC spirit back when it nearly fades away. For example, there is a thread from one member who posts about Robbie Fowler, one of LFC’s legendary players, and comments about the worth of transfer money. This example is one of the many posts in which TIA members forget about the LFC Spirit and traditions. Therefore, tradition reminders need to remind their fellow members about the LFC spirit—tradition and belief of LFC fans to always support players, manager and the club, and also open mind to listen other members’ opinions:

So Fowler's return wasn't a success? I think you'll find yourself in a massive minority there. He came in, did a job, scored important goals, won us points, provided experience and cover, boosted fans and players' morale… (Matt, 05/20/08, TIA Editor).

When Fowler was insulted by some TIA members, Matt, as TIA Editor, felt that it was necessary to recall the spirit of LFC supporters: “You’ll Never Walk Alone,” [YNWA],

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because Fowler was one of LFC’s legendary players who dedicated his life and soul to LFC. He served LFC in 1993 – 2001 with 236 appearances and 120 goals and in 2006 – 2007 with 30 appearances and 8 goals, and his transfer value £ 12.5 millions to Leeds United was the club record (Liverpool FC, 2009).

Perceived as one of the most loyal of LFC’s players, Fowler’s return to LFC in 2006 did not only have a tremendous effect on LFC, but also reunited players and bolstered LFC fans’ spirit. This is one of the reasons why experienced members cannot tolerate the nonsense fans who insult players, especially Robbie Fowler. They have never embodied with the tradition of LFC and need to be reminded about the ‘YNWA’ tradition. YNWA was derived from the popular music in 1963 and it was adapted to be a Liverpool song after a singer presented to manager and players on the bus during the preseason tour. So, this “…song would take on so many different meanings at so many different occasions. Occasions that were tragic but also occasions that were triumphant. It became a song that millions of football fans throughout the world would often sing but always recognise that it was ‘The Liverpool Song’” (Liverpool FC, 2009). LFC fans have adopted the acronym YNWA from the lyrics “you’ll never walk alone” as a way of showing respect and support to LFC players and managers, and also among LFC fans.

In some circumstances, the LFC knight’s role has dominated other social structures to protect players and support the club. There is also a call to boycott LFC in protest over the American co-owners of the club; some fans believe that the protest will damage the owners’ profits from the club. This may be a good sign of the unity of LFC fans against whoever they perceived to be LFC’s enemies. However, some fans walk across the line by calling to abandon the games. This is not supposed to be LFC way because all LFC fans always stand behind the team – players and manager, even when they perform badly. Experienced members, especially TIA Board Members, play an important role in reminding other fans of these traditions.

Thus with the ‘YNWA’ tradition, LFC fans can protest about the owners of the club in a way that does not affect the players or damage the club. All LFC fans are able to do this in order to express the solidity of the fans against the club’s owners. The following example is posted by Dragonshadow to remind other TIA members of the LFC spirit, and recall what they are and what they are not.

…Boycott the club store by all means. Boycott the merchandise, boycott the pre-match burgers and booze. Boycott the e-season tickets on the Offal. But don't boycott matches. It's not Rafa's fault we're saddled with two American muppets at the top. It's not the players fault either.
The team needs all the support we can give them. We're sitting pretty joint top of the table at the minute, and we want that to continue. And the only way we can do that is by supporting the team from the terraces.
Don't turn us into Newcastle, for fucks sake. It's just not the Liverpool Way.
(Dragonshadow, 09/19/08, Forum Admin)

Dragonshadow, as Forum Admin, reminds fellow members about the internal conflict between Rafael Benitez and the American co-owners about the transfer budget is not Benitez’s fault. Moreover, he also reminds them about LFC way (‘YNWA’) whereby LFC fans always support the club’s players and manager.

To respond with the negative interaction, members can manage in different ways: arguing, banning, deleting. Examples mentioned above provide an alternative way by showing how experienced consumers decide to respond the negative behaviour. They teach other members about the code of consumption as a way to deal with the negative posts within the brand communities. Therefore, instead of considering negative posts as a threat of the social interaction, it can be viewed as an opportunity for extending and forming the strong community culture.

Tradition reminders do not only limit support to LFC’s players and manager, but also the fellow members of TIA. This is one of the community markers – moral responsibility (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). This strengthens the sense of community and the relationship among members of the LFC fan community by encouraging them to dedicate their time to the community as a whole and to help other members when they can.

TIA Board Members do not care where fans come from or where they live, but just only what fan you are. Within the TIA community, if you are an LFC fan, you are welcome and become an in-group member. However, members will judge your support from your participation on TIA or more broadly in the fan community. For example, one LFC fan from Poland has done graduate research about the sponsorship of LFC. Some members of TIA were worried about the business affair from this project, and they were unsure whether this student was counted as a LFC fan by their standards. Accordingly a member of the TIA community searched for information about this fan on the internet and found that she was regular member from of another LFC fan-site with the high number of postings. Thereafter, her status as a LFC fan was confirmed among members of the TIA community.
6.2.4 Moderator within TIA Board Member

TIA Board Members do not only share their experiences and knowledge about LFC with fellow members. They also spend their time committed to performing compulsory duties as **Moderators** for the TIA community; these include answering questions, posting new information, and controlling badly behaved members, and generally helping to maintain a good and friendly atmosphere within the TIA community. As moderators, TIA Board Members have to be more committed to the community than other members because they need to read through all the threads that are posted on TIA in order to discipline badly behaved members and remove posts that breach community rules. By doing this, TIA Board Members assume responsibilities as moderators in two ways: customer service and sheriff.

TIA Board Members need to assume a number of **customer service** roles including posting information about LFC and the TIA community on TIA fora, and to listening members’ complaints or notifications, and managing members’ posts. TIA Board Members need to be aware that responsibility is a key feature of **Public Relations**. In the case of LFC brand warriors Boycotting *The Sun* (see also page 122 - 23), there have been a number of occasions in which *The Sun* advertisements have appeared on the TIA webpage in spite of TIA’s policy of boycotting *The Sun*. When this happened, community moderators needed to act quickly, firstly by having the ads removed and secondly by posting on TIA for a explaining what had happened to TIA members. Therefore, they need to take immediate steps to remove Sun advertisements from the TIA webpage:

> Apologies for this people, we have had many conversations with our advertising agency about this and it is really starting to piss me off now. We have a clear agreement with them that Sun adverts must not appear on TIA yet they are still doing so. Hopefully things can be sorted as soon as possible. (Matt, 10/16/08, TIA Editor)

Thus, Matt, as TIA Editor, was obliged to apologise to TIA members for the Sun advertisement which appeared on the TIA webpage because he and other high ranking members of the LFC fan community were at the forefront of the “boycotting *The Sun*” campaign.

As part of their customer service duty, TIA Board Members also maintain **complaint** and **opinion sharing systems** within the TIA community. In this way, board members listen to complaints or notices from other TIA members, and sorting them out in order to co-create the community for all TIA members and not just for a person or a select group within the community. TIA Board Members have thus provided lower-ranking TIA members with
opportunities to share their opinions about the TIA community, site improvement, adding forums, *etc*. The following posts show how the complaint procedure on TIA works:

Why is the word socce® (with a normal r) automatically changed to football. Is anyone really offended by the word socce® to the point that they cannot bear to read it? Am I the only one who thinks it is a tad pathetic that we allow shit, piss, bollocks e.t.c., words by which some may actually be offended by (me not included), to be shown on the site but cannot bear to see the sun written in capital letters on the forums? (Dukeseee, 08/28/08, TIA Youth Team member)

Because we support Liverpool Football Club, who play in football, in a football league and the whole world (bar 1 anomaly) calls the sport football. Shit piss and bollocks are words youd hear in any football stadium in England so if anyone is offended by them on here then... You can turn it off in your personal preferences if you really dislike it that much. (Matt, 08/28/08, TIA Editor)

Clearly Dukeseee does not understand why the word ‘soccer’ is automatically edited out of posts on the TIA webpage while abusive or offensive words such as shit, piss, bollocks and so forth are allowed.

Matt, as a TIA Editor, addresses Dukeseee’s points by referring to the identity of LFC and the global culture of football (the said anomaly being the United States where football is typically called “soccer”). He and other moderators do not prohibit some bad language because they would like to keep the atmosphere within the TIA community similar to that of a football stadium. However, the TIA community is not a creativeitarian community. TIA members can turn the word filter off in their personal preferences because TIA Board Members not everyone shares this perception of bad language.

Like other offline and online communities, TIA Board Members have set up rules, depending on the TIA consensus, with which all members are expected to comply. TIA Board Members are expected to assume responsibilities as sheriffs for controlling and executing these rules within TIA community. The rules apply to all TIA members, including Board Members. For instance, at one point Matt, needed to give a warning to another TIA Board Member, Dragonshadow, who had confused other community members about the status of the LFC club’s main manager, Rafa Benitez, by posting a thread on ‘Ladies team manager sacked’. His post was a humorous thread that confused some TIA members. This is what moderators have struggled to discipline TIA members because it makes the community messy. It is noteworthy that Matt also uses a smiley icon to show his emotion that he is not seriously put out by Dragonshadow’s post.
TIA Board Members act as sheriffs in two ways: banning members and preventing conflicts in TIA fora. First at all, they ban badly behaved members who breach the community rules such as abusing other members, duplicating the threads, advertising within posts, racism, annoying other members, etc. This helps to keep the community tidy, happy, and peaceful. Importantly, banning members can create flows of interactions within the TIA community by unblocking obstructive members. However, before banning members, TIA Board Members tend to first issue warnings to badly behaviour members which give them the chance to change their relationship with the TIA community. Members who have been given warnings will also be given the reasons explaining why. If they continue break rules, then they will eventually be banned from the TIA community.

Another responsibility for TIA Board Members as sheriffs is to act as referees by preventing or resolving conflicts between TIA members. They need to prevent conflicts breaking out on controversial threads in order to keep TIA fora tidy and create a friendly atmosphere within the TIA community. This post shows how a TIA Board Member can act as a referee to resolve a conflict between TIA members:

I guess the answer to that quaker_31 is wait until you've racked up your posts here and had spent time, it's all nice and friendly pointing them to the right place but after you've done hundreds of them it really get's a bit tedious, tiresome and downright frustrating when you know the information is so easy to hand. Couple this with the fact that over the years there have been a few 'foreign fans' looking for tickets for 'their first game' on their first trip to the UK when in fact they're not, you'll probably appreciate johnnyfish's tone more. Personally I don't the reply was rude, maybe it was worded wrong or the tone or whatever......let's leave it at that and if guibadke still wants his tickets he has options, the club, a travel package, ticket selling agencies or a friendly member here. If he wants the ticket that badly, then he'll be able to source one from the above. (Chung, 08/23/08, Chief Moderator)

Here, Chung, as Chief Moderator, is acting to resolve a dispute which has risen from a misunderstanding among several TIA members. I would say that being a referee may is one way of acting as a tradition reminder because TIA Board Members tend to refer to the LFC spirit in order to resolve conflicts, and suggest members for learning to listen to other members’ opinions. Other members cannot act as referees on the TIA webpage.

In order to resolve the conflict, Chung explains the cause of this controversial issue from the differing perspectives of the opposed parties: quaker_31 and Guibadke. Guibadke is a foreign fan who posted a request on a TIA forum for a ticket to see LFC play during his first trip to Liverpool. This caused upset among domestic and local LFC members who understand how difficult it is to get a LFC match ticket; LFC’s ticket allocation system gives priority to
official membership of LFC: *i.e.* season ticket holders and LFC members, respectively, and assigns to the fans who have watched the former matches as the second priority (Liverpool FC, 2009). Moreover, it is difficult to get tickets through the telephone booking system because of the high demand for tickets to LFC’s home matches. Chung believes that Guibadke has to learn this by himself and asks more experienced members of TIA to give him a chance to become more familiar with the culture of LFC.

### 6.2.5 Conclusion

TIA Board Members are a group of TIA community founders, and dedicated members who volunteer to manage and run the TIA community. TIA Board Members’ behaviours provide an opportunity to understand value co-creation process between consumers - another perspective of the co-creation of value. They perform two major roles in the value co-creation process; proactive posters (creative posters, brand warriors, moderators), and reactive posters. Vargo and Lusch (2004a, 2008a) have defined ‘*service*’ as the process of using resources for the benefit of another entity; viewed in this way, TIA Board Members contribute service to the fellow members of their community. It is noteworthy that Vargo and Lusch (2008a) reiterate how participants co-create value with a service-centric vocabulary: actor, firm, provider, offerer, customer, beneficiary *etc.* However, in this dissertation, the provider is the appropriate vocabulary of consumers’ active role. They do not produce the whole value, but instead, they provide issues, materials, or opportunities to value creation process.

TIA Board Members provide the completely case study of value creation. In their capacity as proactive posters, TIA board members act as providers or offerers in the value co-creation process, contributing their knowledge and experience to the TIA community. They bring resources, knowledge and experience, into the interaction process in order to collaborate with other members and continually discuss and extend these resources. Other members, including TIA Board Members who participate in discussions and arguments, act as beneficiaries of the process. This process will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Proactive posters co-create value in two ways. First, as creative posters, TIA Board Members provide a wealth of information, analysis, and knowledge in their posts. Second, as brand warriors, TIA Board Members always remind or recall other TIA members to the traditions of LFC, including protecting the LFC brand from the opponents. Moreover, brand warriors also co-create the community rituals and traditions with LFC and the TIA community. Additionally, they need to co-create value as moderators by spending a considerable amount
of time managing and maintaining the forums on the TIA community in order to create a happy and peaceful community. This is in way, the help to develop the online community.

On the other hand, reactive posters are members who post in response to threads and flows of experience, typically for the sake of upgrading their status on the TIA community. Participating as reactive posters is the way TIA Board Members construct a consciousness of kind (one of the brand community markers: Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001) within the TIA community. Thus, in order to consider whether social structure is an important component in the value co-creation process, other kinds of social structures will be explored in the following sections.

6.3 SECOND SOCIAL STRUCTURE: “TIA LEGEND”

The second social structure within the TIA community is TIA Legends. These are similar to TIA Board Members in their style of posting and passion for LFC. They are different from TIA Board Members in that they do not have compulsory responsibilities as Moderators. However, they post more than any other TIA members. The commitment of TIA Legends to the TIA community and LFC is similar to that of TIA Board Members. Although the average length of membership for a TIA Legend since October 2008 is 2 years and 10 months, they contribute the highest number of posts to TIA community fora.

In light of this, TIA Legends are expert members of TIA who can co-create value with other TIA members. It is worth noting that TIA Legend is the highest rank available to all TIA members; therefore, lower ranking members tend to want to become TIA Legends. This is because within the TIA community, members can elevate themselves to the higher rankings by posting to meet specific numbers. TIA Legends are members who have contributed more than 2,000 posts. Therefore, they are experienced and regular members of the community who are keen to share their experiences, knowledge, emotions, and excitement with fellow members.

However, this ranking does not itself guarantee that TIA Legends contribute good quality posts and knowledge to TIA because the ranking system is based on the quantity rather than quality of posts. This corresponds to Kozinets et al.’s (2008) notion of ‘Wisdom Consumers’, which consumers are ‘doing’ and ‘learning’ from their participation. Thus, the higher rank members have a chance to accumulate and learn from their participation within the TIA
community. By doing this, TIA Legends can co-create value in three different roles – reactive posters, creative posters, and brand warriors (see also Table 6.2).

6.3.1 Reactive Poster within TIA Legend

TIA Legends spend most of their time participating in the TIA community by engaging in long conversations or flows of experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). This provides TIA members with a sense of excitement because they can engage with and argue against the opinions of other members and enthusiastically wait for their replies to their own views. This serves to continue the flow of experience. For example, a long conversation between the TIA Legends, DEVGRU and RoualDuke, began at 7.26 am and lasted until the early morning of the next day. Like TIA Board Members, TIA Legends share their experiences as reactive posters within TIA in the same way that they socialise in the off-line world.

With the advance of the internet, and the weight of duties in everyday of life (jobs, families, educations, and so forth), online communities seem to be the best place for members to socialise. Due to the strong relationship that they have with the TIA community, TIA Legends do not only participate in football forums; they also discuss or share opinions on different topics with their fellow members such as the financial crisis, games, entertainment etc. Like TIA Board Members and other members, TIA Legends enjoy football fandom and participate in football fantasies by trying to predict player line-ups in pre-match threads, commenting on the progress of matches in in-match threads, and on their outcomes in post-match threads. They do not only experience the consumption and enjoy their hedonistic, but also express their passionate toward LFC.

TIA Legends participate on TIA as reactive posters by sharing their opinions about players, team positions, match tactics, and other topics relating to football and LFC and their everyday of lives. Most of them are passionate fans and hardcore posters (as seen from the long discussion and strong argument over the night by DEVGRU and RoualDuke). However, it is the way they participate in the TIA community by posting strong arguments. Their threads are read carefully, and found that they did not intend to beat other members, but they just wanted to explain their points-of-view and facts.

6.3.2 Creative Poster within TIA Legend

Because TIA Legends are the most active members of the TIA community, they can accumulate experience from their discussions and arguments with fellow members. Being more experienced members, TIA Legends co-create value as creative posters by posting on
threads as though they are football GURUs or commentators with plenty of information, knowledge, emotion, experience, and passion. Importantly, they are not only able to discuss matters relating to LFC; they are also able to discuss Premier League clubs, and other national football leagues. The following posts are examples of creative posts in which TIA Legends co-create value by sharing rich information and well-analysed arguments about the football world:

I just feel there won't be an England team to select from 10 year's from now because of the flood of foreign talent into the league. The FA have to decide; do they sacrifice the quality of English players and opportunities for English players to ply their trade in the top league (premier league) or are they going to be content putting out an England side that's composed of 50%-75% of players from division one instead when we play in international tournaments because that's what is going to happen. And anyone who disagrees is either blind or a bigger fool. (DEVGRU, 10/14/08, TIA Legend member)

that really might happen.
If not for Platini and Blatter, other people of that 'class' like Beckenbauer spot the same problems, so I doubt that Blatter's successor would see things different. But Platini and Blatter might try to work harder on home-grown quotas during the next years, not only for the CL, and Platini already addressed the problem of Premier clubs luring minors U18 from abroad to England and that he wants to stop that, too. If they get this job done, things will change in the Premier League, and maybe in other leagues with many foreign players like the German Bundesliga. (RoaulDuke, 10/14/08, TIA Legend member)

In these posts, DEVGRU and RoaulDuke, as TIA Legends, act as creative posters, or more specifically, they act as “football GURUs”. He analyses long term problems with English Premier League (i.e. the effects of the globalisation and commercialisation of football as mentioned earlier, see also page 122). In the season 2008/09, 337 foreign players from 66 countries registered in the English Premier League (Premier League, 2009). The effect of this, noted by both posters, is a reduction in the chances for England’s domestic players to debut in the Premier League and the impact that this will eventually have on the national team. The issue of globalisation and localisation mentioned here by members have also affected the local identity of football fans because football fandom is a consumption object which has strong tie with local community.

RoaulDuke supports DEVGRU’s views on the politics and governance of English football and how they affect the quality of English Premier League. They believe that UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) and FIFA (The Fédération Internationale de Football Association), the powerful governing bodies of European and international football, can protect domestic football in the world and especially in England. I would say that the ways in
which TIA Legends share information or experiences are not different from TIA Board Members because they comment or argue by sharing information and knowledge about football and LFC with similar levels of passion.

Like TIA Board Members, TIA Legends always provide strong support for their arguments unlike members of the lower TIA rankings who tend to respond to threads without providing information or reasons to support their arguments. For example, TIA members have discussed about Anfield (LFC’s home ground)’s quiet atmosphere in an UEFA Champion League match. On this, the lower ranking members tended to agree with the thread, but also that they did not suggest reasons or causes for problem. Only the higher ranking members, and especially TIA Legends, tended to contribute information and reasons why Anfield was quiet. On this thread, some members argue that the quiet atmosphere was the fault of Asian fans, because there were a number of Asian fans watching a game at Anfield.

However, BOJDE, as a TIA Legend, gives strong reasons to support his view that the quiet atmosphere was not the fault of Asian fans. Asian fans were quiet at Anfield because they did not know the songs or how to sing. Moreover, with a number of Asian fans, they should not effect to the overall atmosphere of Anfield. He also mentions the regular fans who know the songs and how to sing, but choose to keep quiet. However, he believes that fans’ concentration with the game is the main reason for the quiet atmosphere:

…Wouldn't the travelling asians have a better chance of getting those tickets than of the league ones? I don't think it is the Asian fault. You did read from someone awhile back that swearing and all those are frowned upon and stewards are pretty uptight lately, and that could be one of the reason.
The other reason is, we have always been down until 70th minute or so, obviously nerves kicked in and the fans are getting too much into the game than to just cheer for the sake of cheering and singing. Though they are there to enjoy the atmosphere, they too would like to watch the match... (lfc.eddie, 10/19/08, TIA Legend member)

To support BOJDE, lfc.eddie, another TIA Legend, argues that this is the real atmosphere by referring to a case in which one fan was singing and shouting, and was told off by a man who sat behind him because he came to watch football rather than to listen to football songs. Moreover, he also uses his knowledge of football to argue that at the beginning of the football season LFC often scored against their opponents after 70 minutes; therefore, fans needed to concentrate to the games in order to support and cheer the players, rather than singing and shouting.

…I think the problem is that everyone seems to believe that The Kop is the singing and chanting stand, and the rest of the stadium is for people who wanna watch the
match "in peace". I've sat in the LCS a fair few times clapping and chanting away, and been told to politely **** off to The Kop... 😁 (Scrummie, 10/19/08, TIA Legend member)

Interestingly, Scrummie, as a TIA Legend, points out the reputation of “The Kop” (the nickname for the stand in Anfield that tends to be occupied by the most passionate fans) among LFC fans, in response to which another TIA member states: “…even now, just saying the words “Kop” or “Kopite” will invoke a feeling of unity among Liverpool supporters” (Perkins, 2008). As a LFC fan, I too have been told many times by other LFC fans not to sit at the Kop if I cannot sing or if I am quite. Therefore, fans in the other stands tend to just sit and watch matches and expect the fans at the Kop to sing for them.

6.3.3 Brand Warrior within TIA Legend

During LFC’s glory period in the nineteen-eighties, it dominated both English and European football and attracted millions of fans from around the world. LFC has not won a League title since the end of this period in the early of nineteen-nineties. Nonetheless, LFC fans remain loyal to LFC and hold high expectations for the future. Since the beginning of the new millennium in 2000, LFC has won many trophies – Triple Champions in 2001 (English FA Cup, English League Cup, and EUFA Cup), EUFA Champion League in 2005, and English FA Cup in 2006. This has attracted many “glory-hunter” fans to LFC. These fans are by-products of the globalisation and commercialisation of football which may dilute the LFC culture. Some members do only employed LFC to extend their social identity but never understood the culture of LFC fan. So, TIA Legends play an important role as brand warriors in two ways: LFC knights and tradition reminders.

As LFC knights, TIA Legends do not only act against perceived LFC opponents – rival clubs, co-American owners, The Sun newspaper, or other club fans - (much like TIA Board Members); they are also against some LFC fans who are glory hunters or who are called in the TIA community as ‘kneejerk fans’. These are defined by Red_Power_Ranger, a TIA Legend member, as rafa haters or doom predictors who celebrate as LFC fans when LFC win and hide their LFC fandom and complain when LFC loses (Red_Power_Ranger, 11/01/08, TIA Legend member). Because TIA Legends are strong passionate fans, they will not tolerate a lack of commitment or passion from LFC fans.

TIA Legends also act against perceived internal opponents; TIA members would call them the ‘fake fans’ who are kneejerk fans or ‘glory-hunters’. These kneejerk or glory-hunter fans can be both domestic and international fans who always change their football loyalties depending
on trophies, or fans who support a particular club for the sake of being accepted by their peers (see also Richardson, 2004). For example, DEVGRU, a TIA Legend, shares his opinions and perspectives about combating fake fans. He talks fake fans, before telling a story about die-hard fans in Thailand, who are global football fans, in order to show that “true” fans do not necessarily live in Liverpool or England.

DEVGRU, as a TIA Legend, shares the story of fake fans. He means this fake fan to adult fans only. This is correspond with Richardson (2004) that it is typically to see kids change their football support, but in some ages, they will stop and decide about their football fandom, while adult football fans view that swap a team of support as ridiculous. These fake fans always search for glory rather than loyalty in one football club. DEVGRU shares his experience and knowledge about glory-hunter fans by pointing out that there is currently an increasing number of Chelsea FC fans in the Far-East because Chelsea FC has recently won a number of trophies (such as the English Premier League title, and the English FA cup). Many fake Chelsea FC fans do not even know about the club history, culture, tradition, or players.

The 2 scousers I hung out with in Athens last year were in and out of Thailand for 3 months; both were construction workers and flew back to anfield for semi-final vs Chelsea and flew back again to Athens from Bangkok and they kept going on and on about the amount of Liverpool fans they kept bumping into in Thailand and the fact you could fill Anfield 20 times over with just the Thai fan's alone and that there were far more die-hard fan's overseas than in Liverpool itself...they were bemused but proud of that fact… (DEVGRU, 09/20/08, TIA Legend member)

DEVGRU extends this story in another thread about Far-East fans (especially the massive LFC fan group in Thailand). These fans are the global fans who are not fake fans even though they live far away from Liverpool. According to his view, LFC fans are any fans who fall in love LFC, and are willing to learn about the history, culture, and traditions of the club. Therefore, global fans can be recognised as LFC fans even though they are not from Liverpool or England if they support LFC in the same way as local and domestic fans. DEVGRU expresses the qualities of a compromiser. Pongsakornrungsilp et al. (2008b) have defined a compromiser as a LFC fan who considers his/herself to be a real or authentic fan, but who is also open-minded about LFC fans from around the world on the condition that these fans familiarise themselves with the culture of LFC.

TIA Legends cooperate with TIA Board Members by acting as tradition reminders who always support LFC in spite of the conflicts between the club’s fans and co-owners. TIA Legends, such as 5euros, DEVGRU, lfc.eddie, etc, always remind other members that the first
priority of fans is to support the club’s players and manager who are fighting in the battlefield, rather than seek change at its headquarters where they have very little influence.

Some fans try to fight against the club by calling on fans to boycott matches. However, the higher ranking members of TIA, the Board Members and Legends, do not support this idea because to them it is not the LFC way, and it can affect the players’ performance in matches. However, they do not object to fans boycotting the club’s merchandises or catering facilities at Anfield because this way they can show the symbolic power of LFC unity against the co-owners. In the following post, lfc.eddie explains the effects of boycotting the match on the team:

…The impact that would bring on the boycott would not be on the owner, but the team, the club itself. The morale of the team will be low, and at this moment in time where we are riding high on our "good fortune", being at the top of the league, we wanna start something to disrupt the form? Let the media make more of how we are performing on the pitch, rather than how the fans perform off the pitch, fighting with the owner… (lfc.eddie, 09/19/08, TIA Legend member)

From example above, a TIA Legend –lfc.eddie, is forming or reminding LFC fans of the traditions of the club, and being brand warrior. Importantly, in 2008, tabloid newspapers attacked LFC’s manager, co-owners, fans, and performances. From my observations, the lower ranking TIA members are the victims of the tabloids because they tend to believe what tabloids said rather than trust players and manager. This calls for tradition reminders to build the LFC spirit. The following post is an example from lfc.eddie, a TIA Legend member, who reminds other TIA members about strong support to players and the club.

I think the rise of expectation level is because of where we sits. ManUtd and Chelsea had slipped up a bit but they have proven track record to be able to handle the pressure when it counts. They have the pedigree and the experience in their squad on how to make the most of it come end of the season …Beating those big boys merely inflate our chest for a week filled with bragging rights. Nothing more than that. That is why level of expectations had gone sky high. We are no longer happy to be there, we are now on top and the fans wants more. That's life I suppose. (lfc.eddie, 12/15/08, TIA Legend member)

In this post, lfc.eddie explains that one of the reasons for LFC fans moaning and complaining are the increased expectations placed on LFC as a result of it being the title challenger early in the season 2008/9. He explains to other TIA members that LFC’s players and manager have done their best performances, but that LFC’s rivals are stronger. Therefore, instead of moaning and complaining about the players and manager, fans should always support the team.
Tradition reminders also include the creation of *sportsmanship* – listening to other opinions, apologising for mistakes, and forgiving others’ faults within the TIA community. This is one of LFC’s and the TIA community’s traditions which members create and remind other members about in order to maintain it from one era to the next. Members tend to ask other members to stick to the topic of the thread and not arguing on tangents. Importantly, TIA Board Members and other higher ranking members tend to be more successful than the lower ranking members in stopping arguments.

For example, an argument between the TIA members Kid Viravax and Redbj about “*Playing badly and winning - what needs to change?*” was stopped by dragonshadow. Dragonshadow resolved this argument by reminding Kid Viravax and Redbj about the spirit of TIA members; both of them accepted this and moved on to the main topic of the thread.

The following post is another example of sportsmanship whereby two members argue about fans’ rights, and cannot find the solution:

> Come on eddie...give it a rest. I think we already have enough on our plate without having mis-understandings among ourselves...
> LetsBuyTotti was being sincere in his question and it was nothing more than that..
> Its an important time for us, as fans; we either stick together and back the team or end up fighting each other and making this worse and getting all worked up and upset over a small issue that really, isn't an issue...
> Come on boys....let's stay focused... (DEVGRU, 01/31/08, TIA Legend member)

The two members make arguments that gradually become more heated. DEVGRU, as a TIA Legend, steps in and points out each other’s main ideas in order to pull them back to the thread rather than arguing about their own points of view. Then, both of them stop arguing and accept each other’s points.

The ways in which TIA Legends co-create value as brand warriors are LFC traditions which are transformed from one era to another in the same way that LFC players do (see also Gerrard and Winter, 2006). TIA Legends play an important role in maintaining, and also creating LFC traditions. These are crucial ways in which they co-create the culture of the TIA or LFC fan communities.

### 6.3.4 Conclusion

TIA Legends are the most active members in a quantity of posts on the TIA community. They are similar to TIA Board Members in the way they post and the way they support LFC because both rankings contain the most experienced members of the TIA community. TIA
Legends co-create value within the TIA community by acting as providers or offerers and beneficiaries.

TIA Legends do not only protect LFC against rival teams (as do TIA Board Members). They are also against non-committed or kneejerk fans. Although they have strong arguments, they also show a spirit of sportsmanship by accepting the opinions of other members. They apologise when they make mistakes, and forgive for other TIA members for their mistakes. Sometimes they even accept the opinions of lower ranking TIA members. When new posts come in on TIA fora, they either argue with them or against them. They do not want to let the threads go the wrong way. They challenge what they see as wrong views, educate less experience TIA members, and remind all members of LFC traditions.

6.4 THIRD SOCIAL STRUCTURE: “TIA FIRST TEAM”

By studying the most experienced members of the TIA community (Board Members and Legends), it is found that members gain experience, knowledge, and recognition by interacting with the TIA community. TIA First Teams are members who have between 1,500 – 1,999 posts on TIA. Although TIA First Teams are among the more experienced members of the TIA community, they are different from TIA Board Members and TIA Legends in that they are either proactive or reactive posters and either experience or less experience members (this is as opposed to Board Members and Legends who are proactive and reactive posters). There are many TIA First Teams who have been members in the TIA community for less than 2 years. This changes my proposition about social structure: ‘social structure or ranking is more important than experience of TIA members and quality of posts’.

Therefore, most TIA First Teams are experienced members who are developing their knowledge and understanding of LFC by posting on TIA and in order to gain the TIA Legends ranking. Moreover, the frequency of posts that TIA First Teams make on TIA fora can be taken as a measure of the strength of their relationship and commitment to LFC and the TIA community. However, members often judge social status from the quality of posts rather than member ranks. TIA First Teams can co-create value in three different roles: reactive posters, creative posters, and brand warriors (see also Table 6.2).
6.4.1 Reactive Poster within TIA First Team

Like all participants in online communities (especially in the TIA community), some TIA First Teams only enjoy their LFC fandom as less experienced reactive posters: That is, they participate in the community but rarely contribute knowledge and information, in order to increase their post numbers and be promoted to be TIA Legends. They do only take advantage from other members and never shared something in returns. In the other words, they focus only their own value; hedonistic and social identity. In contrast, more experienced reactive posters can also participate as proactive. As reactive posters, they act as audiences or beneficiaries. These members are an important component of the interaction process because value cannot emerge from individual posts or articles; it needs to be activated through discussion and argument with other members. However, TIA First Teams interact on TIA in a more relaxed fashion than members with higher TIA ranks.

To engage in the flow of experience as reactive posters, TIA First Teams participate in fantasy games such as the “4 words” game in which four word sentences are posted. Other members are invited continue, or a picture description game in which a picture is posted to which TIA members are invited to add captions. For example, one member posted a picture which shows the outcome of a tackle by an LFC player, Mascherano, on an Aston Villa player, Barry. TIA member Geriant posted the following captions:

*Barry:* Why are you trying to break my leg?
*Masch:* Rafa said that we need to find a way to reduce your price (Geraint, 09/04/08, TIA First Team member)

This kind of playful game provides TIA members with experiences and strengthens their relationships. It also provides them with opportunities to reflect on topical issues relating to LFC or football in general. So here, Geraint was making a humorous comment on the high value of Gareth Barry as a player (£ 18 million), both clubs could not find any solutions to close the deal. Geraint, as a TIA First Team member, participates and replies with a funny comment.
Reactive posts from TIA First Teams are not different from those posted by TIA Board Members and TIA Legends in that they create long conversations or flows of experience as same as the chat room (Shoham, 2004) within the TIA community. This is a way for TIA First Teams to embed themselves within the TIA community and develop strong relationships with other TIA members. Also, TIA First Teams often participate in online communities relating to other interests or issues (e.g. Music, NFL, Films, Books, etc.). Importantly, the high numbers of posts that they make on TIA help them to tie strong relationships with other members and be recognised within the community.

6.4.2 Creative Poster within TIA First Team

Like TIA Legends, some TIA First Teams are creative posters who always contribute to the TIA community with knowledge, experience, and information, in which respects they act as football GURUs or commentators. They gain experience about LFC, the football world, and the TIA community through a hierarchical ranking system which is viewed as a social structure in this study. Their participations or interactions are not only limited to LFC fandom, but also include different football league or discussions fora about football related topics.

However, among TIA First Teams, there is a mixture of longterm and fresh TIA members, the latter of whom are only experienced in terms of the frequency of their posts on TIA fora. The discussions and arguments of both groups help to demonstrate that social structure or rankings are less important than the quality of posts, because some TIA First Team members are more experienced members who can contribute knowledge or experience to their fellow TIA members inspite of the fact that they are members of TIA less than a year. The following posts are examples of the football debates which a longterm TIA First Team member, Geriant, has contributed to the community:

If Pele had tried out playing in Europe instead of dominating the Brazilian league, we would have a much clearer idea of who was the best. One thing that Maradona doesn’t get enough recognition for is his team leadership. Every team that he lead onto the field seemed willing to die for him…His ability to inspire the team to play above their potential is almost as remarkable as his own skill… (Geriant, 11/21/08, TIA First Team member)

…I am partly bringing up this point because the German always gets nominated, but Baresi never rates a mention. He epitomised the role of libero in the modern European game,... He also won the World Cup as well as making a semi and final... I believe that the German is usually included as a token defender so that the journalist appears to be unbiased and well-informed... (Geriant, 11/21/08, TIA First Team member)
These posts show that Geriant is an experienced member who has been active on TIA for a long time because they are supported with rich in information and critical reasons to support his arguments. Geraint supports the arguments that he makes in his posts in similar ways to TIA Board Members and Legends. In both posts, Geraint provides knowledge and information about football to explain his views about different football players. This is because he has more experience about how to post, and the TIA way. However, because he has not spent enough time on TIA or made enough posts, he is not yet a TIA Legend.

However, time or the duration of membership is not an important factor for members to become more experienced members, because some fresh members are able to provide quality posts as rich in information and knowledge as those given by more experienced members with higher rankings. It is how much members dedicate and learn from the social interaction. The following post is a quality post from an experienced TIA First Team member who has been a member for less than 2 years. He has contributed enough posts to TIA to meet the minimum requirement of being TIA First Team in a relatively short time:

Ohh Lucas boy. His confidence looks shot. The fans were booing him everytime he got the ball… I just don't know anymore. Lucas with Gremio and Brazil is great. But when with Liverpool, you just don't see him expressing himself. You almost know what he will do when he gets the ball… Anyway, now, I think Lucas just needs play his game. Don't worry about anyone else. don't worry about the fans reactions, don't worry about the egos around you. Just block that out and play your game... (DanDagger, 11/16/08, TIA First Team member)

Judging from the above post, DanDagger has a wide knowledge of LFC and football. This shows that TIA rankings do not necessarily correspond to the level of experience of TIA members: Lower ranking members may be just as able, if not more so than higher ranking members to supply quality posts.

Importantly, TIA First Teams, and especially the longterm members, tend to be creative posters in that they often correct other members who are using bad information or misunderstanding LFC. This is because they have been on TIA for a long time, and they have enough experience and knowledge to correct other members. Moreover, they are able to correct other members because within the TIA community, members discuss or argue using reasoning and information rather than their rankings.

6.4.3 Brand Warrior within TIA First Team

TIA First Teams can co-create value as Brand Warriors in two ways: LFC knights and tradition reminders. As LFC knights, TIA First Teams are mainly against negative posts
from kneejerk fans who can be fake fans, new fans, or glory hunters who show a lack of commitment to LFC. However, they decide to choose the compromise way to deal with the negative posts in order to protect and co-create LFC fan culture.

TIA First Teams act as LFC knights in the same way as TIA Board Members and TIA Legends, but they do not post against kneejerkers directly. Instead, they combat kneejerkers on TIA by making comments such as “…few too many knee jerk reactions around here…”, “…stop the kneejering…”, or labeling them in other ways such as “fickle fan”. However, they do not want to teach kneejerk posters how to post. They tend to concentrate on discussion topics and arguments rather than giving attention to kneejerk fans.

Importantly, Red under the bed, a TIA First Team member, challenges the views of some TIA members about kneejerkers by pointing out that people are free to share their opinions on TIA: “TIA is for opinions. The only knee jerkers on here are those who love to use this term…get a life! or at least an opinion!...” (Red under the bed, 12/09/08, TIA First Team member). Red under the bed, as TIA First Team member, asks kneejerkers who moan or complaint about LFC to provide support for their views, rather than simply complaining about LFC players or the manager. It is one of the examples how members can deal with the negative social interaction within the online community. This is because experienced TIA members also complain about LFC players or the manager when the team does not perform well, but they always point out the good and bad aspects of games, and also provide strong reasons to support their arguments.

Like other experienced members, some TIA First Teams are tradition reminders who always recall the traditions of LFC. Because LFC are a global football club, with many fans around the world, there is a conflict between local fans and global fans (see also Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b). Some local fans believe that they have more right to be LFC supporters or that they are superior to outsider fans. The following post is an example of TIA First Team to recalling the traditions of LFC and TIA community:

Maybe being a local and being close to that history is blinding you to reality. You can expect the sky based on the club's glorious past and keep repeating that Liverpool has won more league titles than any other club if you want, but dont start attacking Eddie because he is trying to keep things in perspective under the current ownership. Given that the club symbolises the good values of the city, I find it disappointing that so many of the locals come on this site and claim their superiority to OOTers. Its very prevalent on Rawk but its becoming more common on here to now. With a name like LetsBuyTossi your judgement is already doubtful anyway. (Geraint, 01/30/08, TIA First Team member)
Here Geraint, as TIA First Team, is arguing with another local LFC fan who believes that as a local person, he has privileges over non-local LFC fans. Geraint does not agree with this as he does not believe it is the TIA way. Importantly, this shows that the TIA community is generally welcoming to non-local domestic and international fans. This also helps TIA to strengthen its brand legitimacy against RAWK, another unofficial LFC community in which tensions run high between local and non-local fans. Geraint tries to remind members of the values of the TIA community and the LFC’s YNWA tradition. In this way, he helps to co-create the rituals and traditions of LFC and also the TIA community.

6.4.4 Conclusion

The First Team ranking is a place for members to mature or incubate their experiences before upgrading to TIA Legends. There are some First Team members who have not been TIA members for a long period of time, but who have been able to demonstrate similar levels of knowledge and understanding about TIA, LFC, and the football world to higher ranking TIA members. This is because people’s experienced or knowledge of LFC and football are not necessarily by the period of time they have spent on TIA; most TIA members will have had some level of knowledge about LFC and football before becoming members of the TIA community. However, it is also found that some First Team members who have posted on TIA more than 1,500 times are just reactive posters who reply to threads for the sake of increasing their post numbers. Because service is a process which provides benefits to other parties (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), TIA First Teams play a crucial role in the service provision process as service providers or offerers, and beneficiaries.

This is to say that TIA First Team is a social structure or rank that members graduate to on the way to becoming TIA Legends. Both creative posters and brand warriors are crucial roles for service providers to create social resources and social and culture capital within the process.

TIA First Teams lubricate the community movement by running interesting threads at the top of the table. When somebody posts a new opinion in an old thread, that thread will be moved to the first item in the forum. The posts of TIA First Teams are not crucial to this process, but they help to bring the community to life. This process also helps TIA First Teams to gain more experiences and to embed themselves in the TIA community. They will be absolutely true TIA Legends by adapting their role in the community to that of proactive posters.
6.5 FOURTH SOCIAL STRUCTURE: “TIA SUBS-BENCH”

TIA Subs-Bench is the middle ranking within the TIA community analogous to the position held by junior members of football teams. Like the TIA First Teams, TIA Subs-Benches are a mixture of experienced and less experienced and newcomers and longterm members of TIA. Importantly, it does not matter how long they have been members of TIA or what their community ranking is, because the most important aspect of the TIA community is the experience of members which other members can judge from the quality of their posts.

In this social structure, TIA Subs-Benches post and participate on TIA in a similar way to First Teams, but their posts tend to be less creative than those of TIA First Teams. It is worth noting that fresh members have been part of TIA for less than 2 years but who have shown commitment to the community by contributing a high number of posts per day. These members tend to be experienced LFC fans and quickly progress to the higher TIA rankings. Longterm TIA Subs-Benches progress more slowly due to a lack of commitment to the community. This can be seen clearly in the mid-range social structures, especially TIA First Teams or TIA Subs-bench. The way TIA Subs-Bench members co-create value in different roles – reactive posters, creative posters, and brand warriors (see also Table 6.2) is presented in this section.

6.5.1 Reactive Poster within TIA Sub-Bench

All TIA community members are essentially reactive posters in the way that they participate in the interaction process in order to enjoy their LFC fandom and the flow of experiences. However, some members only post as reactive posters for the sake of increasing their posting numbers. In this way, these members have exploited from the fellow members and also the TIA community. One of the most popular flows for reactive posters is the fantasy manager setting in which they predict the first eleven players in the team line-up before LFC games. There are significant differences between the bays in which more experienced and less experienced reactive posters post on TIA; the former tend to contribute strong reasons, well analysed posts, and information to support their views, while the latter do not provide additional information to support their posts.

However, some members are only reactive posters by adding emoticons to their opinions rather than providing information or knowledge to support their posts. Even in some members who always post long opinions, they do not provide information to support their posts. In contrast, the experienced TIA Subs-Benches who participate in flows of experiences or long
conversations as reactive posters are embedding themselves within the TIA community through the interaction process.

6.5.2 Creative Poster within TIA Sub-Bench

TIA Subs-Benches co-create value as creative posters by being creative posters who always provide strong information and knowledge to support their arguments. Importantly, their characteristics are not different from the upper social structures, but they are less creative than the upper groups. As creative posters, I would term some TIA Subs-Benches who contribute to the TIA community as ‘Mr.Statistics’, a unique role whereby members provide statistics and information to support their arguments. In this way, they are able to develop their own style of contributing to the TIA community.

Co-creating value as Mr.Statistics, TIA Subs-Benches do not only provide a wealth of information and knowledge to support their arguments and opinions; they also use statistics to support their posts. Importantly, Mr.Statistics put more commitment into the TIA community because they need to sort through information and statistics before posting the readable format on fora. The following post is an example of Mr.Statistics from a TIA Subs-Bench.

That is correct. Since Chelsea won in the 04/05 season with an amazing 95 points, the Champions have won the league with less and less points over the past 4 years. 03/04: 90 points (Arsenal) 04/05: 95 points (Chelsea) 05/06: 91 points (Chelsea) 06/07: 89 points (Man Utd) 07/08: 87 points (Man Utd) It seems however you need roughly 90 points to win the league nowadays, which requires (90 points / 38 games) 2,37 points from every game - in average. Liverpool and Chelsea have gained 32 points from 13 games so far this season, which makes 2,46 points each game - if either team keep that average points-to-game ratio, the winner will end up with 93-94 points…(Gerrard4life, 11/18/08, TIA Subs-Bench member)

So the example from Gerrard4life, as TIA Subs-Bench member, shows how Mr.Statistics provides information to support their arguments and also contribute analysis as creative posters. To do this, Gerrard4life needs to search for data from different sources. He analyses the data, sorts it, and presents it as knowledge and information in a legible format. Moreover, he adapts the scenario analysis to see how many points LFC need to collect in order to win their first Premier League title by comparing LFC’s stats with Chelsea FC’s, the co-leader of the league table.
An important aspect of being a creative poster among TIA Subs-Benches is showing knowledge about LFC. This is not only limited to longterm members; fresh members may also demonstrate their knowledge about LFC and the football world. The following example shows how members demonstrate their knowledge about LFC.

I love that fact about Rafa. He buys players himself and the scouting department find interesting or fit the teams needs. But if it doesn't work out well, he makes no personal agenda out of it. He doesn't feel he have to prove he saw something unique in a player. He gets rid of them like it should be a old pair of shoes. It could be perceived cold, but at least we wont have another Diouf-like player sticking around for several seasons as long as Rafa is the boss. (Gerrard4life, 11/18/08, TIA Subs-Bench member)

Gerrard4life talks about Diouf who was mentioned in Steven Gerrard’s autobiography (Gerrard and Winter, 2006) as one of the worst LFC signings. Thus, when LFC fans refer to other players as “Diouf-like”, they mean they are bad players. In this post, Gerrard4life uses analysis to make his point and shows his knowledge of football, and especially LFC.

Although TIA Subs-Bench members can co-create value as creative posters in the same way as higher ranking members, they tend to concentrate on football and LFC rather than discussing their everyday lives with other members. It seems that they are just strangers who love and support the same team. This is because most of them are fresh members, so they have not embedded themselves or developed a strong relationship with the community yet. However, by regularly posting on TIA they can gain more experience before being promoted to the upper social structures and also form a strong relationship with the community.

6.5.3 Brand Warrior within TIA Sub-Bench

Brand Warrior is an LFC and TIA tradition which is transferred from longterm or experienced members to fresh members; therefore, within the TIA community, while there are brand warriors in all social structures, but the ratio of brand warriors to non-brand warriors is progressively lower in the lower TIA rankings and vice versa.

TIA Subs-Benches are brand warriors in two ways: LFC knights and tradition reminders. As LFC knights, TIA Subs-Bench members are similar to higher ranking members in that they stand up against kneejerk fans, rival teams, or and TIA members who post non-sense threads. As mentioned in previously (see page 141), kneejerk fans are the number one perceived threat that TIA members have to eliminate because the kneejerk opinions cannot contribute to the
best practice for new members, and it can dilute the LFC spirit if this kind of opinion becomes common within the TIA community. However, it provides our understanding of how consumers can deal with the negative posts. The degree of acting against kneejerk from TIA Subs-Benches is less than the upper social structures due to they concentrate with football and LFC conversation.

TIA Subs-Benches participate in the TIA community as creative posters. In this respect, they are creative posters because they provide strong information, knowledge, and especially statistics to support their posts and they also take a role as tradition reminders. In the following post, Gerrard4life acts as a tradition reminder following LFC’s defeat in the League Cup (for which the LFC manager, Rafa, received criticism from the media):

Yet, for all the rave and praise.... Arsene Wengers Arsenal has won nothing over the past 4 years. In the same time frame we have won the Champions League and the FA Cup.
At the end of the day, the only thing that matters are trophies. And since Rafa came to the club, he has been way more succesfull then Arsene in those terms. (Gerrard4life, 11/17/08, TIA Subs-Bench member)

During the conversation and argument, many members believed the media and complained about the transfer budget spent by LFC in the previous summer. One member compares LFC with Arsenal FC by pointing out that Arsenal does not spend too much money and they also earn money from selling players. Gerrard4life, acting as a brand warrior and tradition reminder, uses statistics in order to rebut this point.

Like the higher social structures, TIA Subs-Bench members strongly believe in the players and manager, and always stand behind them. Interestingly, during the 2008 – 09 season LFC performed well in the Premier League by being the first title challenger in the last 8 years. This success can attract glory-hunters or kneejerk fans to LFC. Tradition reminders always believe that the League title is very important for LFC and also that supporting players and manager is very important; therefore, TIA Subs-Benches alongside more experienced members from the higher rankings have acted against kneejerk fans.

So Sweeting, a TIA Subs-Bench, also mentions TIA traditions about swearing at players: “[B]y the way, the mass amount of swearing doesn't impress people on here. You want RAWK...” He is angry with the kneejerk and glory-hunter fans. From his words, he shows the opposite brand community with RAWK, another unofficial LFC fan-site. It is noteworthy that an important aspect of being tradition reminders for TIA members, especially TIA Subs-Benches, is that they provide statistics or facts to remind members about the spirit of LFC
fans. For instance, Sweeting refers to Jamie Carragher, one of LFC’s legends who performed badly in his first 3 seasons as an LFC player, but later became a successful LFC defender.

6.5.4 Conclusion

The higher member rankings (TIA First Teams, TIA Subs-Bench) include longterm members (more than 4 years membership) and fresh members (less than 2 years membership), both of whom may be experienced but show different levels of dedication to the TIA community. The fresh members contribute more time dedication to the TIA community than longterm members; therefore, fresh members who are creative posters are quickly promoted to the upper social structures. However, differences in the dedication of members do not dilute their post quality and contributions within the TIA community.

TIA Subs-Bench members seem to be apprentices within the TIA community before becoming more experienced members. At the middle ranking, TIA Subs-Bench members absorb and learn about the rituals, traditions, and way of participating in the TIA community, and also about LFC fandom in general. They act as guards or shields by protecting the TIA community and LFC from kneejerk or glory-hunter fans who can dilute the traditions of LFC by influencing the behaviour of new TIA members who are gaining experience and learning about LFC and TIA traditions.

6.6 FIFTH SOCIAL STRUCTURE: “TIA RESERVE TEAM”

Like TIA Subs-Benches, TIA Reserve Teams are a mixture of longterm and fresh members. However, the fresh members in the TIA Reserve Team are younger than the fresh members in the TIA Sub-Bench ranking. The fresh members in TIA Reserve Team ranking have typically been members of TIA for less than 1 year, while fresh members of the TIA Subs-Bench ranking have typically been TIA members for less than 2 years.

This social structure can demonstrate how collective resources – knowledge, experience, and information - are more important than membership period and social structure. It is found that it does not matter how long members have been on TIA or which social structure they belong to; what is important is whether they have formed a strong relationship with the TIA community or not.

Interestingly, more kneejerk or glory-hunter members are found within the lower social member rankings than the higher ones. These kneejerk members tend to be less experienced
than fresh members who tend to believe the media rather than trust LFC traditions. However, TIA Reserve Teams are young apprentices who are gaining experience and learning about LFC and TIA tradition. So TIA Reserve Teams can co-create value in three different roles – reactive posters, creative posters, and brand warriors (see also Table 6.2).

6.6.1 Reactive Poster within TIA Reserve Team

Because TIA Reserve Teams are a mixture of different members, this dissertation found two types of reactive poster – less experienced reactive members who are only reactive posters and more experienced reactive members who are both reactive and proactive posters. Less experienced reactive members always participate in the TIA community by responding shortly to threads in order to satisfy their own sake, rather than the community. Interestingly, less experienced reactive members in the lower social structures tend to be kneejerk or glory-hunter members who always complain or moan about LFC’s players and the manager.

Some members participate in the TIA community with their emotions rather than by providing information and facts; therefore, sometimes they post with incorrect information, or negative thinking which may dilute LFC traditions. Most of them are less experienced members who have been on TIA for less than 1 year. They cannot form a relationship with the TIA community and embody themselves with the LFC spirit; therefore, they express themselves by going against LFC and TIA traditions. Importantly, they also are media victims who always believe or trust media rumours rather than feel confidence and trust in LFC spirit.

More experienced reactive posters participate in reactive posts in order to form a relationship with the TIA community and the fellow members by participating in different threads as they do in their everyday lives. This is a way they construct a sense of community and flows of experience within the TIA community. The more they participate, the stronger the bonds they form with TIA members and the community are likely to be.

By embedding themselves in the community, they become regular members who dedicate their time to posting, reading, and sharing their experiences, discussions, arguments, information, and the sense of community. This is the opposite with less experienced longterm members who cannot form a relationship with the TIA community even though they have been on TIA for a long time. This is because they are non-regular members who lack time or commitment to the TIA community. They are like members who move from community to community in their everyday lives without forming a strong bond with any one of them; therefore, they may be strangers who have no relationship with the community.
6.6.2 Creative Poster within TIA Reserve Team

Like TIA Subs-Bench members, most of TIA Reserve Teams are young apprentices gaining experience within the TIA community, and they are a mixture of longterm and fresh members. Most longtime members are more than 4 years TIA members, while most fresh members are less than 1 year TIA members. Interestingly, experienced members with the TIA Reserve Teams ranking are similar to TIA Subs-Benches and other high ranking members in that they have knowledge about football and LFC; therefore, they can co-create value as creative posters. However, a number of creative posters with the TIA Reserve Team ranking are less than the higher ranks.

Knowledge is one of the main components to indicate who experienced members are. Experienced members can employ their knowledge to support their arguments in posts. Moreover, some members can share information and knowledge about LFC and the football world with other members by analysing and systematising their knowledge. The following example is a post from a TIA Reserve Team member who systematises his post in a simple way:

Well, you'll always have the arch-types I think. You'll either have the:
1. Rare but caring owner, who gives up his money to ensure the running of the club, but unfortunately doesn't have enough to make the club truly competitive, I.E. Steve Gibson.
2. Rich/paying over the top/glory hunter[s]/who get bored easily (who know very little about the sport) Abramovich/The Sheikhdom.
3. Owners who buy the club and finance its running on credit Glazers/Hicks & Gillett Last but not least
4. Owner who just simply doesn't care to put any money into the club but won't sell it either: Muhammed Al Fayed. (b.scheller, 12/09/08, TIA Reserve Team member)

B.scheller, as a TIA Reserve Team member, commenting on football club owners places them into 4 categories. This is similar to how more experienced members in the higher social structures contribute to the TIA community as can be seen from the rich information, knowledge, and experience in their discussion and arguments. Moreover, these are important aspects of quality posts which experienced members contribute to the TIA community.

6.6.3 Brand Warrior within TIA Reserve Team

By co-creating value as creative posters, a small number of TIA Reserve Teams can co-create value as brand warriors. They can co-create value as brand warriors in two ways: LFC knights and tradition reminders. As LFC knights, most of them are longterm members who learn and embed themselves in LFC and TIA traditions. They cannot tolerate members who tend to be
kneejerk fans who they will remind about LFC traditions. The following post is an example of somebody acting as an LFC knight:

Clearly you don't embody the spirit of the team. They never say die, the true fans will never give up. How can you say that is the end? It is only half time, and the lads give 100% each time they go out there. They will do the same at Stamford, and we will qualify. Next time try and be more positive! (No.17, 04/22/08, TIA Reserve Team member)

No.17, as a TIA Reserve Team member who has been on TIA since it was formed, reminds another member about the LFC spirit which fans should learn and embody. This is a way in which older members transfer traditions and culture to newer members. Thus, he is both an LFC knight and a tradition reminder. Furthermore, he extends his support to fellow TIA members who have problems or need help, as is shown in the following post:

R.I.P Liam Harker. I was amazingly touched by the response of fellow Red fans to his plight and just strengthened my love for the club and the fans. It was so special that we could give him a little bit of joy by displaying banners bearing his name in the first leg of the Chelsea game. Truly touching and really shows that us fans, as a family, will never walk alone. (No.17, 05/05/08, TIA Reserve Team member)

In this post, No.17 expresses sympathy for an LFC fan, Liam Harker who has died, and also reminds other members about the LFC YNWA tradition. This is a way in which TIA members co-create value as tradition reminders.

However, being tradition reminders does not mean that they have never complained or moaned about LFC players and managers. They always complaint and moan, but they provide reasons, information, and suggestions with their complaints. This is because they do not support LFC like the mad love which fully support LFC. Tradition reminders are LFC fans who understand the situation, and accept the reality or opportunities for LFC to win the 19th league title. This qualification can be seen from both longterm and fresh members.

6.6.4 Conclusion

TIA Reserve Teams are TIA members who have contributed 400-999 posts on TIA fora. Like Subs-Benches, TIA Reserve Teams are a mixture of longterm and fresh members who are who experience and participate in the TIA community in different ways. Although some TIA Reserve Teams can co-create value in the same way as higher ranking members, less of them are proactive posters because most of them are young apprentice members who are learning and gaining experiences by participating in the TIA community. Some of them are kneejerk or glory-hunter members.
6.7 SIXTH SOCIAL STRUCTURE: “TIA YOUTH TEAM”

TIA Youth Team is the second lowest TIA member ranking. Most TIA Youth Teams are fresh members who tend to be reactive posters; they have mostly been TIA members for average 1 year 3 months (as of October 2008). However, there are experienced TIA Youth Team members who can co-create value alongside higher ranking members.

It is found that the lower ranking TIA members tend to be reactive posters rather than proactive posters, and most of them are either creative posters or brand warriors. Moreover, unlike higher ranking members, they are only interested in LFC and football discussions; they do not usually discuss their everyday of lives in the TIA community. This is because some fresh members are less experienced and have not been members for long enough to form a relationship with the TIA community.

While some TIA Youth Teams are longterm members, they are still in the TIA Youth Team and cannot form a relationship with the community yet. This is because most of them, like some longtime TIA Reserve Team members, are non-regular members who seem to be strangers who visit community, but do not participate in it. In contrast, experienced fresh members who have a strong relationship and commitment to the TIA community, tend to be promoted to the higher rankings more quickly because they spend their time participating in the community by discussing threads and contributing quality posts. TIA Youth Teams can co-create value in three different roles – reactive posters, creative posters, and brand warriors (see also Table 6.2).

6.7.1 Reactive Poster within TIA Youth Team

Like TIA Reserve Teams, there are two main types of reactive poster among TIA Youth Teams – less experienced reactive posters and more experienced reactive posters. Both of them are longterm and fresh members who differ according to the extent of their experiences within the TIA community. The less experienced longterm members are strangers within the TIA community. Although they come to visit the TIA community, they rarely participate in the community, because they cannot form a relationship with it or fellow TIA members. Most of them are not promoted to the higher social structures, and many subsequently cease being members of TIA.

The less experienced fresh or young members tend to respond to threads or directly quote other opinions and reply shortly. Moreover, they tend to be media victims and act as kneejerk members. However, in contrast with the less experienced longterm members, they have
opportunities to gain experience and embody the LFC spirit by interacting with the community, and also learning the LFC and TIA ways from more experienced members. Their reactive posts also contribute to the TIA community by updating or creating the community movement.

In contrast, more experienced members enjoy their experiences of being LFC fans, and participate in the flow of experience in order to share their experienced or discuss different topics with their fellow LFC fans as they do in the offline community. Participating in the flow of experience is another way for TIA Youth Teams to form a strong relationship with their fellow members, and also embody themselves with the LFC and TIA traditions which help to bond the sense of community among members.

6.7.2 Creative Poster within TIA Youth Team

Like the higher ranking members, TIA Youth Teams can co-create value as creative posters, although the ratio of Youth Teams doing so will be lower than in the higher member rankings. Their co-creation as creative posters supports the proposition that it does not matter which social structures members belong to or how long members have been in TIA; rather, it is the quality of members’ post or how they participate in the community which counts towards the co-creation process.

Fresh creative posters tend to be promoted to the higher social structures quickly. TIA Youth Teams contribute quality posts to the TIA community by using their knowledge about LFC and the football world. With time and dedication, some members contribute to the TIA community like journalists who participate or argue in particular threads with well analysed comments, suggestions, and predictions. They dedicate time to the TIA community by participating in threads and also by searching for information, statistics, and facts to support their arguments.

LFC-Singapore is an example of a TIA Youth Team member who contributes posts rich in information, knowledge, comments, and facts like journalist in media world. In his posts about the performance of LFC he complains about players and the manager, but he also points to the positive things about the LFC performance which is gradually increasing. In his journal post, he analyses controversial issues such as particular players (Dirk Kuyt or El Zar) to point out that fans are employing emotions in the discussions on the TIA community. He makes positive and negative points about LFC, analyses the behaviour of TIA members and the skills of LFC players, and he provides examples to extend his arguments.
Most creative posters with the TIA Youth Team or lower rankings tend to be fresh members because the experienced members who have been on TIA for a long time tend to progress to the higher rankings, while longterm members who cannot form strong relationships with the community tend to stop participating in it and later quit being members altogether.

### 6.7.3 Brand Warrior within TIA Youth Team

Like TIA Reserve Teams, most of the TIA Youth Teams are either creative posters or brand warriors. Some TIA Youth Teams can embody the LFC and TIA spirit, and co-create value as brand warriors in two ways: LFC knights and tradition reminders. As **LFC knights**, kneejerk or glory-hunter members are the first target for LFC knights to attack, because they cannot tolerate their complaints or attacks on LFC, including abuse from fellow members. This is the LFC and TIA spirit which experienced members within the TIA community have developed and co-created LFC and TIA tradition with fellow members.

Importantly, the fact that there are LFC knights in the lower social structures shows that this tradition has been successfully formed, because many lower ranking members are able to embody the LFC and TIA traditions in the short time. Even when there are ex-players who comment on or argue about LFC, the LFC knights tend to fight and protect LFC.

For instance, in one post Osprey23, as a TIA Youth Team member, defends the LFC manager, Rafael Banitez, who was being attacked by some former LFC players (“ex-reds”). He argues against these ex-Reds, and provides information to support the manager. He provides strong reasons to support his argument as to why ex-Reds should not attack their old club, LFC by stating that negative comments cannot bring success to LFC (Osprey23, 24/08/08, TIA Youth Team member).

Importantly, some TIA Youth Team members also remind other members about the LFC spirit when they are attacking LFC players and the manager. In this respect, they are **tradition reminders**. The following post is an example of a Youth Team member acting as a tradition reminder:

> And how is that different from some people we have on the forums here? I had a reply to an earlier post on this thread, by Shanklys Best, that quoted his/her post, and it's exactly the same thing. Real fans don't boo, and don't quit. Real fans support their team, in the wind and the rain, even if we're near relegation (which thankfully we're the OPPOSITE OF), so can we please, stop being so negative, and just get behind the team? Maybe it's just the negativity of the fans that's affecting the team's mentality so much, anyone thought of that? (redalways, 12/01/08, TIA Youth Team member)
Here redalways, as a TIA Youth Team member, reminds other members to always stand behind the team by defining who real LFC fans are. His post and Osprey23’s post show that the lower ranking members can co-create value as brand warriors just as well as higher ranking members. However, there is a lower ratio of brand warriors in the lower member ranks than in the higher ones.

6.7.4 Conclusion

Like other TIA groups, TIA Youth Teams are a mixture of longterm and fresh members. Most members with this rank have not so far formed a strong relationship with TIA. Most of them are interested only in football and LFC and they only participate on TIA in order to discuss these things. They also tend to be kneejerk fans. Interestingly, experienced members tend to be promoted or have been promoted to the higher member rankings more quickly because they spend more time posting on TIA and searching for information searching. Therefore, longterm members who fail to progress beyond the lower member rankings tend to be reactive posters.

6.8 SEVENTH SOCIAL STRUCTURE: “TIA NEW SIGNING”

TIA New Signing is the lowest ranking on the TIA community. Most of these members have been on TIA for less than 1 year. Most TIA New Signings are less experienced reactive posters who are learning about LFC and TIA traditions; therefore, sometimes they participate in the TIA community with kneejerk posts or discussions. This is because they are new members who need time to embody the LFC and TIA spirit by interacting with the TIA community.

Another group of less experienced reactive posters in this social structure are the longterm TIA members who lack of time and commitment, and rarely visit or participate in the TIA community. Although this social structure is the lowest ranking within the TIA community, there are many more experienced members who are both reactive and proactive posters.

As reactive posters, these less experienced members participate in the TIA community in the same way as higher ranking members by participating in different threads in order to form a strong relationship with the TIA community. Moreover, they are also to co-create value as creative posters and brand warriors, although with less intensity than the higher ranking
members. So TIA New Signing members can co-create value in three ways: reactive posters, creative posters, and brand warriors.

6.8.1 Reactive Poster within TIA New Signing

TIA New Signings are the least experienced members of the TIA community, and most of them are less experienced reactive posters who post or participate as kneejerk members. However, some of them try to avoid being branded as kneejerk fans or glory hunters by learning about LFC tradition from the TIA community. It demonstrates that members do not only want to be accepted by the peers as a member of in-group, but also avoid to be marked as kneejerk members. This is a result of collective process which TIA members have collaborated to co-create through the roles of brand warriors. TIA New Signings are a group of newbie members who come in this community after the battle of brand warriors and kneejerk members; therefore, they perceive about those negative behaviours.

It is noteworthy that they are shown to be less experienced reactive posters by the ways in which they post or respond to threads (i.e. they rarely provide strong information, knowledge, or statistics in their posts). However, there are more experienced reactive posters among them who enjoy the flow of experience and aim to bond with their fellow members. Interestingly, longterm members are more experienced reactive posters but they have not progressed above the TIA New Signing ranking because they lack dedication to the TIA community; however, some of them may be regular members of other online communities.

Although there are some longterm TIA members with the New Signing ranking, most of them are fresh members who are reactive posters learning about the TIA community by participating in discussions and interacting with other TIA members. As fresh members, they tend to read and observe or post short responses to threads, rather than engaging in discussions and arguments because they are new members of the community and they are not familiar with the other members. But as they form a strong bond with the TIA community and its members, they will become more regular and experienced members of the community who can co-create value as proactive posters. Therefore, it is necessarily for TIA New Signings to spend time in the TIA community in order to accumulate experiences and understanding of the TIA community.

6.8.2 Creative Poster within TIA New Signing

Because most TIA New Signings are fresh members who have been on TIA for less than a year, there are very few creative posters within this social structure. Although there are some
longterm members in the TIA New Signing ranking who keep their membership active, they are still relatively fresh members by comparison with the higher ranking members; the average length of their TIA membership is \( c.2-3 \) years whereas the average length of membership for the higher ranking members is \( c.4-5 \) years.

Therefore, the TIA New Signings who are creative posters tend to be longterm members who have not progressed to higher member rankings because they lack commitment; they may just visit, read, and browse around the TIA community without participating in it. On the other hand, they may not visit the TIA community regularly. The quality of some of their posts shows that they can embody the LFC and TIA spirit. They may post with a wealth of information, experience, and knowledge about LFC and the football world. The following post is an example of a creative post from a TIA New Signing:

I usually don't post very much but I have been following this topic for quite some time, and I can say that I really enjoy the comment and contribution of SMTM except the last post above this one. However as someone said before I am wary of some new member who are obsessed in defending G&H. The fact are there, they done nothing to this club which is not to their good also. We can thank God for having RAFA as most of the progress we have made are due to his unorthodox fights he has been involved with time after time for this club. (Without him I doubt we could get this set of players with us).

If someone follow this post from the beginning, you could find a new member entering and put a lot of defense and try to sway other member towards the yanks and after sometime he will disappear and a new one will appear later and try to do the same(currently we have "Hero") he is hardly two weeks old but he is doing a fantastic job. Keep it up, you must be stuffing in some good weetabix dollars... (2Red, 09/19/08, TIA New Signing member)

Here 2Red, as a TIA New Signing, draws upon his experiences, knowledge, and information to support his post. He shows his knowledge of the TIA community by referring to ongoing conversations within it. He can co-create value as an experienced member because he has been on TIA for more than 3 years, and he has accumulated LFC and TIA traditions and experiences, but he may lack commitment to the community. Therefore, commitment seems to be another important factor that can increase members’ experience within the community.

### 6.8.3 Brand Warrior within TIA New Signing

Interestingly, some fresh TIA New Signings can co-create value as **brand warriors** alongside more experienced members. A small number of TIA New Signings are **LFC knights** who always stand up for LFC players and managers and fight against kneejerk fans. In this way, they act as **tradition reminders** because their arguments against kneejerk fans help to strengthen the LFC and TIA spirit.
This shows that the LFC and TIA traditions have been formed, and can be found among the lowest ranking and newest members of the TIA community. Although this phenomenon can be explained by the self-monitoring theory (Richardson, 2004), which states that people tend to act in ways that will gain acceptance for them in social groups, it is the first step for the TIA community to embed LFC and TIA traditions in its newest members. The following post is an example of a TIA New Signing who always supports LFC’s players and manager:

Get out of here Pedro!!! Parry is fecking useless we all agree on that and everyone knows ours views on Hicks and Gillett but dont throw Rafa in on that. Rafa is in my view our best manager in a long time and some of us are turned off by the players we are linked with but he is working on a tight budget and I trust he will do the best he can with the money he is given. Parry, Hicks, Gillet should all go now but Rafa is one of the best managers around at the moment. (Aggerdododo, 05/21/08, TIA New Signing Member)

In this post, Aggerdododo, as a TIA New Signing member, argues against the kneejerk views of another member, and provides other members with reasons to support his argument. Although Aggerdododo is a relatively new member of TIA he can co-create value as a brand warrior in the same way as more experienced members do. By arguing against kneejerk or glory-hunter members, TIA New Signings can learn and gain experience participations about being a dedicated LFC fan. Moreover, they also absorb these traditions in a similar way to how they would absorb traditions in the offline world.

6.8.4 Conclusion

New Signing members are ‘tourists’ in this community (Kozinets, 2002b) who have not yet developed a strong relationship with the TIA community. They may visit TIA because they want to follow LFC news. Like some youth team members, they tend to be kneejerk fans who do not know about LFC and TIA traditions or who do not support the club, manager, and players. Therefore, members of this group tend to be reactive posters. Longterm members with this ranking tend not to be active on TIA or they are possibly LFC fans who live outside of the UK or cannot visit TIA due to their job responsibility.

It is found in the same way with the TIA First Teams, Subs-Benches, Reserve Teams and Youth Teams that different members in different social structures can co-create value in the different ways: reactive posters, creative posters, and moderator. To summarise, that the social structures or rankings do not matter, while the community ranking system is an important indicator of who the more experienced and dedicated members of TIA are, the
quality of members' posts, regardless of their rankings in the TIA community, tends to be a more important factor in the co-creation of value.

6.9 DISCUSSIONS

The results from this chapter imply that the social structures of the TIA community and the period of membership are not the most immediate influences on the interaction process, but the co-consuming group’s operant resources – its knowledge, experience, and information - play an important role in the co-creation of collective resources – different forms of capital. These are resources which members of the collective group accumulate through the social interactions. According to this view, social, culture and symbolic capital are resources in the interaction process which members can gain and accumulate over a period of time and through social structures. These are key forms of capital alongside with economic capital in the social life (Bourdieu, 1984).

As the co-consuming group’s social resources, cultural capital is the various forms of knowledge, taste, skills and practices which members symbolically reproduce within the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1990), while social capital is both the embedded resources within social relations (Lin, 1999) and the opportunity to access them. Although symbolic capital is also a collective resource, it is occupied by individuals. In this dissertation, these forms of capital can be viewed as another form of value which emerges from social interaction.

These resources contribute to how people behave within the social life. Cultural capital is the knowledge or skills that people need to create value from embedded resources, while social capital is the opportunities that they need to access these social resources. Interestingly, some members in the lower social structures are able to contribute crucial resources to the interaction process in a short time because they have a high level of human capital – individual ability (Burt, 1997: 339). These forms of capital will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight.

6.9.1 The Roles of Social Structures in the Value Co-creation Process

Seven social structures in the TIA community have been discussed in order to show how the roles played by participants in collective groups enable the value co-creation process in the realm of football fandom, and specifically LFC. The idea of social structures which were assigned to the TIA ranking system was derived from Bourdieu (1990) who suggests that the
locations of individuals in social networks is a way to understand capital within social relationships. In this study, seven social structure rankings were investigated – TIA Board Member, TIA Legend, TIA First Team, TIA Subs-Bench, TIA Reserve Team, TIA Youth Team, and TIA New Signing.

Although insiders and devotees are the most important members of groups for marketing researchers concerned with online communities (Kozinets, 2002b), all social structures in the TIA community play important roles in the value co-creation process. This serves to highlight Kozinets (1999)’s suggestion that marketing researchers should investigate non-regular members of groups (tourists and minglers) in order to understand how they socialise and upgrade their status in groups.

**Figure 6.1: Proactive Posters’ Intensity**

![Proactive Posters' Intensity](chart)

**Source:** Developed from empirical data

Social interactions within different social structures demonstrate the direction of individual consumer’s movement within the online community. However, this contribution would be elaborated in Chapter Seven. These findings show that all social structures in the TIA community provide information about the level of involvement in community. The most involved members of the TIA community are the TIA Board Members and TIA Legends, while the least involved are the TIA New Signings. This is in line with Sirsi *et al.* (1996) that experienced members tend to have stronger social tie than less experienced members. It is noteworthy that the different ranking members of TIA can co-create value for the TIA
community as reactive posters and proactive posters, but that the proactive posts of lower ranking members are less intense than those of the higher ranking members (see Figure 6.1).

To summarise, the TIA members’ collective knowledge and information are more important than their formal social structures or the amount of time that members have belonged to them in the online communities because members can be promoted to higher social structures by continuously posting on fora. This supports Pongsakornrungsilp et al.’s (2008a) Figure 2 which states that time is an important factor in the service provision process, and Mathwick et al.’s (2008) work on ‘Social Capital Production in a Virtual P3 Community’ which states that membership length orients the social capital within the peer-to-peer community. It is found that many longterm members on TIA cannot form a strong relationship with the community and thus cannot co-create value with it.

As mentioned by different scholars e.g. Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001), Kozinet et al. (2008), Mathwick et al. (2008), Schau et al. (2009), brand communities provide the positive value through moral responsibility, consciousness of kind, reciprocity, social trust or creativity oriented activity. However, there is not only positive value within brand communities, but also the negative value. The social interactions within the different social structures have provided an additional perspective of negative value – kneejerk posts - within brand community. Kneejerk or glory hunt members are mainly in the lower social structures, especially with the less experienced members. They can be defined as fake fans or glory hunt members who lack of commitment to LFC, stand up with the glory of LFC and always complaint LFC players and manager when the team lost.

It is arguable that this is not new and it has been developed through the theory of social psychology in sport marketing. These kneejerk fans can be explained through the concept of BIRGing (Basking in Reflected Glory: trying to receive this glory, but they have done nothing tangible to bring the team’s success) and CORFing (Cutting Off Reflected Failure: distancing themselves as far as possible from the losing team) (Richardson, 2006). However, kneejerk fans are different from CORFing fans in that they do not stay away from the team, but they stand opposite by moaning and complaining players and also manager. Therefore, instead of viewing the negative value as a threat of value creation, it is viewed as an opportunity for co-creating the strong brand culture (see also Brand Warrior section).

This finding also contributes to our understanding that co-consuming group does not only play a role of brand curator (Cova and Dalli, 2009; Leigh et al., 2006), but also a source of value or platform of value creation. As a platform of value creation, the TIA community is a
place for LFC fans to interact with the fellow members about their LFC fandom and their everyday of life. At the centre of interaction, LFC plays a role as a brand which provides linking value (Cova and Cova, 2002) to bond all LFC fans for co-creating value: sharing stories, protecting brand value, socialising with the fellow members, and so forth. Consumers spend a lot of time and effort within the co-consuming group because they would like to share experience and brand stories, to socialise with their fellow members, and to create strong brand culture. Therefore, it is arguable that brand and co-consuming group play an important role for consumers to spend so much time and effort.

In the collective groups individuals form social bonds around an object by interacting with other individuals who belong to the same group. Individuals who are committed to the group and have gained knowledge about it by participating in it tend to co-create better social resources. Burt (1997) has stated that human capital has a direct impact on the development of social resources. That is, the most important component in the value co-creation process is the co-consuming group’s operant resources (knowledge, experience, and information) rather than its social structures, which Members can use to co-create social resources. This is because social structures form a network of positions which facilitate individual members to access and use social resources (Burt, 1997).

This is similar to Mathwick et al.’s (2008) argument that interactions are driven by norms of community voluntarism, reciprocity, and social trust. To co-create value as creative posters, members require social resources in order to contribute knowledge into service provision process. Although there is a higher ratio of creative posters in the higher TIA rankings, rankings do not in themselves reflect or guarantee the quality of TIA members’ posts. This finding illustrates Lin’s instrument action which is the outcome of social interactions that are intended for “searching and obtaining resources” (Lin, 1999: 34). Therefore, it is arguable that social structure does not have a great influence on the value co-creation process, and that the collective knowledge, experiences, and information play an important role within the value co-creation process.

6.9.2 The Roles of Participants in the Value Co-Creation Process

In this study, this dissertation has extended Schau et al. (2009) and Muñiz and Schau (2005) by providing additional insight of value creation through a micro-perspective of co-creation how individual consumers engage in the collective value creation of the co-consuming group for co-creating value. This perspective helps us to understand how consumers deal with the negative posts and also the roles of individual consumers within the value creation process. It
also demonstrates the double exploitation within the consumer-to-consumer interaction. These roles also extend an understanding of service in S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a) which individuals employ to co-create value with others.

By analysing the roles of members within the TIA community, it is found that members in online communities play different roles in the value co-creation process – reactive posters and proactive posters (creative posters, brand warriors, and another unique role as moderators).

6.9.2.1 Reactive Posters

The “Reactive Poster” role is an elementary qualification of all TIA members by which they are able to form social resources within the TIA community. In this role, individual members can co-create value in two ways: (1) for their own sake – hedonistic and social identity and (2) strong sense of community. On the one hand, the former value can be explained by Holbrook’s (2006a) typologies that consumers are playing for fun, and also gaining status (ranking) and esteem (social identity) within the community (see also Holt’s (1995) ‘How Consumers Consume’). On the other hand, it is arguable that Holbrook’s (2006a) typology of value is less concern on the collective value within the community e.g. consciousness of kind and sense of community, norm of reciprocity, relationship and level of engagement among consumers and so forth. At the collective level, reactive posters play an important role to bond all members within the LFC fandom.

As mentioned above, the co-consuming group’s operant resources help to control or constrain the behaviour of members. More experienced members who are highly committed to the group and more knowledgeable about it tend to co-create value as reactive posters in different ways to less committed or less experienced members. More experienced members tend to join in the flow of experience, share their views, construct a consciousness of kind, and create a sense of community. In this way, they gain and co-create social resources from their interactions with the online community.

However, some less experienced members are not committed to the community and less knowledgeable about it. They discuss only football related issues, participate only as reactive posters, in order to increase their post numbers for being upgraded to the upper social structures, because most of them are new members who cannot embody LFC spirit or gain experience about LFC and TIA tradition. Moreover, they are not experienced enough to know the best ways of interacting with other members. This is similar Giesler’s (2006) suggestion that some online community members who have a higher level of culture capital and know
the game well always give something back to community, while some members who have a low level of cultural capital never return. In the other words, it can be explained by the concept of double exploitation (see also Cova and Dalli, 2009) within consumer-to-consumer interaction. They do only focus on their self and take advantage from the collective resources, rather than co-create the collective value or at least provide a benefit to the community.

Reactive posts help marketing researchers to understand how foundation of interactions within the online community is, because these interactions are the collective actions of individuals within the co-consuming group. This is similar to how chatters create flows of experiences on chat-rooms (Shoham, 2004). The concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) has been adapted in many consumer researches for the purposes of understanding the flow of experiences. Pace (2004: 329) states:

F]low refers to a state of consciousness that is sometimes experienced by individuals who are deeply involved in an enjoyable activity.

Although the concept of flow has been typically applied to the study of activities requiring skills and challenges (e.g. Arnould and Price’s (1993) River Rafting; Celsi et al.’s (1993) Skydiving; Hopkinson and Pujari’s (1999) Kayak), it has also been used to shed light on web user experiences (Pace, 2004). The flow in the TIA community is similar to what has been shown by web user studies (Chen, Wigand, and Nilan, 1999). The flow is created by individual members who require skills to achieve challenges. It influences members to concentrate with interaction, lose self-consciousness, distort sense of time, and gain the autotelic experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). These actions are strategies that online community members employ to engage themselves with objects (or what Holt (1995) states about consuming as experience).

Another important aspect of this reactive phenomenon, as it is conceptualised according to S-D logic, is that all reactive posters act as beneficiaries who gain benefits through the service provision process. In this case, they gain experiences and enjoyment through LFC and TIA conversations, and they also gain benefits as members of a collective group by contributing to the solidarity of the community through a consciousness of kind and a sense of community (Mathwick et al., 2008; Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). This would influence to strengthen the relationship and engagement level between consumer and consumer, and consumer and community. In the other words, it is one form of social capitals which will be mentioned in Chapter Eight.
6.9.2.2 Creative Posters

The “Creative poster” role is an advanced qualification pertaining to TIA members who have gained and accumulated social resources and who embody the LFC and TIA spirit by interacting with the TIA community. They enjoy the flow of experience and gain resources from the TIA community by acting as reactive posters; but they also give back to the TIA community by providing information, knowledge, statistics, facts, and well analysed comments to which other members can respond. These collective resources are collective values which are co-created through the collaborative network of consumers. However, an individual creative poster also gains status within the community. It is one strategy which TIA members employ to gain symbolic capital.

As creative posters, experienced of the TIA community play an important role in the service provision process as service providers or offerers whereby they contribute benefits to their fellow members or beneficiaries. This finding supports FP10 (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a) which states that value is not the participation experience, but rather the phenomenological of value whereby each party employs their operand resources (knowledge, experience, and information) in order to contribute benefits to other members or resources in the social network. Members who have more experiences are able to bring more resources into the interaction; therefore, experience does not dominate the service provision process, but it does drive the process.

As mentioned above, creative posters can extend our understanding of the concept ‘Working Consumers’ within the brand communities. They demonstrate the working consumers of consumer-to-consumer interaction which individual consumers employ their immaterial labours to provide benefits to others. This would also extend ‘collective consumer creativity’ (Kozinet et al., 2008) by claiming that consumers do not only act as providers by contributing ‘innovation’, new ideas, or solutions to the community, but also act as ‘producers’ by initially providing ‘arguable posts’ for the fellow members to discuss or share their resources. This is in line with Arvidsson’s (2005) that consumers can produce the social interaction through their immaterial labour.

Through the concept of Working Consumers, creative posters are been double exploitation by some less experienced members and also kneejerk members. Cova and Dalli (2009) have mentioned that there is no harmony relationship in value creation. On the one hand, they are exploited by less experienced members who have never contributed knowledge or information to the community in return, and also are a cause of conflicts among members (see
kneejerk discussion in page 142). On the other hand, the question, Do they personally need something in return?, can be added to our understanding of value creation and working consumers. As mentioned above, creative posters may receive the status, social recognition, or symbolic value from their dedication and commitment. Moreover, creative posters may achieve their experience life goals to enjoy their hedonistic value (fun, Holbrook, 2006a) of sharing (Wasko and Faraj, 2005).

From the discussion above, creative posters is a role or way of contributing to the value co-creation process which plays an important role to co-create brand myths through story telling as creative posters. Creative posters continuously create value or resources between contributing to ongoing discussions with other members. This co-creation of value is in line with the notion of brand culture that “is a focus on cultural processes that effect contemporary brands, including historical context, ethical concerns, and cultural conventions.” … and “… refers to the cultural codes of brands – history, images, myths, art, theatre” (Schroeder, 2009: 123 - 124).

Creative posters contribute in the value co-creation process by creating social resources which reproduce the meaning and history of a brand within the collective group alongside their fellow members. The social structures occupied by individuals can be viewed through the lens of S-D logic as value proposition embedded a level of expectation to consumers or beneficiaries, but it does not insure that members in the higher social structures can contribute value as expected. The actions or interactions benefit members by allowing them to gain respect from others.

Participation or interaction within the TIA community can be viewed through the lens of S-D logic either emerged value or a grant to access the social resources (Burt, 1997; Lin, 1999). This process also results the production of the social capital within the TIA community which members can use to gain respect and honour from their fellow members. This process will be explained further in the next chapter.

6.9.2.3 Brand Warriors

The “Brand Warrior” role experienced TIA members are able to contribute knowledge, experience and information to the TIA community. Brand Warrior is one of most important roles within the TIA community because it forms and constructs LFC and TIA traditions, including the TIA members’ embodiment of the LFC spirit. It is the collective value whereby consumers have chosen to deal with the negative value; by compromising with kneejerk
members. Instead of get rid off these negative members, brand warriors are the roles which experienced consumers teach or share resources to the negative members in order to make them understand the code of consumption.

Recent studies by Kozinet et al. (2008) and Schau et al. (2009) demonstrate the process of how consumers learn from collective community. Brand warriors provide an additional perspective of value creation by showing how experienced consumers teach other members about the code of consumption as a way to deal with the negative posts within the brand communities. This is another way in which cultural capital is formed and accumulated within the TIA community. Like creative posters, brand warriors are found in the higher rankings rather than the lower rankings because they accumulate experience and the LFC spirit by participating in the TIA community.

On the other hand, these higher social structure members have a ‘High Culture Capital’ (HCC) which allows them to perform distinct actions from the lower ranking members who have a ‘Low Culture Capital’ (LCC) (Holt, 1998). Cultural capital is formed through discussions, arguments, and interactions which teach members how to participate, post, or interact and behave as good LFC fans. In the other words, it is also provides guidelines on how TIA members should post. This also supports the idea of democratic communities (Newton, 1997; Paxton, 2002; Putnam, 1995) by co-creating and reproducing the meaning of the football fandom within the TIA community.

Research on football fandom suggests that culture capital influences the ways in which members socialise and form symbolic meanings within their particular groups (Richardson, 2004). Brand warriors co-create social capital as LFC Knights through expressive actions - preserving or containing resources (Lin, 1999: 34). LFC Knights also cooperate with Tradition Reminders by co-creating the cultural meaning of who LFC fans are, who they are not, and also who LFC opponents are. In this way, brand warriors help to maintain the unity of the community against its opponents (i.e. kneejerk or glory-hunter fans, the fans of rival clubs, the co-American owners, and The Sun newspaper etc.), strengthen the brand value of LFC, and avoid distorting its meanings. If creative posters help to co-create brand myths, then brand warriors are the shields that protect against the dilution of those myths.

6.9.2.4 Moderators

“Moderator” is a compulsory role performed by TIA Board Members only. This role is a volunteer duty performed by well-behaved and qualified TIA members in order to create a
“third place” – a new public where people can volunteer their time, expertise, and resources (Mathwick et al., 2008: 846) in order to mobilise the collective group (this will be discussed the social capital created by moderators in Chapter Eight). This role contributes to the knowledge of how consumers work within the online community.

Mathwick et al. (2008) have noted that social capital is the outcome of social networks whose members share a sense of duty to actively shape the future of their community. The TIA community with the fully control by membership create the democratic community by promoting the collaborative effort to shape their community. Moreover, it also provides symbolically solidity of the football supporters to the club.

Moderators gain respect as community committees who have the power to discipline all members. Because the TIA community is managed by beneficiaries of football fandom, moderators are members who gain social and symbolic capital from the community which grant them rights to control and manage the community. However, this social capital is formed through a democratic discussion which allows all members to share their opinions about developing community rules. Importantly, this social capital also helps to increase the human capital of individual members. Individual members can gain and accumulate human capital through the interaction process (Burt, 1997).

Hence, according to value co-creation debates within the collective consumer group, individual members employ their human capital in order to interact within the social network and also in order to gain and accumulate the social resources, social capital, culture and symbolic capital. The social capital produced by this process is both an embedded resource (the co-consuming group’s operant resources (Lin, 1999)) and the opportunity to access the social resources (Burt, 1997). Moreover, due to the recursive relationship between social capital and culture capital (Coleman, 1988; Holt, 2008), individuals also employ social resources to co-create and reproduce symbolic meanings for their interactions which support their ideas about who they are and how they socialise.

The findings of this chapter lend support to Kozinets’ (1999) and Mathwick et al.’s (2008) arguments about the different ways in which participants contribute to the interaction process by demonstrating the different ways in which participants in different social structures co-create value or social resources.

Importantly, value co-creation is a continuous process in which people employ their human capital, and network resources to continually participate, discuss, and argue. This is a process
of value co-creation which may result differently in each participant. The value co-creation process will be discussed further in Chapter Seven and the forms of capital in Chapter Eight.
CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS – VALUE CO-CREATION

PROCESS OF THE COLLECTIVE GROUP

7.1 INTRODUCTION

S-D logic offers a new perspective on service by viewing it as the fundamental basis of exchange. It does this by emphasising how skills and knowledge provide benefits to other parties (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a; 2008a). It is a way of thinking about marketing in terms of ‘market with’ rather than ‘market to’, specifically by focusing on the process of value creation as it occurs between companies and consumers. This dissertation also employs CCT to understand value creation process of consumer-to-consumer community whereby interaction plays an important role in the achievement of this process. This interaction involves the combination of resource integrators (Lusch and Vargo, 2006c). Resource integrators can be companies, consumers, organisations, nations, or anything else that can employ its resources to co-create value.

To understand value creation process, we need to understand how resource integrators bring resources into the service provision process (especially consumers who are influenced by brand communities). Thus, the co-creation of value, which has been recently viewed as an emerging paradigm (Cova and Dalli, 2009; Zwick et al., 2008; Phalalad and Ramaswamy, 2004a, b; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a), is the core purpose and central process of economic exchange. Moreover, with the emergence of CCT, marketing scholars are becoming increasingly focused on the active roles played by consumers in brand communities by viewing them as co-creators of value (Arnould et al., 2006) or ‘working consumers’ in Cova’s and Dalli’s (2009) words. By this account, the TIA community acts as a resource integrator and plays the most crucial role in the resourcing process (resource creation, resource integration and resistance removal). This kind of resource integrator is formed by a group of consumers who gather around the LFC brand.

The hermeneutical framework of interpretation provides an opportunity of moving back-and-forth between empirical data of TIA members and theories: S-D logic and CCT (Thompson,
The social structures and the roles of members were brought into an additional level of analysis in order to consider how individual consumers negotiate and interact within brand community. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the process of value co-creation within the collective group in order to show how individual consumers negotiate and interact within co-consuming groups and how individual consumers transform through the value creation process. It was noted in Chapter Six that all TIA members (the LFC brand community) can co-create value, but in different ways as shown in Table 7.1. Therefore, this chapter will employ empirical data mentioned in Chapter Six to make understanding of value creation.

Table 7.1: TIA Social Structures and the Roles of TIA Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Structure</th>
<th>The Roles of TIA Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIA Board Members</td>
<td>Reactive Posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Legends</td>
<td>Creative Posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA First Teams</td>
<td>Brand Warriors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Sub-Benches</td>
<td>LFC Knights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Reserve Teams</td>
<td>Tradition Reminders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA Youth Teams</td>
<td>Moderators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIA New Signings</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sheriff</td>
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In the following sections, the resourcing process (Lusch et al., 2008) is adapted in order to show how co-consuming groups’ social resources are co-created by individuals who dedicate skills and knowledge to the group. Following this, collaborative networks within brand communities are discussed in order to demonstrate the value creation process. Finally, a 2x2 matrix of the value co-creation process is proposed in order to demonstrate how consumers’ social interactions within co-consuming groups enable them to co-create value.

7.2 RESOURCE CREATION WITHIN BRAND COMMUNITY

This section begins by discussing resource creation within brand community in order to understand the primary resources which TIA members bring into the interaction process. According to FP6, the consumer is always a co-creator of value; this implies that value creation is an interaction (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a: 7).

In order to understand how consumers co-create value, the processes, resources, and relationships within the TIA community were found in the empirical data, mentioned in Chapter Six, as resource creation. The TIA community is a good example of value creation.
within the online brand community in which members employ consumption objects (LFC fandom) in order to negotiate between their selves and social life. TIA members play the four important roles in the value co-creation process – moderator, creative poster, brand warrior and reactive poster (see also Table 7.1). Their social interactions mentioned in Chapter Six provide our understanding of value creation process.

Figure 7.1 depicts a triangle of value within S-D logic; this shows how the process, resources, and relationship within the relevant online brand community (the TIA community) are balanced in the creation of value. These three components are interdependence and no one dominates others.

**Figure 7.1:** Triangle of Value Co-Creation within the Online Brand Community

![Triangle of Value Co-Creation within the Online Brand Community](image)

### 7.2.1 Process

This dissertation has focused on value creation by investigating the interaction process within collaborated network of consumers or an online brand community, TIA. As mentioned in Chapter Six, creative posters and brand warriors play an important role in co-creating of social resources through the interaction process. Figure 7.2 illustrates how resources are created within the process by the individual members of brand community interacting with one another; they each bring resources into the process which they use to create social interactions.

It was noted in Chapter Six that TIA members play important roles as providers and beneficiaries within the value co-creation process. As providers, they participate at the social level by employing their knowledge, experiences, and information to co-create and construct social resources (social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital). TIA members
accumulate the community’s knowledge, experiences, and information by continually interacting with other TIA members.

**Figure 7.2: Value Co-Creation Process in Brand Community**

At the individual level, each member participates in flows of experiences with other members for their own sake (reactive posters). In contrast at the social level, some members (proactive posters) try to use their social knowledge to educate less experienced members about the traditions and “way” of the TIA community. Both roles (reactive and proactive posters) are compromised between the social and individual level by moderators. They play an important role in managing and executing community rules in order to monitor and regulate discipline within the group. Additionally, moderators also create opportunities for fellow members to participate and co-create social resources.

### 7.2.2 Resources

Much like the process of value creation as it occurs between companies and consumers, value co-creation between consumers in the TIA community is also a triadic relationship (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). This network of collaboration focuses on resources, namely operand resources. These resources are knowledge, experience, and information within the TIA community which can be defined as ‘service’ or applied resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2008b) which TIA members bring into the interaction process in order to co-create benefits (value). The collective group uses these resources to activate or act upon an individual member’s operand resources (*i.e.* individuals’ knowledge, experience, and information).

Although in S-D logic operand resources are tangible, static, or inert (Lusch *et al.*, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a), in the TIA community individuals’ resources can be viewed as operand resources because they need to be activated or acted upon by the operant resources of
the community: its knowledge, experience, and information (see also brand warrior discussion in p.134). The collective group employs operant resources in order to shape the ways in which its individual members participate in it (see also Figure 7.2).

Within this process, new resources are synthesised and co-created through the interaction process. These resources, which are accumulated and co-created through collective interactions, are social resources (social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital; these resources will be explained in more depth in Chapter Eight. As shown in the right-hand side of Figure 7.2, individuals employ their operand resources (self resources: e.g. knowledge, experience, information, perception) to interact with their fellow group members for the purposes of accumulating and creating their own resources – human capital. This process is a perpetual cycle because intangible or operant resources are unique and continuously renewed through the interaction process. Thus, each participant in the value co-creation process needs other components of value co-creation (process and relationship) in order to synthesise resources which create benefits for all entities.

7.2.3 Relationship

In Chapter Six it was stated that individual members of the TIA community employ their resources (human capital) in order to interact with other TIA members who have different resources to them. TIA members participate in the TIA community in order to embed themselves as parts of the community or to form relationships with other members through reactive posts. As seen from reactive poster discussion, less experienced and experienced members have participated in the flows of experience through different creative activities e.g. prediction of the line-up players before the game, the 4-word game and non-LFC related discussions. On the one hand, these activities are employed to satisfy their hedonistic and experience within the community. On the other hand, these activities help members bond their relationship with the fellow members and also engage with the TIA community. This is similar to the way that one has moved in one community. Through the interaction with other community members, he/she can create the engagement and relationship with the community and also the neighbours.

During this process, TIA members accumulate knowledge, experience and information from the TIA community, and form ties with their fellow members. The more resources that TIA members accumulate and the more they interact with each other, the stronger the bonds will be that form between them (see reactive posters’ posts in p.117). This relationship plays a crucial role as a social boundary or glue that binds members of the group together; in this
way, they are able to create a secondary community which supplements whatever offline communities they belong to in the world.

These three perspectives shed light on the co-relations and interdependences between the three components of value co-creation in the TIA community. To complete the interaction process, the co-consuming group requires both its operant resources and a good set of relationships between its members who embed themselves with the culture and traditions of the community. In the other words, to continually create resources, collective groups require networks of collaboration in which members interact with each other by discussing, arguing, and sharing. The correlation among these components will be employed to demonstrate the value co-creation process through the collaborated network of individual consumers.

7.3 BRAND COMMUNITY: VALUE CREATION PROCESS OF AN INDEPENDENT RESOURCE INTEGRATOR

Viewed as a kind of resource integrators, the TIA community does not only play a crucial role as an independent resource integrator; all participants within it can co-create value through the collaborative networks. However, by employing CCT, the TIA community is not absolutely an independent community or resource integrator because TIA members have employed marketplace materials *e.g.* LFC brand, LFC players, LFC jerseys, LFC sponsors or LFC issues into the interaction process. At this point, the TIA community acts as a resource integrator by bringing together individuals’ competencies of its members and allowing them to use these to interact with each other.

Specially, the collaboration and co-creation within the TIA community can be considered as the independent resource integrator because its process can be done within its community without interdependence of other resource integrators even members have brought marketplace objects into the process. Moreover, they are the one who assign value or meaning into the objects and employ them to co-construct the social interaction. In the other words, individual TIA members can act both as a provider and beneficiary to co-create value with other members within TIA through the interaction between subjects and subjects. They individually post creative threads by sharing knowledge, information, experience and also passion (see also creative poster and brand warrior discussions in Chapter Six) within the TIA community which can provoke arguments or discussions with other members who act as
beneficiaries. Some beneficiaries can adopt the role of provider by providing knowledge, information, or well-analysed posts to the discussion.

As a result of this process, members from other resource integrators cannot access discussions or arguments, or even access the TIA community as members, because they first need to embed themselves with the social resources of the community in order to know how to post or participate in it. Some kneejerk arguments in Chapter Six are the examples of these out-group members. TIA members and moderators are able to prove their membership through interaction, whereas members who post these kneejerk or non-engaged threads will be warned or banned (see Moderator discussion in p.127). This helps to demonstrate that the co-consuming group is an independent resource integrator.

7.3.1 The Value Co-Creation Process in Brand Community: Emerging Themes

Figure 7.3 represents the brand community as an independent resource integrator within the service provision process by demonstrating how TIA members can co-create value. This is expressed by FP9: “all social and economic actors are resource integrators” (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a: 7). This resource integrator can be found in families or collective groups in which it requires the relational context of individuals and individuals; this is described by Gummesson (2006) as a many-to-many relationship. Individuals within this resource integrator form bonds with each other through interactions which requires all three aspects (relationship, resources and process) mentioned in the value co-creation triangle. These aspects and individual’s discussions have been employed to understand value creation process as shown in Figure 7.3 that individuals co-create value within the network of collaboration by engaging, educating, and enriching.

7.3.1.1 Engaging

Engaging is fundamental to the co-creation of value in brand communities, especially the TIA community, whereby individuals bond with the community in order to be a part of it. It is a way in which members use their resources to bond with other members of the TIA community. At the individual level, members contribute their commitment in time and resources to the TIA community by participating and interacting with their fellow members. As mentioned in TIA Legend discussion (p.130) between DEVGRU and Roual Duke, it is one example of how members commit to the TIA community. Through this basic means of participation, TIA members join reactive posts and co-construct the flow of experience by generating or initiating long conversations with their fellow members.
It was noted in Chapter Six that the more highly committed members of TIA tend to be more experienced and creative posters; providers who always contribute knowledge, information and experience to the community. In order to commit themselves to the community, members need to spend their time and resources to post, argue or support threads and thus embody themselves with the LFC and TIA spirit and the community code of conduct. One example from Gerrard4life (see also page 145) shows the commitment and dedication of a TIA member in searching and sorting information before sharing to the fellow members. The commitment also helps members to gain experiences through discussions and participation with their fellow members.

To interact within this process, members need to form a relationship with the community and its members by making themselves more familiar within the community and to its members.
Highly committed members contribute to the relational context which forms strong bonds relationship and a community of practice – an online community where members participate to share knowledge and passion (Wenger and Synder, 2000).

It was shown in Chapter Six (see also TIA Board Member discussion, page 118) that the more experienced TIA members in the higher social structures discuss non-football related topics such as music, films, politics, family, jobs, holidays, personal life, cars, and so forth. These interactions in non-football related topics help bond strong relationship with the fellow members. Moreover, TIA members also engage with the fellow members and the community by participating in the flows of experience (see also page 119) or the 4-word game (see also page139).

Engaged members who are highly committed to the community and maintain strong relationships within it tend to be regular members who immerse themselves in discussions with their fellow members. In this way, TIA members co-construct a consciousness of kind through a triadic relationship between other members, the community, and LFC (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). This relationship is the crucial basis for further interactions within the TIA community because it constructs a sense of “we-ness” within the community.

7.3.1.2 Educating

Co-consuming groups are formed by strangers who have never met each other through the reciprocity context. In this context, information resources play an important role in attracting members to the community and to participate in it (as found in the visual P3 community: Mathwick et al., 2008). The information resources within the TIA community are knowledge about LFC, players, competitors, tournaments, history, statistics, news, culture, the TIA community, and so forth. Both long-time members and fresh members employ these resources to socialise within the TIA community.

There are many conflicts between more experienced and less experienced members which are provoked by the latter [less experienced members] posting incorrect or nonsense information. Because of the reciprocal nature of the online community, experienced members try to negotiate between longterm members and fresh members through an educating process which involves the sharing of resources (knowledge, information, and experience) in order to endow all members with the TIA and LFC culture and spirit. In the following post, an experienced member explains the educational process:
“The point with THIS forum is that NO ONE knows who the other members are, what they look like, how old they are. We all start from ZERO when we join… ME? I came to this site as a newbie and knew no one here… if I can remind younger fans of the work of Shanks and Paisley and the traditional meaning of being a Liverpool fan, then I will be consider my time not wasted… because whatever we argue about… We'll never walk alone.” (Geebo, 12/25/07, TIA Caretaker)

Geebo, as a TIA Caretaker, calmly explains to other members that all members begin on TIA from zero, and gradually accumulate knowledge and experience by participating in the community. He also mentions the worth of sharing LFC stories or the club’s history to newbie members because he believes that this is a way of maintaining the LFC YNWA tradition. There are no restrictions on LFC fans who wish to participate in the community (they can be children or younger supporters, or global supporters). More experienced members would like to provide them with opportunities to learn about the LFC way and culture. The more knowledge and traditions they learn, the more they embed themselves in the LFC and the TIA community.

Educating is a way of negotiating between more experienced and less experienced members in order to help the latter participate more smoothly in the TIA community. This is similar to how offline communities cultivate younger members by educating them about their traditions and culture. However, the TIA community is different from offline communities in the blood-relationship which relates to personal respect within the community. The TIA community is an independent online community run by volunteers who are LFC fans whose members are free to come and go. Fortunately, longterm TIA members co-construct a sense of ‘sportsmanship’ within the community which encourages its members to open their minds to different opinions, even from the lower ranking members, as can be seen from the following post by Geebo:

“…If people don’t like your views you have to accept that and think about why. You can draw the conclusion your views are a bit extreme compared to the majority, but, to say everybody is wrong and I am right …is NOT the right conclusion!!!… I had to accept the longer term members and respected their views. I didn’t provoke them even if I thought they were wrong, but, I did try and argue…” (Geebo, 12/25/07, TIA Caretaker)

This example demonstrates the freedom of members to share their views within the TIA community by mentioning the case of the judgement toward discussions and arguments which are opinions, thus, there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. TIA members accept the sportsmanship or spirit of TIA members by accepting their points of views or arguments.
With the atmosphere of sportsmanship, the lower ranking members can argue with higher ranking members if they have the stronger reason or information. The TIA ranking system plays the same role as companies’ value propositions in as much as it purposes how members can contribute to the community (although it cannot assure whether they can provide contributions or benefits – see Chapter Six); however, it does not determine which members’ views are right and wrong.

Within this process, experienced members employ the social resources (social capital, culture capital and symbolic capital), which they accumulate by interacting in the community, to co-instruct other members (newbie and more experienced members). In each interaction, members do not only educate other members; they also learn by sharing, discussing or arguing, and co-develop the community’s resources continually. This process institutionalises all members in the same way – the TIA way, both directly and indirectly.

Direct education can be seen from Brand Warriors (see also Chapter Six) who directly argue against non-sense or kneejerk posts. These arguments also instruct other members about the LFC and TIA way which encourages them to engage with one another in order to find solutions about arguments between members and how LFC and TIA traditions help to resolve these. Meanwhile indirect education is when experienced members unintentionally educate less experienced members by discussing or arguing within the community through creative posts – posts that are rich in information, statistics, history, knowledge, and so forth. This process reflects the continuous process of reciprocity whereby the resources pertaining to the group and its members are increased and a strong relationship is formed among them.

7.3.1.3 Enriching

To the extent that they belong to an independent resource integrator, TIA members act as providers and beneficiaries by contributing to a continual process of value co-creation. Vargo and Lusch have expressed this by modifying their original FP4 (see also Vargo and Lusch, 2004a) (i.e. replacing ‘knowledge and skills’ with operant resources) to read: “[o]perant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage” (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a: 6). In this way, they highlighted the importance of resources (operant resources) which participants use to co-create benefits for each other.

Operant resources employed in the interaction process can contribute an alternative way of value co-creation as the co-learning process (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006). In this process, the
process of renewal knowledge is generated by the collective resources which members can learn, share, and enrich, continually.

As mentioned in Chapter Six, value or benefit does not emerge when one member posts a thread in a forum. It needs an interaction process to activate the value co-creation process whereby other members read, discuss, and argue with other members on the thread in order to extend their knowledge, information, or experiences. Moreover, these resources are not only limited football or LFC; they may include other issues.

For example in regard to LFC’s proposed Asian Tour in July 2009, one TIA member expressed concerns about the security of players and staff during the proposed Asian Tour due to warnings from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office about the threat terrorism in some Asian countries. Many British LFC fans were panic about this concern and complain the club for overlooking players’ safety. It led to the controversial discussions among TIA members. The different Asian members and also domestic members’ arguments are extended to the different issues such as Politics in Thailand or India, terrorism in USA or UK, hotspots in Thailand or other Asian countries, increasing a number of LFC fans in Asia or North America, etc.

Each member participating in this thread provides strong reasons, information, and statistics to support their argument. In this process, the discussion plays an important role in the extension of resources continually. Extended resources can be found in different threads which have been open for a long time: e.g. ‘who would you buy’ for discussing about new prospect players (posted on 10/27/07 with 159,716 views and 4,322 replies in April 2009), ‘Take Over Talk Thread v.4: Kuwaitis to take over?’ for discussing take-over rumours (posted on 01/22/09 with 45,240 views and 804 replies in April 2009), and so forth.

Nevertheless, extended resources also require open-mindedness from all members, especially LFC’s local members because English football has been dominated by local fans since the formation of the football league in 1888 (Buraimo et al., 2006). The process requires compromise between local members (including local Liverpudlians and domestic English members) and global members (who are spread as widely as North America, Thailand, Singapore, China, Brazil, Poland, Finland, Norway, Japan, etc).

Fortunately, the TIA community is a group of compromisers who are highly loyal local LFC fans with a strong local identity (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b). They are similar to “hardcorers” in that they are local and loyal to LFC, but unlike this group they are open to
non-local fans. Compromisers understand the domination of globalisation and the influx of global fans into the LFC community (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b). Therefore, they believe that everyone can support LFC, but on the condition that they need to embrace the local culture and traditions of the club. This unites all members under the umbrella of the Liver bird crest (an LFC logo) so that all members are welcome to participate in the TIA community without any restrictions on their nationality, religion, or location.

The compromise can be seen from brand warriors or tradition reminders. These are experienced members who always remind other members about LFC and TIA traditions and the spirit of LFC fans. In this way, they reinforce the unity of LFC fans and TIA members. For example, one local Liverpool City member claimed that he is a local person who has supported LFC for 25 years; therefore, he should have more privileges to provide opinions or discussions on LFC than global fan who live far away from Liverpool and do not often attend matches. A tradition reminder steps in to remind this person that there are no restrictions on the unity of LFC fans (see also page 142). This tradition reminder reminds his/her fellow members that the honour of LFC fans belongs to the community rather than to specific groups of fans; this has been labelled ‘we-intentions’ (Bagozzi and Dholokia, 2006). Therefore, compromise can create opportunities for different kinds of member to discuss and participate in the TIA community. It does not matter who they are or where they come from; what counts the most is their love for LFC and the extent to which they are willing to be part of the TIA community.

This continuous learning process involves the merging of knowledge through discussions whereby participants try to find solutions to particular circumstances. From the example of the Asian Tour thread, members were conversing in order to find solutions to whether LFC should go on tour in Asia. Different members participated on the thread by making different arguments for or against the tour. Each member comes up with their own resources which are polished through the discussion process. In this case, members participated in the debate by adding additional knowledge or information to support their arguments until a solution was found, following which new resources emerged. At this point, members obtained these new resources, and added more knowledge or information to the discussion, cyclically.

It is worth noting that resources from the interaction process within the TIA community are one of the consumers’ operant resources which they bring into the service provision process. In this study, rather than investigating what value is, the concept of value as context (Vargo et al., 2008) has been used in this dissertation, which means the set of consumer perceptions
which may be unique for different consumers, for the purposes of understanding the value co-creation process. Thus, understanding the resourcing process is the appropriate way to understand how value is co-created by consumers because resources are entities which consumers use to co-create benefits for each other.

7.4 SHIFTING THE POSITION OF INDIVIDUAL TIA MEMBERS WITHIN THE BRAND COMMUNITY

As mentioned earlier, this chapter is purposed to understand how individual consumers transform through the value creation process. The social interactions within the different social structures in Chapter Six have been unfolded and revisited in order to understand the members’ movement within the TIA community. It was mentioned in Chapter Six that TIA members can be upgraded to the higher social structures by making required numbers of minimum posts for each ranking. They can accumulate knowledge, experience, and information from their social interaction.

As mentioned in Chapter Six, the social structures or rankings do not ensure that members become proactive posters who always provide knowledge, information, and experiences with their posts. TIA members tend to be judged how experienced members are by the quality of their posts. Lower ranking members can provide high quality posts by contributing knowledge, information, analysis, statistics, and experiences in the same ways as higher ranking members. This is because the lower ranking members can quickly form a strong relationship with the TIA community and accumulate collective resources for it.

Moreover, these members are more committed and spend more of their time participating with their fellow members (as can be seen from fresh members in the high social structures) as seen from creative poster discussions in page 141. The details and quality of posts can exhibit members’ positions within the community. This identification is displayed in Figure 7.4, in which members’ interactions represent their positions in the TIA community in two ways – engagement (commitment, relationship) and resource intensity (discussion issue, and knowledge). These dimensions are arranged in 2x2 matrixes so that they reflect the four typologies of members’ positions within the TIA community.

In Figure 7.4, an additional axis, resource intensity (knowledge and discussion issues) has been added to Kozinets’s (1999) Types of Virtual Community of Consumption member by placing online community members into four categories: Arrival, Player, Resident, and
Stranger. Figure 7.4 shows the four dimensions of value co-creation as a 2x2 matrix (resource intensity: knowledge and discussion issues, and level of engagement: relationship and commitment) in order to illustrate how members upgrade their status in the TIA community. These four typologies provide a chance to trace the historical movements of TIA members and the strategies that individual members pursue in order to be part of the group or community.

Figure 7.4: A Typology of Members’ Positions in the Brand Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Engagement</th>
<th>High Resource Intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stranger:</td>
<td>Immigrated from another community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community members but rarely visit and participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deciding to permanent move or staying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrival:</td>
<td>New comers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-regular and knowing nothing about the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested only football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sure to stay or leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident:</td>
<td>Most regular and commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embeded strong relationship with the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formed the secondary community as the everyday of life community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player:</td>
<td>More regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decide to stay and increase more commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embeding with the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mainly interested in football</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.4.1 Arrivals

The ‘Arrival’ category is the starting point for members in the community; it is the bottom tier position characterised by low resource intensity and low engagement. Arrivals are newcomers and non-regular members who have so far not managed to embed themselves with the community because they have a low level of commitment to it. They seem to be ‘anonymous’ within the community. Most of them are lower ranking members and reactive posters who are mainly interested in football and especially LFC (see also TIA New Signing discussion, page 157).

It can be seen from their participation that arrivals tend to make short posts or replies which are lacking in knowledge or information to support them. However, it was stated in Chapter Six that new members of “arrivals” are able to co-create value by joining the flows of experience which make the TIA community alive and up-to-date, although they cannot contribute resources or knowledge. The arrivals are similar to Kozinets (1999)’s ‘tourists’ who tend to participate by making causal posts. Because they have not embedded themselves
in the community, they do not know how to participate, and may make kneejerk or non-sense posts which break the community rules. If they break community rules then arrivals are faced with the choice of either continuing their membership or leaving the community.

If they decide to stay, then arrivals need to increase their commitment to the community in order to form a strong relationship with the community. It is worth noting that members are not only be able to tie a strong relationship with the community by interacting with its members; they can also accumulate collective resources from the community in order to upgrade their status within it.

7.4.2 Players

The next tier up from arrival is ‘Player’. Players are members who are highly engaged with the community but with low resource intensity; they are struggling to form a relationship with the community and to provide more commitment to it. At this stage, they upgrade from being ‘anonymous’ to ‘someone’ in the collective group. However, most of them are still newbie or fresh members who are gaining and accumulating more knowledge and experience through interactions. Although they can expand their discussion issues to non-football related topics like music, religion, other sports, etc., their main discussion issues are still football and LFC. This is because they have not completely embedded themselves in the TIA community and contributed to the co-construction of a secondary community with their fellow members. Examples of player position can be seen in TIA Subs-Bench discussion (page 144) and also TIA Reserve Team discussion (page 148). Many members in both social structures have been promoted to the higher social structures in short time because they have contributed more commitment both time and resources into the TIA community.

Players are similar to Kozinets (1999)’s minglers who tend to concentrate on the consumption objects. However, in the context of value co-creation, players are considered from the resource perspective by which they do not have enough collective resources or knowledge to provide significant contributions to the community. Thus, players have to gain and accumulate knowledge and social resources in order to upgrade to another category – the highest position within the TIA community.

7.4.3 Residents

‘Resident’ is a mature position within the TIA community. Residents strongly embed themselves in the community with their fellow members; they are highly engaged in the community and have a high resource intensity. They can form a strong relationship with the
community and co-construct a secondary community within it. They are similar to Kozinets (1999)’s ‘insiders’ who have strong relationships with whatever communities’ they belong to. Thus, their discussion issues are not limited to football or LFC; they are able to discuss non-football related topics or issues. Residents tend to be well-recognised, regular, and committed members of the TIA community. Therefore, they are ‘the Stars’ of the community to whom other members aspire. We can see the examples of members in this position from TIA Board Member discussion (page 116), TIA Legend discussion (page 130) and TIA First Team discussion (page 138). These are discussions among more experienced members who play the roles of creative posters and brand warriors.

It was noted in Chapter Six that membership duration is not the only factor determining which members become residents. The extents to which members are engaged or embodied in the TIA community, including their experience, knowledge, and understanding of LFC and the TIA community, are also factors. In this position, there is a mixture of long-time and fresh members who can settle as the most experienced members within the TIA community. As the highest status members of the community, they always share knowledge, information, and experiences to other members in order to educate and enrich them through the interaction process. Members can become residents by socialising and conversing; however they need participate regularly in the life of the community in order to co-construct its solidarity and hold their status as residents.

7.4.4 Strangers

The final tier in the TIA community are the ‘Strangers’; these are people who used to be regular and experienced members. They become strangers or ‘Nobodies’ with high resource intensity but low engagement, even though they participate in different issues, because they do not participate often enough. Interestingly, strangers can be both engaged members and fresh members. As engaged members, they have a strong relationship with the TIA community and plenty of knowledge about LFC, the football world, and between LFC and the football world. However, they rarely visit and participate in the community; therefore, their relationship with the community gradually loosens. As found in TIA New Signing discussion (see also page 157), 2Red, an experienced member, rarely posts in the TIA community even he has regularly visited the community. In this case, he can accumulate knowledge and experience from lurking within the community.

As fresh members, they are mature members who already have knowledge from other communities, but have immigrated to the TIA community. Therefore, they cannot embed
themself in the community or with their fellow members. If their relationship is loose then it is clear that they are not committed. Strangers may be former residents who have lost their connection with the community even though they are still recognised by some community members.

This is similar to residents of one community who have immigrated to another in the real world. Although they occasionally return to visit their friends and families, they tend to be strangers to other community members who have not met them before. As a stranger, they need to decide whether to stay in or resign from the community. By staying, they may choose to be strangers or regain their former position as residents. To regain their position, they need to become more committed to the community by regularly interacting with its members in order to embed themselves in it again.

From the four typologies mentioned above, there are two different ways in which community members may change their status within the community. In general, TIA members will progress from the bottom tier – (arrival) to the top tier (resident). TIA members can stay in the top tier as long as they maintain a strong relationship with, and stay highly committed to the community. If they let this slip then they will become the strangers. Alternatively, members who have developed high resource intensity, knowledge, and information in other communities can progress from being strangers to residents by participating in the community as experienced members. They can upgrade to resident status once they have formed a bond with the community by regularly participating in it.

7.4.5 Five Strategies of Transformation within the TIA Community

As mentioned above, individual members can transform within the TIA community through the four positions: arrival, player, resident and stranger. Figure 7.4 shows the route of dynamic movement of TIA members classified by resource intensity and engagement. Therefore, rather than only providing the route of transformation, the strategies which individual members have employed for upgrading into the next position need to be elaborated. There are five strategies that members can use to upgrade their status in the TIA community:

1. **Bonding.** Arrivals and strangers use this strategy to form a strong relationship with the community. It involves the regular posting and participation in the community in order to make themselves be recognised by other members (see also 7.2.3 Relationship, page 174). In the other words, bonding is a process of engagement which individual members employ to embody with the community. Arrivals can
employ the bonding strategy in order to upgrade to player status, while the strangers can use it to upgrade themselves to resident status.

2. **Boosting.** Players use this strategy to upgrade themselves to resident status by gaining and accumulating collective knowledge and experiences. To boost themselves, players will attain these resources by interacting with their fellow members. The more they interact, the more knowledge they can obtain. However, their interactions should extend to non-football related issues of discussions in order to enrich their individual resources, which they can then employ to co-create collective resources with their fellow members.

3. **Holding.** This strategy can be used by members to maintain their position in the community. It involves steady participation in the community. This strategy is to keep the level of participation for keeping the current status. Although it can be used by all members, it is mostly used by residents who need to maintain the level of their relationship and commitment to the community. This strategy may be meant to do nothing in other positions, especially in lower status position; however, it is necessary for residents who need to regularly participate in discussions in order to maintain their status.

4. **Refreshing.** Strangers who have been downgraded from resident status due to a lack of commitment or regular participation in the community need to refresh their position by increasing their commitment to the community. They need to reform a bond with the community by becoming more regular and recognised members. Therefore, they need to regularly participate in community discussions.

5. **Resigning.** When members lack of commitment to the TIA community, they face two choices: staying or leaving. Some members choose to resign from the community.

Figure 7.4 shows that the two basic binaries of the social interaction, resource intensity (knowledge and discussion issues) and engagement (relationship and commitment), can be viewed through the four aspects of value co-creation which individuals can pursue within the collective group: knowledge, discussion issues, relationship, and commitment.

In order to socialise, individual members need to adapt their own strategy for upgrading themselves in the contexts of resources and relationship. These strategies are intended by group members to achieve a series of objectives or ‘interaction modes’ – recreational mode,
informational mode, relational mode, and transformational mode (Kozinets, 1999). Therefore, it would be concluded that the TIA community is not merely an informative group (a group which members are bound relationship to solve the problems of product usages or personal problems); but it likes members’ secondary community where members have strong emotional engagement as they do in their offline community.

7.5 DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this chapter confirm that consumers within the collective groups can co-create value with other consumers through the interdependencies of process, resources, and relationship. These three components provide evidence for Warde’s notion of the theory of practice – understanding, procedures, and engagement (Warde, 2005). It is worth noting that the value co-creation process can be explained by the theory of practice, and especially the community of practice (Mathwick et al., 2008; Wasko and Faraj, 2005; Wenger and Snyder, 2000). This chapter demonstrates how consumers engage in process of value co-creation by using their resources and emotional attachments to an online brand community. In order to co-create value, individuals need to engage in the interaction process; this includes bonding themselves with the community and its members, long-life learning and embodiment with the community’s culture, and cyclically extending resources by contributing to it.

Much like a P3 community (Mathwick et al., 2008), the TIA community can be classified within the domain of communities of practice (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991). However, given differences in its communication channels, network size, access and participation, it is perhaps better classified as an electronic network of practice (Wasko, Faraj, and Teigland, 2004).

Although this theory is typically used in an organisational context, this dissertation followed Mathwick et al.’s (2008) study by adapting the network of practice with consumers’ practices. These practices influence social and individual actions (Schatzki, 1996) through coordinated actions (requiring, doing, and saying) and performance for the existence of practice (Warde, 2005).

This chapter has examined the value co-creation process within the TIA community and found three components of practice in the ways in which TIA members’ interact with each other (see also Figure 7.1). The value co-creation process results from social practices within the online community which require doing and saying or action and dialogue. It is noteworthy
that the different roles played by TIA members (moderators, proactive posters, and reactive posters) have important effects on the balance of collective resources (knowledge, information, and experience) through all three components of practices – process (procedure), resources (understanding), and relationship (engagement).

### 7.5.1 The Value Co-Creation Process

The value co-creation process within the TIA community is the product of the collective interactions of its members. According to S-D logic, TIA acts as a source of value or resource integrator (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a). The resource integrator is essentially a platform for value co-creation whereby members can interact, participate, and converse with each other (Arvidsson, 2006; Blazevic and Lievens, 2008; Schau et al., 2009).

With the power of the computer-mediated community, process within the co-consuming group is not merely a one-to-one relationship; rather it is a many-to-many relationship (Gummesson, 2006) whereby individuals gradually engage in the community or ‘the social network of practices’ (Schau et al., 2009). Interaction within the network advances from one-to-many interactions (one way communication through email) to many-to-many interactions (multi-way communication in a computer-mediated environment). In this way, consumers are able to share information with companies or each other (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). The latter interaction is a bottom-up approach, whereby information resources are focused from a grassroots perspective (Kozinets et al., 2008).

Figure 7.5 shows that there are two main roles in the value co-creation process: provider and beneficiary. Within this process, some members are moderators and proactive posters who always play an important role as providers within the value co-creation process by sharing resources and other benefits to the community. Meanwhile, all members are reactive posters who act as beneficiaries (see Chapter Six) by contributing benefits to other members. Because value can be uniquely perceived by each beneficiary, the benefits from this process may be experiences of the social interaction, aggregated knowledge, or hedonistic emotions depending on the situation, person, issue, or time (Holbrook, 2006a; Vargo and Lusch, 2008a). This kind of value can be viewed as ‘play for fun’ by Holbrook (2006a). On the other hand, it is the collective value which members are co-creating of the social life by strengthening the relationship and engagement with other members and also community.

In order to negotiate between experienced and less experienced members, moderators and proactive members need to blend the primary resources of less experienced members with the
community’s operant resources (knowledge, information, and experience about LFC and the TIA community) in order to regulate these less experienced members and institutionalise them as parts of the community.

**Figure 7.5: The Cycle of the Value Co-Creation Process**

This process demonstrates the transformation of resources (the flow of resources: see straight arrow in Figure 7.5), and the dynamic role that each participant is able to play, either as a provider or beneficiary. In this process, there are two key entry points; those of less experienced members and more experienced members. Less experienced members (who may be found in members rankings, although most of them will be fresh members) access the social proximity offered by the TIA community, in which regard they act as beneficiaries. It is noteworthy that they can only act as beneficiaries because they lack experiences, knowledge, or information to share with other members; therefore, their value co-creation process is limited to the shaded circle shown in Figure 7.5. In contrast, more experienced members can enter the process as providers who give or share resources to members of the community. However, experienced members can also access the process as beneficiaries by reading and responding to threads for their own sake.

When providers share knowledge, information, or statistics, they become beneficiaries in as much as they gain benefits from the interaction (see also an example of beneficiary from Matt, see also page 119). Although they have more or better knowledge about resources or LFC and the community, they also receive benefits from the interaction such as experiences, socialisation, playful debates and conversations, etc. Thus, they can appear in the process either as providers by adding new resources or as beneficiaries by reading and responding to
threads. The flow of this process moves cyclically, depending on the roles of participants, and the contributions that they make to the community. The roles played by participants are similar to those of ‘bidirectional creators’ (Blazevic and Lievens, 2008), who act as passive and active consumers within company – consumer relationships.

It is noteworthy that beneficiaries can also provide value or benefits to the community through flows of experience and the movement of the community (the thread will be moved to the first item when members add posts to it). This is an evidence of community’s vitality (Schau et al., 2009). Individual members can increase their commitment to the community by participating in the parts of it where they can benefit the most (i.e. increasing their skills or knowledge); this has been described as the “evolvability” process (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004b). They act as providers by contributing new resources (knowledge, information, statistics, data, or well-analysed arguments) to the process (see black arrow in Figure 7.5).

As providers, both moderators and proactive posters engage in the collective consumer creativity practice which TIA members co-create through their social interactions (Kozinets et al., 2008). Importantly, the performance of this social interaction depends on whether members can embed themselves in the community.

7.5.2 Transforming of Individuals within Social Networks

In Figure 7.4 it extends Schau et al. (2009) by providing another perspective of value creation how individuals engage in the collective process. The findings of this chapter about the strategies used by individuals to pursue different positions within the TIA community, as shown in Figure 7.4, answer Kozinets (1999) and Mathwick et al. (2008) questions about how members of groups who are involved with them at the different levels can upgrade their status within them. In the other words, consumers have used the LFC fandom to create value by gaining ‘status’ or what Holbrook (2006a) classifies as ‘other-oriented active extrinsic value’.

Much like the members of virtual consumption communities described by Kozinets (1999), members’ positions within the TIA community go through four positions: arrivals, players, residents, and strangers. Resource intensity can be expressed as an additional axis which shows the typology of the online community members or their positions within the community. Moreover, Figure 7.4 also advances Kozinets’s (1999) ‘types of community members’- static position, by shedding light on the dynamic movements of individuals within the collective group.
These positions are pursued by individuals who belong together for the purposes of finding group solutions to problems or so that they can share their resources with the community. Thus, the TIA community acts as resource integrator (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a) or as a “creator of collective outcomes” (Cova and Dalli, 2009) by constructing a sense of ‘we-intentions’ (Bagozzi and Kholakia, 2006) or ‘we-ness’ (Mathwick et al., 2008) among its members. To achieve this goal (collective goal), members need to increase their own competences in order to upgrade their status within the community.

The value co-creation process within the TIA community is an example of a response to Hoffman’s and Novak’s (1996) call for a new marketing paradigm which addresses issues raised by the emergence of a new medium, the computer mediated environment (CME), or Information and Communication Technology, ICT (Kozinets et al., 2008). Kozinets et al. believe that this new medium requires a paradigm shift which can account for how groups of consumers who interact and bond as creative online collectives are able to co-create value.

S-D Logic has been used in this chapter to shed light on the process of value co-creation within a particular brand community, the TIA community. In S-D logic, brand community acts as an independent resource integrator because its members can interact with each other and pursue the network of practice within the community without having any connections to other resource integrators. The process derived from the TIA community supports the active role of consumers (as found in the CCT research area: Arnould et al., 2006).

Moreover, it supports many-to-many relationships (Gumnesson, 2006) whereby multiple group members are able to interact with each other and co-create value at the same time. It is worth noting that the evidence for many-to-many relationships supports the views that Vargo and Lusch put forward in their paper ‘Service-Dominant Logic: Continuing and Evolution’ (2008a). In this they argue that S-D logic is not only a dyadic relationship between companies and consumers, or among consumers; it also includes multi-valent relationships between consumers and consumers. Each consumer or member in the online community pursues two goals: individual goals (information, experientialism, social life, self identity), and collective goals (a sense of community, group identity, collective resources, brand experiences, oppositional brand community, brand legitimacy, etc.).

It is noteworthy that value co-creation also contributes to the changing of the ecosystem by increasing consumer empowerment through networks of collaboration (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008; Denegri-Knott et al., 2006; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004, Vargo and Lusch, 2004a).
The empowerment issue will be discussed more depth in Chapter Eight by employing the forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to make understanding of power, conflicts and capital.
CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDING – THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CO-CREATION, CAPITAL CONFIGURATIONS AND COMMUNITY POWER

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings in Chapters Six and Seven have demonstrated how individuals participate in the value co-creation process of brand community. This work shows how individuals employ their resources to participate and interact within the TIA community in order to achieve their life goals, individually and collectively. Through this process, individuals accumulate new knowledge, experiences, and information about LFC and the TIA community while also co-creating the collective resources of the TIA community.

It was noted in Chapter Four that capital represents resources that individuals or groups invest in social interactions with the expectation of profits in return; therefore, capital is viewed as a part of surplus value (Lin, 1999). The theory of capital has been used by many scholars to understand social relations in brand community: e.g. Lin (1999); Mathwick et al. (2008); Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998); Tsai and Ghoshal (1998). This study focuses on different forms of capital in the value co-creation process as it occurs within a particular brand community, the TIA community.

This chapter follows Avery’s study on Porsche brand community (2007) which examines an internal conflict within Porsche brand community between traditional Porsche owners and Porsche Cayenne SUV owners. In this context, social capital and cultural capital play an important role by institutionalising the two unique sub-groups of Porsche owners as one community. In contrast, although there are conflicts among the members of the TIA community due to unequal resources, these conflicts also resolves struggles over capital that contributes towards the development of the TIA habitats.

However, this can be viewed as a process through which dominant members have exercised their power within the community. This helps to extend our understanding of consumer power through both empowerment against the company and also consumer authority within the community. Therefore, this chapter demonstrates how the different forms of capital (social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital) emerge through the collective interactions of TIA members and how struggles over the forms of capital reproduce certain power
relationships under the LFC flag. In this way, how collective groups negotiate through social interaction to co-create value will be explored.

In order to understand the different forms of capital, Thompson’s (1997) hermeneutical framework is employed to understand the collective experiences of TIA members as a group, rather than as individual members. Moreover, additional data collection was conducted by sending questions through personal messages to the TIA community administrator in order to investigate how symbolic capital is formed.

Therefore, this chapter intends to demonstrate the influence of the different forms of capital (human capital, social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital) on the realisation of apparent unity among TIA members via the value co-creation process. It begins by tracing the processes by which the forms of capital emerge through conflicts among TIA members. These conflicts may take a number of forms; they may be between local and non-local fans, more and less experienced members, and members who play football and those who don’t. In the next section, the social capital of both instrumental and expressive actions is presented. Before examining how symbolic capital emerges within the TIA community, discussion will turn to how unequal resources and social capital influence the formation cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). It is worth noting that in contrast to Avery’s (2007) study, the forms of capital co-created by TIA members contribute to the solidarity of the brand community rather than provoking conflicts among sub-groups of the LFC brand community.

8.2 UNEQUAL RESOURCES: A CATALYST TO THE CONVERSION OF FORMS OF CAPITAL

This section will discuss how conflicts among TIA members lead to the redistribution of the forms of capital. Inequalities between the resources of TIA members can be a cause of conflicts among them; some members believe they should be more privileged than others. These inequalities influence TIA members to demonstrate the power they have over other members and this led to conflicts in the TIA community. It was identified that the most prominent conflicts are caused by inequalities between the resources of local and non-local members, more and less experienced members, and member who play football and those who do not.

These conflicts provoke TIA members to mobilize their social capital in instrumental and expressive actions; and this social capital allows TIA members to go on to form cultural
capital; and ultimately to generate a particular status dynamic in the group. As mentioned in Chapter Seven (see also page 181), these conflicts also lead to a continuous learning process which is co-created through open discussions and the open-mindedness of members (Pini, 2009) thereby providing them with opportunities to engage with each other in a constructive manner. Importantly (as was mentioned in Chapter Seven in regard to the process of enriching), the posts require discussions and arguments in order to synthesise knowledge from different members, because value co-creation cannot be processed by one party.

Synthesised knowledge is available as new resources within the community which members can access and employ to engage with particular threads. This is supported by the continuous practice on the TIA forum of moving threads that have been posted on most recently to the top of the list of threads (the age of the thread does not effect this process). Therefore it is concluded that different actors within the brand community have different levels of knowledge and resources which can be increased throughout their membership of the TIA community, but ultimately reproduces patterns of the dominant forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The following section will discuss the three most prominent kinds of conflict among TIA members and how provoke members into co-creating the forms of capital.

8.2.1 Conflict between Local and Non-Local Fans

Due to the globalisation and commercialisation of football, there is currently an influx of domestic and international LFC fans into the LFC fandom, especially on the TIA community. It was mentioned in Chapter Six (see page 141) that there is an ongoing conflict between local and non-local members of the TIA community. Local members are LFC fans who believe that they have more privileges than non-local members because they were born and live in Liverpool, regularly attend home games, and sometimes also away games. The following post is an example of a conflict between local and non-local members posted by a local member, LetsBuyTotti, who believes that local fans should have more privileges than non-local fans:

…You live in Malasia apparently and don't go to the games - fair enough - but I actually live in Liverpool and go to every single game so maybe my expectations - having been actually going to Anfield for well over 25 years - are different / higher to foreign supporters like yourself? … and I'll take my advice from someone who's actually been in the trophy room and not just seen it on internet… (LetsBuyTotti, 01/31/08, TIA Reserve Team member)

LetsBuyTotti, a TIA Reserve Team member, argues against a global fan in a discussion about LFC’s chances of winning the league title in the 2007-8 season. Non-local members are satisfied with any trophies when LFC had already lost the English Premier League trophy by
mid-season. In contrast, LetsBuyTotti argues that as a local person who has grown up in Liverpool, the league title is the most important. He is confident about his authenticity as a LFC fan, due to his long-term passion for attending LFC’s home matches and his acquaintance with somebody who has seen LFC’s trophy room. On the one hand, LetsBuyTotti’s post can be considered as a censure: he is attempting to dismiss the opinions of non-local fans by emphasising the ‘authenticity’ of local fans and the validity of their opinions. On the other hand, the local and non-local issue is one of the classic conflicts within the LFC fandom due to the long history of English football and the city of Liverpool itself (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2008b; see also King, 2000). These strong local identity fans are a minority numerically within the LFC fandom but they are more powerful than others because they born and grew up in Liverpool. Their relationship with LFC is beyond the relationship between consumer and brand; it is a long live marriage with strong passion. Therefore, LetsBuyTotti’s stance in assuming the higher privilege of a local LFC fan is a way of exercising his power, and securing dominance for the forms of capital possessed by local fans. In his perspective, this may right because the different resources provide him with the authority to say so. In other words, his apparent legitimacy gives him power to influence non-local LFC fans (Bourdieu, 1986; Rezabakhsh et al., 2006).

This post led to further arguments on fans’ qualifications, whereby both local and non-local members participated in order to find a solution and reduce tensions between local and non-local fans. In the other words, members employ certain ‘compromise’ strategies to reduce the overt demonstration of domination within the TIA and to provide individual members with the authority to participate within the TIA community. However, the struggle does not result in the equal distribution of power, but rather the formation of a collective habitus that shapes future strategies and beliefs about the community and the brand. The TIA habitus still reflects the forms of capital possessed by the dominant actors in the community. In other words, dominant actors may form ‘symbolic violence’ by widening the distinction among them (Bourdieu, 1989).

8.2.2 Conflict between More Experienced and Less Experienced Members

It was mentioned in Chapter Six (see also page 142) that less experienced members tend to complain or despair when LFC does not perform well. Experienced members brand these less experienced members kneejerk or glory-hunter fans. The following is an example of a kneejerk posts:
So f**king frustrating. I hate Dirk Kuyt, hope to god the man up and dies. How does he manage to stay playing for Liverpool, he is useless. Set pieces was dreadful, bout 15 corners and not once did we threaten. From the high of last week to this. We can't beat a team if they sit back and defend, not good enough to win premiership on the early evidence of this season. (jamsieboy86, 09/20/08, TIA New Signing)

So this newbie member, jamsieboy86, is a ‘kneejerk member’ who despairs at the loss of the English Premier League title by the second month of the 2008 – 09 season. He is a less experienced member who has been a LFC member since March 2008. He does not only abuse a player, Dirk Kuyt, but also the team. He is one of the less experienced members who have not yet embedded themselves within the TIA community because they do not know how to post or have not familiarised themselves with the rituals and traditions of the community; i.e. posting duplicate threads without looking around the community, dumping posts for the purposes of increasing their post numbers, ignoring community rules, abusing players, the club, and other members, and so forth. These actions are unacceptable within the LFC fandom and the TIA community. Social agents operate according to an implicit practical logic: in the TIA community, the practice of agents is dominated by experienced members and only through engaging with the cultural productions and symbolic systems of dominant agents do newbie members become accepted into the game (Bourdieu, 1977).

Discussions and arguments in this kind of conflict lead to the institutionalisation of the ‘Brand Warrior’ whereby more experienced members educate and share the rituals and traditions of LFC and TIA with less experienced and newbie members. The following post by Gerrard4life is an example of this process:

Wow... its really amazing what a single defeat can do ay? A week before this game we beat Chelsea and everything was great, we were finally ready to push for the title...Maybe the ACTUALL situation is the one we see when looking at the results, play and the table? We have had the best start to a Premier League campaign ever! We are joint top with Chelsea, who have started the season amazingly. We are joint top of our Champions League Group (compared to last year when we had 1 point at the same stage).

Have we been flawless? No, as a matter of fact we have plenty of areas where we can improve. Think about that, really think about it.... then think about how we have been the better team, or at least equal to every single team we have played so far this season, bar one ...All this put together with the fact that most of us said that all we wanted this season was to at least finally be challanging for the title puts things into perspective? So stop whinging and get behing the team again! Its how you respend to a loss that matters. Just look at Chelsea after losing to us. They have responded brilliantly. Support the lads so we can bounce back the same way! (Gerrard4life, 11/04/08, TIA Subs-Bench member)

So, Gerrard4life, one of the experienced members, plays important roles as brand warrior and creative poster. As a brand warrior, he reminds the fellow members about the tradition of LFC
fan by providing the comparative case of Chelsea FC whose fans always stay behind the team. Moreover, he also provides his analysis and the facts to share the reasons why LFC fans should stay behind the players. This example is different to Avery’s (2007) Porsche brand community in that the goal is brand unity, but the method of getting there is exert power through his dominant forms of capital so that less dominant actors alter their practices and conformity.

8.2.3 Conflict between Football-Playing and Non-Football-Playing Members

Another prominent conflict among members is between those members who have direct experience of playing football and those of who do not. Some members who are active players or who have played football in the past typically believe that they have greater privilege than other members to comment, discuss or argue about the players, LFC performances, or the manager’s tactics. They believe that, as football players, they have more embodied cultural capital: more knowledge and a better understanding of football than non- football players. The following posts are examples of conflicts concerning direct experiences of football:

…And what gives you the right to judge how good a player is or if he is up to the "Liverpool" standard. I am interested. Have you played football to a high level? Have you ever played a proper game of football? Or are you someone who thinks that because you pay to see a team you have the right to slate someone?... (redpower, 08/25/09, TIA Reserve Team member)

Again, I hate saying this but I just sometimes wonder...again and again, do many forum members play indoor football, or local league football of any nature. Its like you're talking to people who have no understanding of the fundamentals of the game nor even any match experience. And it just keeps on going on...and on..and on...... (DEVGRU, 08/29/09, TIA Legend member)

Redpower and DEVGRU are here participating in a discussion about Lucas Leiva, an LFC midfielder, who is viewed as either a scapegoat or a future player after his poor performance with LFC early in the 2009-10 season. This conflict is related to LFC performance and strategy, and especially the quality of its players. Lucas is the most controversial member of the LFC squad because of his performance, style of playing, and role on the pitch. Many members would like to see Lucas leave LFC and thus provide different reasons to support this view. Both redpower and DEVGRU draw on their direct experience of playing football to argue against these members and to show that they know the game and situation better than members who have never played football. These arguments lead to further discussions and
arguments whereby the different forms of capital are disputed and dominant forms are negotiated amongst the TIA members.

The following post is an example of a member’s reaction to the conflicts mentioned above:

> When you ask that question Red I am willing to answer it as honestly as I can. What gives us the right? 
> (1) We the fans pay his wages. We buy the merchandise, shirts, hot dogs etc & so yes - we have *every right* to voice our opinions on him as a player - or - should he remain immune & exempt from all criticism's leveled at him?...I haven't played anywhere close to pro level - just Saturday & Sunday league – but I have a football brain of sorts & can see if someone is struggling or if it's just not working. Does that make me the devil incarnate for holding such opinions? 
> Of course not... (showmethemoney, 08/25/09, TIA Streaming Expert)

Here showmethemoney argues against redpower by stating that all LFC fans have a right to complain and make comments about players and the club, and even though he is a football player, he does not see himself better than others. However, their argument and discussions here are the struggle between the more dominant actors in order to control the field. Newbie members are fairly irrelevant as it is here between the dominant players that the power struggle is really playing out.

Hence, the inequalities of resources provide different levels of consumer authority exerted through different forms of power (Rezabakhsh et al., 2006): legitimate power (local fans) and expert power (more experienced members and football-playing members). These forms of power are a cause of conflicts amongst members. However, these prominent conflicts serve to underline how actors with different resources socialise and dominate resource – disadvantaged actors to the nature of the game. Moreover, these conflicts demonstrate struggles over different of the forms of capital: social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital. Within this field, the dominant agents potentially negotiate using their forms of capital and they act to condition less dominant agents to alter their practices. This compromise might then produce the appearance of unity and the co-creation of value for the LFC brand. To form these, individual members need to employ their human capital to interact with their fellow members. The details of the different forms of capital are presented in the following section.
8.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL: THE REMOVAL OF RESOURCE RESISTANCE THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORK POWER

Defined by Lusch et al. (2008: 9) as “barriers”, resource resistances need to be removed from the value co-creation process. These are intangible resistances such as bad attitudes toward particular issues, kneejerk or despairing posts, personal biases, and so forth. These resource resistances act as barriers to interactions and also cause conflicts amongst members. Therefore, in order to co-create value, all participants within brand community need to remove these resistances from the interaction process before they use their resources to co-create value. As an apparently collaborative network, the TIA community plays an important role as an independent resource integrator by collecting individuals’ competencies or human capital in order to co-create value.

Within the brand community, consumers can co-create value through the interaction process via the additional processes of embedding, educating, and enriching (see also Chapter Seven). As mentioned above, these conflicts demonstrate how different resource-holders gather and use social capital to remove certain resource resistances: reciprocity, voluntarism, democracy, and sportsmanship are employed as ways to resolve conflicts. It is a way to demonstrate how subtle use of the forms of capital serves to underline dominant modes of practice that result in a unified logic or solidarity for the TIA community (Bourdieu, 1985). However, the strong solidarity of social network can consequently produce less desirable circumstance (Portes, 1998).

To form the solidarity of social network, dominant members employ the norms of social capital to co-create the harmony social interaction. By doing this, individual members are being intimated by dominant members and told that they must respect the norms of the group (see also downward levelling norms; Portes, 1998). However, this process may limit the opportunity of value creation because dominant members have forced less dominant members to obey the norms of community, namely ‘collective sanctions’ (Portes, 1998: 15). Therefore, negative consequences will be considered in this section.

8.3.1 Reciprocity in the TIA Community

Reciprocity is the willingness of members to share resources within the community; it is a basic function of the online community (Giesler, 2006; Mathwick et al., 2008; Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001). It was mentioned in Figure 7.3 that in the context of the value co-creation process in the TIA community, reciprocity helps to balance the resources of more experienced
and less experienced members. It also helps members to embed themselves in the community. This is because less experienced members have fewer resources than experienced members which can lead to conflicts between them. Moreover, it also supports the education process whereby each member shares knowledge and information in the community, and other members can indirectly be educated through reading and participating. A positive outcome from gaining access to this form of social capital is that it generates information which can be used by less experienced members to generate ‘expert power’.

Reciprocity within the community may also take the form of experienced members providing assistance to less experienced members on request. Assistance of this kind may relate to LFC or football issues, but it may also include more banal matters: e.g. computer applications, travel, music, books, education, etc. Thus, reciprocity also plays an important role as a means of forming relationships between members and a sense of moral responsibility (as found in many brand communities: Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001).

The returns from this social capital come in the form of the further exchanges, help, kindness, information, or knowledge. These returns are an obligation of the TIA community. Members recognise that these returns are an obligatory duty for them is this a negative outcome of reciprocity?. The following posts from a conversation between Dublin_Kopite and allyrobbo are one of reciprocity examples within the TIA community:

- Reading on a few of the other forums it sounds like its widely tipped that Keane is down for a medical on Monday... Although i would have thought someone on here would have got wind of something like that? (Dublin_Kopite, 08/26/08, TIA Legend member)

- Look on the previous page, Nevoo34 mentioned that someone he knows on RAWK told him about it. (allyrobbo, 08/26/08, TIA First Team member)

Here Dublin_Kopite wanted information regarding Robbie Keane’s medical situation at the time when he was signing a contract with LFC (28 July 2008). This is one form that reciprocity may take among TIA members. In this thread, allyrobbo responds to this request by referring to information given in the post of another member, Nevoo34. According to TIA norms of reciprocity, Dublin_Kopite is not obliged to immediately return a favour to allyrobbo; instead he is obliged to reciprocate with the wider TIA community by supporting members who require help or information which he is in a position to provide. However, by considering the reciprocity among members, it can increase a number of kneejerk members who do only take benefits from the social network. In other words, it increases a number of free-riders who only access to seek the mutual assistances from the fellow members. This
negative consequence also includes double exploitation among members (Cova and Dalli, 2009), because this norm of social capital reduces the struggle of some members in achieving their personal goal (Portes, 1998).

8.3.2 Voluntarism in the TIA Community

*Voluntarism* is an offer to do something for other community members without monetary payment. Mathwick *et al.* (2008) have noted that online communities offer “free rides”, meaning that strangers can come and go in order to find collective and individual solutions. Particularly in the TIA community (an independent community run by consumers), voluntarism creates obligations and power relationships amongst members. They create a sense of duty among members towards the community; the community is thus maintained and run by consumers for consumers with no commercial interests.

The voluntarism includes volunteers who operate and manage the discipline of the community as moderators (see also TIA Board Member discussion in Chapter Six), and who dedicate time, energy, and resources to work for other members. TIA Board Members have voluntarily worked in the TIA community as unpaid works whereby they can warn or ban bad-behaved members. Moderators perform this voluntary duty because they gain coercive power through these symbolic acts— an ability and right to punish bad-behaved member (Rezabakhsh *et al.*, 2006) — which allows them to act as sheriff (see also Moderator discussion in page 127). However, they tend to employ this power in a compromising way, avoiding ironhanded approaches because they do not want to appear to dominate the community. Subtle forms of domination such as this could be viewed as symbolic violence on the part of moderators (Bourdieu, 1989). As mentioned by Portes (1998), this action leads to the conformity within the community, but it might limit the emergence of new knowledge or resources. In other words, it demonstrates that less dominant members are abused by superior power.

Although members dedicate and commit themselves to the community as unpaid workers in order to form a sense of community, it can increase a number of free-riders and the negative consequences. To form a sense of community, members dedicate themselves by working on different projects such as gathering LFC statistics, developing flow charts detailing LFC performances, searching for historical data about LFC, writing columns or articles, and so forth. The following post is an example of voluntarism by Dane, a TIA Legend member:

> Both tremendous natural goalscorers without doubt. As Torres is still playing at the top level, and Robbie is basically winding his career down with some Australian outfit, it's clearly unfair to compare them today.
However, Torres is 25 years old so I’ve taken the goalscoring stats from Fowlers debut at 18 up until the age of 25 and compared them to Torres’ from the age of 18 up until now.

**Fowler**.....played 265............goals 150 = average of a goal every 1.76 games.
**Torres**.....played 288............goals 136 = average of a goal every 2.11 games.

Stats aside, Robbie Fowler is a true Liverpool legend, Fernando Torres as much as I love the lad, still has a long way to go before even being considered for that category. (Dane, 09/06/09, TIA Legend member)

Dane collects data on Robbie Fowler, a former LFC player and legend, and Fernando Torres, a current LFC player, covering the same period in their respective careers (18 to 25 years old). In this case, Dane act as an unpaid worker by searching and sorting data into a comparative format; Torres is 25 years old whereas Fowler is 34 years old, so in order to be fair Dane needs to gather the data from the same period in their careers (18-25).

In doing this, Dane does not receive any objective rewards; however, he may gain social recognition and a stronger relationship with his fellow members. In the other words, he can accumulate and gain more expert power which is one way he is able to gain positive outcomes from social capital: power. From this example, voluntarism seems to be similar to reciprocity to the extent that both of them help to solve collective and individual problems within online community. Nevertheless, voluntarism requires greater commitment and dedication than reciprocity thereby creating more symbolic social capital. However, the voluntarism might create two possible consequences: (1) the slothful atmosphere in which some members do not struggle to achieve their goal; and (2) some dominant members may leave from the social network (see also Portes, 1998).

### 8.3.3 Democracy in the TIA Community

Importantly, no one in the LFC fan community is overtly more privileged than other fans. This can be seen from arguments between higher and lower ranking members of the TIA community examined in Chapter Six and the arguments between local and non-local fans examined in this chapter. Within the online community, debates or arguments are not decided by member ranking or location (*i.e.* whether they are “local” or “non-local” fans) but by the resources (knowledge, understanding, information, *etc.*) that they members bring into the community by participating in threads. As mentioned by Holt (1998), members with higher cultural capital members can make distinctions from members with lower cultural capital. Thus, there is a appearance of a democratic atmosphere within the TIA community which encourages all members to share their resources; if reciprocity means to a willingness to share, then democracy means the opportunity to interact.
The *democracy* within the TIA community can be found when TIA Board Members are setting the community rules. It is very significant that Board Members have an absolute right to set up rules and execute them by themselves. However, they have chosen to provide all members with opportunities for sharing ideas and logic so that they can co-create the community’s rules, which is further evidence of symbolic violence. TIA Board Members co-create a sense of duty among all community members; this is analogous to the P3 community whose members try to form a sense of duty which offers them opportunities to control their community (Mathwick *et al.*, 2008). However, the process within the TIA community is slightly different from the P3 community because the P3 community is sponsored by a commercial body whereas the TIA community is managed and controlled by consumers who consume it.

The exercise of democracy also lends support to the moderator role. Members who are anti-social or badly-behaved will be politely asked TIA Board Members to improve their behaviour, regardless of whether they are higher ranking or longterm members of the TIA community. This action helps to alert TIA members about who badly-behaved members are; this is because when warnings are issued to badly-behaved members, the relevant thread will be moved to the top of the table. The following post from Dublin_Kopite illustrates how democracy works within the TIA community:

> I don't care if 'Runcorn' has never seen a game before or is a season ticket holder for the last 20 years, if he has 2000 posts or 2 posts, if a statement or an opinion is made and is backed up by a good explanation or reason it's as valid as anyones. If someone thinks Lucas is the next pele, fair play to them. I disagree and i've said why a number of times. (Dublin_Kopite, 08/25/09, TIA Legend member)

Here Dublin_Kopite, a TIA Legend member, supports the argument that every fan has a right to give opinions, regardless of whether they have never attended games at Anfield or are season ticket holders, as long as they provide good reasons to support their arguments. He provides an example of a view that he disagrees with (*i.e.* that Lucas Leiva, an LFC midfielder, is a new Pele, a world-famous footballer of the nineteen-sixties). Dublin_Kopite does not argue directly against the view that Leiva is the new Pele; instead, he provides reason apparent in other posts to support his disagreement. However, this interaction can be considered as the strategy of condescension – negating the difference between people is often a way of increasing their own power (see also Bourdieu, 1989). In this example, instead of negating the gap between dominant members and less dominant members, Dublin_Kopite’s denegation increases the actual distance between members.
8.3.4 Sportsmanship in the TIA Community

The unequal quantities of information or resources available to TIA members can be a cause of the conflicts amongst them because each party employ different information or knowledge in their arguments and discussions. Because TIA members have different levels of knowledge and understanding of LFC and football in general, it can often be difficult to find solutions to conflicts that break out between them. To solve this problem, TIA members have collectively created the norm of *sportsmanship* (see page 136) or a spirit of LFC fans which involves learning to accept other members’ views and apologising for mistakes that they have made.

Sportsmanship is similar to democracy in that it encourages TIA members to value reason or argument over rankings or membership period as a means for settling disputes. However, sportsmanship is different from democracy in that it helps members to discuss or argue in a manner that encourages them to accept the strength of opposing arguments, and also to overlook some mistakes from other members.

Chapter Six has mentioned how conflicts occur amongst members (see TIA Legend discussion in Chapter Six). Without the norm of sportsmanship, their tempo might dramatically increase so that they become stronger arguments. Nevertheless, they can find solutions to arguments through the norm of sportsmanship whereby they recognise that they are arguing according to their emotions rather than considering other reasons and perspectives; or if arguments become too heated then other members will step in and remind them about LFC and TIA spirit. Therefore, at the end of strong arguments, members will calm their conflict by embodying the spirit of LFC fans. However, through the norm of sportsmanship, members are using language/LFC as ‘a downward levelling norm’ (see also Portes, 1998: 17) to prevent dissident opinions and emotional responses from some fans. Therefore, it may obstruct the flow of discussion because less dominant members are forced to stop arguments.

Hence, on the one hand, this action is collectively formed by members in order to co-create opportunities for them to interact in a friendly environment where nobody is more privileged than anybody else. Moreover, it is a process that members use to solve conflicts among each other and also to form a bond among them all. On the other hand, it may form the downward levelling norm by forcing members to halt their argument. These social capitals play an important role in helping members to form cultural capital. The next section will discuss how cultural capital is formed within the TIA community.
8.4 CULTURAL CAPITAL: CO-CREATION OF COLLECTIVE POWER

As mentioned above, social capital plays an important role in bonding all members together and providing them with opportunities to interact by removing the conversation barriers from the community, or at least reducing the tensions among the members. It helps TIA members to form cultural capital: a system of symbolic meanings that create a group distinction through the myths, traditions, or culture of LFC fans. In contrast with social capital, cultural capital is in the form of cultural power; consumer empowerment which allow the TIA community to resist or emancipate from the market, and also to internalise the cultural power of the community to the community members. Moreover, TIA members employ cultural capital to solve problems with kneejerk or glory-hunter members of the community. These problems may be among the causes of conflicts between members and the stereotype behaviour; i.e. that the bad behaviour of kneejerk fans can have a negative on all TIA members by creating the wrong impression about LFC fans.

As with the group of Porsche Cayenne SUV owners studied by Avery (2007), TIA members (especially more experienced members) have struggled to fight the negative stereotypes created by badly-behaved members. However, the discourse of negative stereotypes in the TIA community is different from its equivalent in the Porsche brand community because the dominant group within Porsche community is anti-Cayenne, whereas in the TIA community, it is the “brand warrior”. Thus, Porsche Cayenne SUV supporters have gradually faded out from the discourse.

In contrast, TIA members can beat the stereotype of kneejerk or badly-behaved members by creating a symbolic meaning of LFC fans through the myth of YNWA (You’ll Never Walk Alone; see also Chapter Six page 124). Instead of eliminating those kneejerk members, TIA members employ their authority through their cultural capital to the TIA community and its members and subjugate kneejerk members using the language of the spirit of LFC fans. In the TIA community, cultural capital is activated by LFC opponents who may be both internal and external to the group. Before discussing how cultural capital is activated or formed, the explanation of how the symbolic value of YNWA is formed by a group of LFC fans will be presented.

8.4.1 The Myth of ‘YNWA’: An Objectified Cultural Capital

The tradition of ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’ began in 1963 when the local band, Gerry & the Pacemakers, performed a version of the song, originally written by Richard Rodgers and
Oscar Hammerstein II in 1945 (LiverpoolFC, 2009). Gerry Marsden, a member of the band, presented it to Bill Shankly (LFC manager between 1959 and 1974) during the pre-season coach trip of 1963; Shankly enjoyed listening to the song.

Coincidently, a local journalist had travelled with LFC, and reported the story of adapting Gerry’s new song to be a club song (Smith, 2008). This song has since been adopted as part of LFC’s objectified cultural capital, and it is now regularly sung by LFC fans shortly before the beginning and final whistle of home games. Moreover, it is used to provide meaning for the unity of LFC fans. YNWA has thus been used since 1963 as a symbol for the identity of LFC fans.

From this perspective, YNWA is a form of objectified cultural capital which TIA members co-create and to which they have assigned a meaning via the value co-creation process (see also Brand warrior discussion, page 124). The prominent cultural capital of TIA members and LFC fans embedded in the ‘YNWA’ are ‘Liverpool fans do not read The Sun newspaper’, and ‘LFC fans always support the club, players, and manager’. By doing this, brand warrior plays an important role as co-creator of cultural capital within the TIA community.

In brand warrior discussions among LFC knights and tradition reminders, more experienced members deploy the symbolic meaning of YNWA to educate less-experienced and fresh members about the traditions and culture of LFC fans; this in turn helps solve conflicts by making the balance between the resources of more and less experienced community members more even (i.e. evening out the balance on a set of traditional scales) and defending the community against negative stereotypes generated by badly-behaved members. The way in which the LFC logo unites LFC fans around the world is also symbolically important to TIA members or embodied state of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, this cultural capital would be considered as cultural power which is co-created by the collective members of community in order to dominate members’ behaviours and attitudes. In order to doing this, YNWA plays an important role as a cultural artefact co-created collectively through the social interaction. It serves to underline cultural norms and symbolic struggles in the field, and to act upon the dominated members. In the other words, it works in the same way with the organisation culture (Schltz and Hatch, 2006). Moreover, it can dominate new members and also present members to behave in the way of community through the symbolic and meaning system (Jenkins, 1992). Like the norm of democracy and sportsmanship, the cultural capital of YNWA artefact may oppress less dominant members and hammer in the distinction between dominant and less dominant members (Bourdieu, 1989).
8.4.2 Activation of Cultural Capital through External Opponents

External opponents also help to activate the formation of cultural capital within the TIA community. One external opponent is The Sun newspaper (see also Chapter Six, page 122), against which all LFC fans, and especially TIA members co-create the symbolic action of boycotting The Sun in order to express the symbolical power of LFC fans over The Sun. This is one of examples which demonstrate how collective members have exercised their cultural power to strengthen the community culture. Or demonstrates a struggle cutting across dominant agents in different fields through which the Liverpool fans fight for their forms of capital and for domination and power.

This form of symbolic action is transmitted to the new generations or members of the LFC and TIA fan communities through interactions and actions. Members who are brand warriors always warn other members when there are references to The Sun in interactions or notify moderators when there are Sun advertisements on the community. Moreover, the phrase, ‘The Sun’, is banned and cannot appear on the TIA community (see also page 123). It is the way that TIA members employ The Sun to form their symbolic power and solidarity of the TIA community. In other word, they have co-created their collective identity against outsider: The Sun. It may strengthen the solidarity of the community, but from the view of outsiders, it may be viewed as negative or threat activity in the same way with football hooligan (King, 2001) or Ku Klux Klan (Fukuyama, 2001).

TIA Board members have created a forum to explain why LFC fans should not read The Sun newspaper Comment on domination/power please. This is similar to the embodied state of cultural capital whereby less experienced members learn from the behaviour and instructions of more experienced members (Bourdieu, 1986). Through this process, experienced members gradually inform and instruct other members, especially newbie members, about the culture of LFC fans. TIA members realise that they cannot do any serious damage to The Sun; however, they can at least express their solid as LFC fans by acting against LFC’s perceived opponents.

8.4.3 Activation of Cultural Capital through Internal Opponents

Internal opponents such as kneejerk or glory-hunter fans are a means by which TIA members may strengthen LFC’s objectified cultural capital, ‘YNWA’. As with The Sun newspaper, experienced TIA members, and especially those who act as brand warriors, take action against the posts of kneejerk or glory-hunter members which attack or abuse the club and its players or manager.
However, this does not mean that LFC fans cannot complain about the club or players. As Dublin_Kopite noted in post cited above (see also page 203), all LFC fans have the right to complain about the club or its players, but they should provide strong reasons to support their complaints. Experienced members educate newbie members about the brand warrior discourse against kneejerk posts in order to familiarise them with the good code of conduct and protect the community against negative stereotypes created by badly-behaved members. Therefore, by taking action against kneejerk or glory-hunter members, brand warriors show less experienced members how LFC fans should behave and thereby strengthening the symbolic meaning of the YNWA tradition. Please link to power/domination

In short, cultural capital, emerging from the struggles with external and internal opponents, is a kind of embodied and objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In embodied cultural capital, TIA members make use of an informal pedagogic system. This is similar to the ways in which individuals gain cultural capital through the institutionalised process of the collective consumers. They accumulate the knowledge and cultural capital through the social interaction within the TIA community (Bourdieu, 1986). Within this process, TIA members can co-create objectified cultural capital through the myth of YNWA as a culture of LFC fans by adding the symbolic meaning of LFC fans to ‘YNWA’ in the same way which art or music (Bourdieu, 1986). It contributes the cultural power to internalise members with the community culture. In the next section, the emergent capital of the TIA community will be discussed whereby individual members gain and accumulate a privileged status.

8.5 EMERGENT CAPITAL: SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

Like human capital and embodied cultural capital, symbolic capital is the honour, recognition, and renown accumulated by individuals through their social behaviour (Bourdieu, 1986). It can be converted into other types of capital, but it cannot be transmitted to other individuals (neither can cultural and social forms). On the other hand, symbolic capital is a product of social interactions which it is owned by individuals.

By studying the social interactions of the TIA community, it is found that symbolic capital emerges from the sum of human capital, social capital, and cultural capital. Individuals who participate in the community gain and accumulate symbolic power through their behaviour and interactions. This section will discuss how individual members of the TIA community
accumulate two kinds of symbolic capital: recognised symbolic capital and objectified symbolic capital.

8.5.1 Recognised Symbolic Capital

*Recognised symbolic capital* is the subjective context of symbolic capital (Özbilgin et al., 2005) which individuals accumulate from the ways in which they interact with their fellow members. It is worth noting that symbolic capital is not merely reputation and recognition, or namely social capital. It is also the symbolic power which individuals gain from their behaviour within the community; their contributions to the community can solve the individual and collective problems of their fellow members. However, as mentioned through non-desirable consequences from social capital (Portes, 1998), members who contain recognised symbolic capital may dominate others and obstruct an opportunity of knowledge enchantment (see also Adler and Kwon, 2002).

It was noted in Chapter Six that TIA members have gradually become experienced members as they regularly post and contribute knowledge and well-analysed comments to the community. Moreover, members tend to judge members’ level of experience and commitment to LFC and the TIA community are from the quality of their posts. This symbolic value can be ‘the right to be listened to’ (Stringfellow and McMeeking, 2009). The following posts are examples of TIA members who gain symbolic capital from their fellow members:

showmethemoney, though I don't post here often, I read here each day and in respect of this topic, your posts are very useful as an unemotional and reasonably informed view of what's actually happening with our club. So thanks for that, and ignore the moron. (Ozz, 09/18/08, TIA New Signing member)

…Oh, and I trust showmethemoney more than I could ever trust you. He has backed up his words with cold hard facts about current financial climate, and I’ve learnt more about the crisis from him than you... (redalways, 09/18/08, TIA Reserve Team member)

Mate. With all due respect, it is my opinion that neither Hicks nor Gillett will put ANY money directly into Liverpool Football Club. They have lied time and time again to us… I recommend you read the post by ShowMeTheMoney on the previous page of this thread… (Tosh, 03/27/09, TIA Youth Team member)

These posts show that showmethemoney holds symbolic capital as a TIA member in the form of the respect that is shown to him by his fellow members. These posts refer to a thread in which TIA members are discussing the take-over issue. They discuss about who should buy the club from American co-owners (one of perceived internal opponents). One member contributing to this thread has made posts disagreeing with showmethemoney’s views on the
take-over. Both Ozz and redalways express support for showmethemoney by referring to the strength of his knowledge and argument; these are sufficiently good reasons for them to take his side in the argument. Showmethemoney’s renown is also shown on another take-over thread where Tosh refers to showmethemoney’s posts in order to support his posts. Thus, showmethemoney’s renown is accumulated through his posts, contributions, and behaviour which other members can observe. However, this kind of symbolic capital may lead to the myopia within the social network. Fukuyama (2001) has provided an example of myopia whereby community members may overlook the good opinions or knowledge from both outsiders and other members who may have better evidences or information. So, in this circumstance, members may trust showmethemoney because of his renown, rather than considering the reasons or information. Therefore, it may be a threat of learning process within the community.

8.5.2 Objectified Symbolic Capital

Another type of symbolic capital is objectified symbolic capital which individuals gain from certificates or formal endorsements (Özbilgin et al., 2005). In the TIA community, members can gain this through the ranking system. Although rankings do not ensure the experience of TIA members (see also Chapter Six), certain ranks such as TIA Board Member, TIA Streaming Expert, and TIA Record Poster do count as objectified symbolic capital because they are gained by member endorsement rather than quantity of posts.

It is found that recognition plays an important role in the formation of objectified symbolic capital within the TIA community. This can be seen from the recognised symbolic capital held by showmethemoney, who also has the special rank, TIA Streaming Expert. TIA Board Members are essentially a group of TIA community founders. However, given the limited number of community founders, additional Board Members are required. Through the collection of personal message data, TIA Administrators are able to make decisions about which TIA members should be given objectified symbolic capital (which is to say which among them should become TIA Board Members). In order to gain this symbolic capital, members need to have the following qualifications:

Firstly, members need to embed themselves in the community (i.e. they must become ‘Residents’; mentioned in Figure 7.4, see page 185). They also need to have been members of the TIA community long enough for them to have gained an understanding of the game within the community. To consider who are qualified, Dragonshadow, a TIA administrator, has states: “We've had time to see which posters could be trusted with such a position…” In
this meaning, ‘trust’ is a confidence which TIA Board Members have toward particular members regarding to their capabilities of taking responsibilities as moderators.

Secondly, creative posters and brand warriors are qualified to be Board Members. Moreover, qualified members are selected according to the style and tone (friendly or aggressive) of their posts, the quality of the information that they supply in them and how helpful they are towards other members of the community.

Thirdly, members need to be dedicated to the TIA community. Qualified members need to visit and participate in the community on a regular basis because as Moderators or TIA Board Members, they need to control and manage member discipline (see also Chapter Six). Thus, moderators need to read as many posts as they possibly can. And finally, Dragonshadow explains the most important qualification of TIA Board Members:

“You also need to be able to be sensible. We have forum rules, and the moderators are there to try and keep those rules in place, but without going over the top. We need to allow for common sense and not hand out warnings…” (Dragonshadow, TIA Administrator, Personal Message)

Members gain recognised symbolic capital by gathering these qualifications; that is accumulating experience, knowledge, recognition, and renown from good behaviour within the community. Therefore, we can consider the moderator power as embodied power which they accumulate through their social interactions. In order to do this, individual members need to have a wealth of human capital which allows them to contribute informative, helpful and creative arguments. This symbolic power can be reinforced by objectified symbolic capital, or formal endorsements, such as the special rank of TIA Board Member which allows certain individuals to exercise official powers within the community. Recognised symbolic capital may endow individual members with some powers within the community; however, this can still be argued against by members with lower recognised symbolic power. In contrast, objectified symbolic capital (i.e. being a Board Member) provides individual TIA members with real powers to maintain discipline within the community; e.g. warning and banning badly-behaved members.

8.6 DISCUSSIONS

The analysis in this chapter shows that unequal resources are a cause of conflicts between the members of the TIA community and that these lead to conversions and to the domination of
different forms of capital. These forms of capital allow certain community members to gain power within the social interactions of the TIA community (Bourdieu, 1989). This adds to the findings of Avery’s (2007) work on the Porsche brand community by demonstrating how members use ‘collaboration’ as a mode of domination to solve the conflicts. Moreover, it also adds the negotiation of power to extend our understanding of social power within the brand community.

Through the hermeneutical framework of interpretation (Thompson, 1997), the different forms of capital (human capital, social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital) can be employed to explain the value co-creation process by examining how they help to resolve conflicts among the members of co-consuming groups. In this process, power can be used to explain the social interactions or the negotiations of individuals within the online community. The findings in this chapter also extend Holbrook’s (2006a) typology of value to demonstrate collective value: a norm of social capital and the community culture. In order to do this, individuals and collective groups invest their skills and knowledge in social interactions with the expectation of gaining returns from them. Moreover, this chapter also explains how the different forms of capital emerge through social interactions in the TIA community. This has helped to illuminate the process whereby TIA members cooperate to solve conflicts caused by unequal resources and thus strengthen the unity of LFC fans.

It is worth noting that TIA members do not use their power to eliminate the opponents out of the community as found in Porsche brand community (Avery, 2007) and Veer (2010). Instead, they use their power to form the unity of the TIA community and LFC fans by sharing the power through different ways e.g. reducing the domination of local fans or football-playing members, sharing knowledge, information and experience to the fellow members, and so forth. However, the norms of social capital found in this dissertation may lead to non-desirable or negative consequences (Alder and Kwon, 2002; Portes, 1998) whereby dominant members may oppress less dominant members and increase a number of kneejerk members who just lurk around rather than giving something in returns. These norms may also widen the distinction among members through the strategy of condescension (Bourdieu, 1989). At the collective level, the power contributes the cultural authority of the TIA community to internalise certain norms or cultural codes: YNWA and the spirit of LFC fans within the community, and also to empower against the market. At the individual level, it provides the consumer authority to participate in the TIA community without any restrictions of localness, resources, or experience.
The research findings show that social capital plays an important role in the removal of resistance (Lusch et al., 2008) or the resolution of conflicts within the TIA community, and also that it helps members to form cultural capital. In order for them to co-create social capital, individual members require human capital (Burt, 1997), skills and knowledge (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a), or general intellect (Zwick et al., 2008), all of which help them to interact with their fellow members. There are four ways in which TIA members collectively form the norms of social capital: reciprocity, voluntarism, democracy, and sportsmanship. Interestingly, the forms of social capital found in the TIA Community relate to what Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) have called the “relational” and “cognitive” dimensions of social capital. This is because the structural dimension is in a bridging form which is embedded in the social ties or membership of the community (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).

Reciprocity and Voluntarism as found in Mathwick et al. (2008) are instrumental actions of social capital which contribute to the development of resources within the community (Lin, 1999). These actions require dedication and commitment from members who are required to work as unpaid workers (Cova and Dalli, 2009; Zwick et al., 2008) in order to solve problems for other members. Meanwhile, this dissertation extends Mathwick et al.’s (2008) norms of social capital by demonstrating additional social capital in the online community: democracy and sportsmanship. These social capitals are expressive actions of social capital which contribute to the preservation of embedded resources or to bond all members together (Lin, 1999). On the one hand, Alder and Kwon (2002) and Lin (1999) have all noted that these forms of social capital play an important role in the value co-creation process by providing community members with opportunities to co-create value by interacting with each other.

Although communities consist of many of individuals, their products do not belong to their individual members; rather they belong collectively to the community (Cova and Dalli, 2009) which all relevant members share both emotion and ownership. The observations of the TIA community show that these forms of social capital benefit the TIA community by removing obstructions to the interaction process. Typically, these contributions can be found on online communities (Mathwick et al., 2008) in the forms of social capital that members gain and accumulate by interacting as members of communities.

These forms are an outcome of the value co-creation process which provides individuals with opportunities to access the collective resources of communities by interacting as parts or members of them. Moreover, they contribute to the collaborate network of value co-creation by acting as a glue that bonds members together as a group; that is, it helps them to participate
in a long-life learning process and continually synthesise the collective resources of their group(s). This is correspondent to Sirsi et al. (1996: 369) that “[t]he strong social ties, the greater sharing of resources”.

In the discussion of unequal resources, the stereotype of kneejerk posts is an important factor in the creation and strengthening of cultural capital. In the Porsche brand community (Avery, 2007) negative stereotypes have led to a win-lose situation; the Porsche Cayenne SUV group have gradually left the main body in the Porsche brand community which is now dominated by Anti-Cayenne members. In contrast, within the TIA community the kneejerk stereotype leads to a win-win situation (Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder, 2009) because all TIA members have a chance to learn and internalise the cultural codes: ‘YNWA’ which can strengthen the solidarity of the community.

Moreover, conflicts among members help to provide a code of conduct (YNWA) and unity among them through the interactions and actions of experienced members. This cultural capital is in the embodied state when more experienced members educate less experienced and newbie members about LFC traditions via the symbolic meaning of “YNWA” (see also Bourdieu, 1986). This is similar to the way members of the MG car community co-create the authenticity of MG cars by developing a brand community which acts a brand curator (Leigh et al., 2006). The more kneejerker members participate in the TIA community, the more the tradition of YNWA is strengthened through the actions of brand warriors. This process is supported and facilitated by social capital within the TIA community (especially the willingness of TIA members to interact and participate in the community in an open-minded fashion). This supports Pini’s (2009) view that open-mindedness is a crucial component of interactions.

Another form of capital is symbolic capital, which can emerge in two forms: recognised symbolic capital and objectified symbolic capital. Alternatively, Özbilgin et al (2005) have classified these as the subjective and objective forms of symbolic capital respectively. These forms of symbolic capital are not transmittable to other parties, although they can be converted into other forms of capital. The TIA members can accumulate symbolic capital by dedicating their resources to the community, and gradually gain recognition, and honour from their fellow members (Bourdieu, 1990). This corresponds with Fuller and Tian (2006) that symbolic capital can be formed through the good behaviour. Moreover, the actions and behaviour that members employed to activate symbolic capital are different in different communities of practices (Bourdieu, 1986) whereby participants in the community
collectively form the rules of the game (i.e. academic scholars consider the symbolic capital from papers published in the top class journals, Cronin and Shaw, 2002).

However, the interactions within social network do not only contribute the positive connotations of struggles for capital play out in the TIA community, but also negative consequences (Alder and Kwon, 2002; Portes, 1998). Norms of reciprocity and voluntarism may increase a number of free-riders who access to the community only for seeking mutual assistances, rather than provide something back in return (Alder and Kwon, 2002; Portes, 1998). It also causes of double exploitation (Cova and Dalli, 2009) whereby these members might expect that dominant members or experienced members always share or provide assistances to the fellow members; therefore, they do only gain benefits, and may emotionally act as kneejerk members (see also Chapter Six).

On the other hand, through the norms of democracy and sportsmanship, dominant members may unintentionally obstruct less dominant members to share or discuss within the community, namely ‘downward levelling norms’ (Portes, 1998). In this negative consequence, dominant members may obstruct the flow of information (Alder and Kwon, 2002). It would be argued that oppression within the social network may play out as value creation through the cultural code of YNWA. Moreover, the findings in this chapter also support what Cova and Dalli’s (2009) claim that there is no harmony relationship within the brand community; it is the struggles of power and dominant members or symbolic violence by dominant members (see also Bourdieu, 1977).

Interestingly, on the one hand, dominant members employ ‘compromise’ strategy through ‘YNWA’ artefact to relieve all conflicts among members – harmonic relationship of value creation in S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). On the other hand, dominant members’ strategies do hammer in the wide distinction against less dominant members, known as ‘the strategy of condescension’ (Bourdieu, 1989). For example, one dominant member may try to cease the conflict argument against a local LFC fan, LetsByTotti (see also page 197), by mentioning that being a local LFC fan and watching LFC home games do not matter because everyone can support LFC. Instead of levelling distance, it widens the distinction between the matter of local and non-local fans by giving much more privilege to LetsBuyTotti.
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation has focused on how consumers co-create value in a specific community of practice (an online Liverpool FC football fan community). The findings demonstrate that consumers form a relationship with the co-consuming group through the continuous learning process of social practices; this in turn allows them to co-create value. This dissertation has synthesised S-D logic and CCT in order to understand how consumers co-create value by themselves.

This dissertation demonstrates a comprehensive and up to date review of the S-D logic literature, and a connection to CCT, which provides a guide to the theory and a path for research. The fundamental premises, both original and modified have been shown in Table 2.1, in order to provide an understanding of S-D logic. Value is defined as ‘uniqueness’ (see also Chapter Three) (in order to take account of the variety of ways in which value may be perceived). In this way, value is viewed through a multi-dimensional perspective which allows for differences in how value is perceived (e.g. depending on factors such as situation, time, or person).

This chapter begins by outlining the conclusions drawn over the course of this study. Next, a summary of the key findings of Chapters Six to Eight will be presented. The following section will discuss the contribution that this study makes to consumer research and its implications for managerial practices. Then it goes on to discuss its limitations before finally proposing some future directions for research related to the value co-creation process.

9.2 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This dissertation has synthesised S-D logic and CCT in order to understand how the value co-creation process works among consumers. By making use of the concepts of ‘resources’ from the S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a, 2008a) and ‘cultural lens’ from CCT (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), this dissertation has provided another way of understanding the value co-creation process. Generally, marketing scholars have tended to focus on the value co-creation process as it occurs from interactions between companies and consumers (dialogue, involvement and consumption: see also Chapter Three). In contrast, this dissertation has
employed the cultural lens through history, culture and tradition to understand the value co-creation process. Moreover, this dissertation has employed different theories—consumer experience (Carù and Cova, 2007; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) and forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986)—to frame the phenomenon of online co-consuming groups. This dissertation is to answer these research questions: 1) What are the roles of consumers in the value co-creation process? 2) How does the value co-creation process work? 3) How do individuals negotiate within the co-consuming group? A summary of the key findings of this dissertation will be presented in the following section.

9.2.1 The Active Roles of Consumers in the Value Co-Creation Process

In consumer research the relationship between producers and consumers is blurred (Firat et al., 1995; Pettinger, 2004) even though many research streams have studied the active roles of consumers through the concepts of consumer empowerment (Denegri-Knott et al., 2006) or consumer resistance (Holt, 2002). This dissertation has furthered our understanding of the active roles played by consumers in the value co-creation process by showing how consumers collectively empower themselves as groups in order to protect and strengthen the value of brands. Through negotiating among themselves as members of collective groups, consumers play an active role in the formation of their realm of consumption (as noted by CCT: Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

According to S-D logic, the consumer can be a value co-creator (see also FP6, Vargo and Lusch, 2008a: 2) by either interacting with companies or other consumers. This dissertation has employed S-D logic to extend our understanding of the value co-creation process to include brand communities. At present, very little is known about the roles played by consumers in the value co-creation process. The findings of this dissertation demonstrate that consumers can co-create value with other consumers by acting as proactive and reactive consumers.

It is arguable by working consumers (Cova and Dalli, 2009) that these roles are the harmory relationship because of the fact that there is a double exploitation within the value creation process. Through the working consumers, the proactive consumers have been double exploitation by less experienced consumers in that: (1) they always provide and share knowledge, information and experience whereas these less experienced consumers do not, and (2) these less experienced consumers tend to act kneejerk in which proactive consumers have to compromisingly share and institutionalise the tradition of the community and brand to these less experienced consumers.
However, this dissertation has focused on the socio-cultural perspective and discards socio-economy; therefore it cannot confirm or disconfirm the position of Cova and Dalli (2009) on their own field that is economic. As LFC fans, they probably try to reach a balance: they loose their money and they are not paid by the team management but they get something else which is as valuable as money. However, we as scholars cannot compute the exchange ratio between the socio-cultural benefits and money. They (fans) can do it. They decide how much intensity they put on their support for the team according to a fine balance sheet which includes also, but not exclusively, economic terms.

This dissertation has discussed the active roles of consumers whereby they collectively form the traditions of LFC and the TIA community through the roles of ‘Brand Warrior’ and ‘Creative Poster’. TIA members protect the LFC brand from opponents, especially from the double exploitation of American co-owners who have invested in the LFC only for filling up their portfolio rather than interesting in football and the culture of LFC. This may dilute the value of the brand. These active consumers employ the community’s collective resources (knowledge, information, and experiences of the LFC brand and co-consuming group) to educate less experienced members. In this way, they institutionalise and regulate less experienced consumers who thus become members of the community by empowering themselves against the club through the protests in order to express their symbolic power. This is the collective consumer authority, namely cultural power, which allows community members to form the resistance against the capitalist.

Although Blazevic and Lievens (2008) have discussed the similar roles of active, passive, and bi-directional creators in regard to the co-production of knowledge between companies and customers, they mainly focus on business-to-business interactions, or service provider and problem solving interactions. This dissertation has extended this coverage to understand value co-creation process by considering consumers’ social and cultural interaction of consumption through the balancing of power. In the other words, this dissertation aims to understand the value co-creation process through the history, traditions, and culture of a brand community.

In Chapter Six it was noted that all TIA members are able to co-create value by playing the roles of provider and beneficiary. This finding has extended Kozinets (1999) and Mathwick et al. (2008) by demonstrating that different consumers in different social structures, or at different levels of consumption, can co-create value. Because of the subjective nature of value, actions from each member of a brand community can lead to the co-creation of value in different ways. For example, a reactive member can interact with other members in order to
form a strong relationship and a sense of community with them through a flow of experience. Moreover, proactive members who are members of brand community can share their resources (knowledge or experiences) with other members in those groups in ways that add to the resources available to the groups as wholes. Importantly, the findings from this study have demonstrated that low-level involvement from consumers can also co-create value, but in the different ways to highly-involved members.

Hence, these member roles are in line with the notions of ‘working consumers’ (Cova and Dalli, 2009) and ‘creativity orientation consumer’ (Kozinets et al., 2008). TIA members can employ their ‘immaterial labour’, ‘general intellect’ (Zwick et al., 2008), or consumer resources in order to co-create benefits for other members: e.g. information, social ties, and experiences. The findings in regard to the beneficiary role are in line with Holt’s (1995) notion of ‘Consuming as Experience’ in that they show that TIA members acting as beneficiaries need to accumulate resources in order for them to co-create value. In other words, TIA members engage themselves with the consumption objects, rituals, traditions, and rules of the games they ‘play’ with other members (Holt, 1995). By acting out the provider role, TIA members employ these resources to construct their self-identity or to distinguish themselves from non-LFC fans.

9.2.2 The Value Co-Creation Process in Brand Communities

This dissertation extends our understanding of the value co-creation process by demonstrating its characteristics. It does not only show the process of problem solving, but also socialisation and creativity. It was mentioned in Chapter Three that value is a multi-dimension concept which can be perceived differently depending on the time, situation, and person. Previous conceptual and empirical studies have demonstrated that value co-creation is a process of problem solving between companies and consumers. However, this study shows that consumers do not only participate in this process in order to solve their personal or technical problems; they also wish to socialise, be creative, and be powerful. Moreover, value co-creation is a controversial concept among marketing scholars; it is not yet clearly defined within the discipline. Thus, in light of the findings of this dissertation, the value co-creation process should be defined thus:

A continuous learning process within a network of collaboration, whereby all participants are liable to gain benefits through engaging, educating, and enriching.

According to this definition, value is unpredictable because each consumer is usually the best judge of what they value and there are differences in each context of value co-creation. Thus,
value creation is not a systematic and predictable process; it is rather a continuous and dynamic process. In this process, all participants employ their ‘skills and knowledge’, ‘general intellects’, or ‘immaterial labours’ to co-create their own unique value, influenced by social and cultural schemas, in order to achieve their life goals.

In Chapter Seven, it was noted that the value co-creation process is a learning process between providers and beneficiaries in which all TIA members can co-create value, and gain value from their interactions. It has extended our understanding of the value co-creation process mentioned in Chapter Three (see also Figure 3.1) by demonstrating its indispensable interdependences: process, resource, and relationship. Through the theory of practices (Schau et al., 2009; Warde, 2005), these components can be seen to be necessary for value co-creation by showing that individual consumers require resources or an understanding of ‘practices’ in order to participate in social processes. Meanwhile, to facilitate the value co-creation process, consumers need to engage themselves with the community and other consumers.

It is worth noting that social structures within online communities or ranking systems are not the only influence on the value co-creation process: TIA members’ resources (experience, knowledge and information) are also important influences on this process. Some members in the higher social structures may only act as beneficiaries because they have less resources to share with other members. However, these members are in higher social structure because they have made enough posts to progress from the lower to higher rankings of the TIA community.

The findings found that the brand community is an independent resource integrator (see also resource integrator: Vargo et al., 2008) whereby all consumers can co-create value independently of other resource integrators (other communities or companies). However, it went on argue by CCT that this community is not absolutely the independent community because consumers need marketplace objects to co-create value with other consumers. In order to better understand the negotiations between individual consumers and brand community, the 3Es model (see Figure 7.3) of the value co-creation process (engaging, educating, and enriching) has been developed to show how consumers may co-create value as independent resource integrators. In the other hand, it is the way of balancing the power within the brand community. Consumers can employ the power as consumer authority to play active roles. For example in the academic community, new academics, as less authority members in the community, need to engage with their peers in order to learn the rituals and
traditions of their community and form bonds with other academics. The greater relationship and engagement with the community, the more authority they contain.

This concept of independent resource integrator helps to answer Denegri-Knott et al.’s (2006) questions about how consumer empowerment allows consumers to control, resist, or co-create their consumption. It also shifts our new understanding of value co-creation from being a one-to-one to many-to-many relationship (Mathwick et al., 2008; Wasko and Faraj, 2005). Therefore, this dissertation does not deny the marketplace interaction, but brand community is viewed as an independent resource integrator in the sense that community members can co-create value within the community without any interactions with outsiders. In the other words, this is another point which would show that companies do not have to be necessarily involved in value distribution and that the value can be created and distributed outside the company field.

This value creation process can also support Schau et al.’s (2009) argument that consumers can contribute operand and operant resources themselves; however they do not demonstrate the roles of participants or consumers. They mention only the value creation process of the collective consumers within brand communities. According to this view, the resources of individual consumers are the co-consuming group’s operand resources (resources used for producing effects, including the knowledge and experience of individuals), while the collective resources (knowledge, information, and experiences about LFC and the TIA community) are the co-consuming group’s operant resources; resources used for activating operand resources or other operant resources to create results. In CCT, these brand community’s operant resources refer to cultural schema (see also Arnould et al., 2006) whereas co-consuming group’s operand resources are individuals’ skills and knowledge (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a) or general intellect (Zwick et al., 2008), which members employ to interact withing the community.

The brand community’s operant resources dominate the individual learning process and new knowledge emerges as new resources when members interact and exchange their knowledge with each other (Blazevic and Lievens, 2008; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). This is a continuous process by which all members learn together (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006). Open-mindedness plays an important role in this learning process (Pini, 2009). At the end of the interaction, resources have been transformed in two ways: 1) the brand community’s new resources, and 2) individual resources; the experiences and knowledge that individuals gain and accumulate from the interaction process. Individuals gradually collect these resources
which are then re-employed by them as collective resources, thus increasing their competence in the co-creation of value.

Although many research streams have mentioned the value co-creation process and the role of consumers in it (see also working consumers: Cova and Dalli, 2009), there is currently only a limited understanding of how this process works. Recently, Schau et al. (2009) have demonstrated macro-perspective of value creation from multi-brand communities by demonstrating 12 practices of value creation. This dissertation has extended Schau et al.’s (2009) by demonstrating micro-perspective of value creation through the dynamic roles and movement of individuals. Moreover, this dissertation also extends Schau et al.’s (2009) co-creation practices by focusing on resources as a centre of discussion.

Therefore, this study proposes another way to understand the value co-creation process; namely by employing a cultural lens to interpret how individual consumers co-create value within the collective group. It was noted in Chapter Three and Four that the value co-creation process emerges through interactions between consumers and companies: dialogue, involvement, and consumption. This also includes possession and co-creation of the symbolic meanings of consumption. Therefore, the emerging value co-creation process has reduced a gap between the roles of producer and consumer. Additionally, terms from S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a) are employed to explain the active roles that consumers can play (i.e. producer or provider) in the co-create value. This role of consumers is similar to the way that consumers employ the global culture to co-construct their own local consumption (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2007; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006). They may also play a reactive role as consumer or beneficiary. Thus, consumers do not only consume experiences; they also co-create experiences through the flow of experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) with their fellow consumers.

9.2.3 Individual Movement of Value Creation

This dissertation extends Schau et al.’s (2009) collective value creation practices by providing another understanding of how individual consumers negotiate within the co-consuming group. In order to demonstrate how individuals negotiate with each other in brand community, the dynamic evolution of consumers within the community is classified through a 2X2 matrix (see Figure 7.4). This evolution challenges the typologies of online members proposed by Kozinets (1999, 2010). He only mentioned this typology through the dimension of engagement – level of involvement and consumer activity. This dissertation has demonstrated the resource intensity as an additional dimension to classify the dynamic status of individuals.
within the community. Additionally, this dissertation has advanced Holt’s (1995) notion of ‘Metaphors for Consuming’ by demonstrating the dynamic movements of individual members within the community of practice; ‘Arrival’ to ‘Player’, ‘Resident’, and ‘Stranger’.

In this 2X2 matrix, individuals can upgrade themselves to higher social rankings by gaining competencies or becoming experts by accumulating knowledge, experiences, and information through interactions. In contrast to Kozinets’s (1999, 2010) static online members who tend to be interested either in social connections or consumption objects, this dissertation has found that consumers are interested both in social connections and consumption objects. Thus, LFC fans participate in TIA in order to consume objects (i.e. LFC and football in general) and also to discuss or share their everyday life narratives with each other (as they do in the offline world).

These processes are extended in Figure 7.5 by demonstrating the roles of consumers, the flow of activities, the flow of resources, and the entry points of each consumer into the continuous learning or ‘evolvability process’ (Pralahad and Ramaswamy, 2004b) in order to explain how the value co-creation process works within a community of practice. It also adds further insights: (1) a classification according to what subjects do and not according to their status and (2) a dynamic evolution of this classification, since beneficiaries may become providers by gaining competencies. In this process, all consumers can act as beneficiaries; however, only some consumers, who have a high level of resources (knowledge, information and experiences), can act as both providers and beneficiaries. Beneficiary consumers only participate in the flow of experience in the expectation of hedonistic satisfaction. This process is not only negotiated between individuals in the co-consuming group, but also between more experienced and less experienced consumers.

Hence, according to S-D logic, the co-consuming group acts as a source of value or a platform for value co-creation whereby consumers can interact, participate, and converse with each other (Arvidsson, 2006; Blazevic and Lievens, 2008; Schau et al., 2009). With the power of the computer-mediated community, the online community contributes not only to one-to-one, but also and many-to-many relationships whereby individuals gradually engage in the online community of practices. Interaction within the network advances from one-to-many (one way communication through email) to many-to-many interactions (multi-way communication through a computer-mediated environment) so that consumers are able to share information with companies and other consumers (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). For example, on the social networking site, Facebook, consumers can participate with companies and other consumers
through ‘Becoming a Fan’ of something (NEXT, the fashion retail brand, has employed this method to co-create value with consumers and the co-consuming group on Facebook).

9.2.4 Unequal Resources as Causes of Conflicts and Balancing of Power

Within the value co-creation process, individuals employ their skills and knowledge, namely human capital, to interact with other consumers and negotiate with collective groups in order to achieve their identity projects, statuses, and even life goals. Social interactions are a way in which individuals invest their resources – skills and knowledge- and expect something in return. The higher human capital, the more powerful consumers contain the consumer authority in the social interaction. Thus, this dissertation has extended the set of data collected for this study to Bourdieu’s theory of capital (1986) in order to understand the value co-creation process within brand community. This dissertation demonstrates how consumers employ social and cultural resources in order to interact and co-construct the meaning of consumption (see also Holt, 1997; Schroeder, 2009). However, the value creation found in this dissertation does not only provide positive consequences as mentioned in S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a), but also negative consequences, called as ‘non-desirable consequences’ (Portes, 1998).

It was mentioned in Chapter Eight that unequal resources can cause of conflicts within the community and in this way contribute to the value co-creation process (this is confirmed by Avery’s work on the Porsche Brand Community, discussed further below: Avery, 2007). This is an example of balancing the power. These conflicts and power can be explained that some consumers who have real experience with the consumption objects e.g. LFC fans attend most of the home games at Anfield and have seen the trophy room are claiming more cultural capital and exercise it online. These kinds of conflicts can be viewed as ‘resource resistance’ (Lusch et al., 2008) or obstacles to interactions. On the other hand, it is an exercise of power in order to dominate the community. However, this may be seen as the condescension (Bourdieu, 1989) that instead of levelling the unequal resources, it may hammer in the widen distinction of members.

This finding is in line with Mathwick et al.’s understanding of Peer-to-Peer communities (Mathwick et al., 2008) in that consumers have collectively formed relational and cognitive social capital through norms of reciprocity and voluntarism (see also Figure 7.3). However, these norms of social capital may contribute the negative consequences (Alder and Kwon, 2002; Portes, 1998) whereby a number of free-riders may increase because they expect other members to always share resources. Moreover, this finding identifies two additional forms of
social capital: democracy and sportsmanship. The former means that there are no privileged consumers within co-consuming groups. All consumers are free to converse or participate in their respective communities as long as they follow the rules. Furthermore, it plays an important role in forming and strengthening the community (see also Jenkins, 2010). The latter extends the ‘democracy’ environment in which consumers may argue or have serious discussions; however, consumers must also be open-minded and prepared to learn from different points-of-view. On the other hand, both democracy and sportsmanship may limit the flow of experience (Alder and Kwon, 2002) that experienced members cease the arguments by using the norms of social capital to dominate members.

These processes could be considered as the way that consumers are balancing the power through the social capital in order to solve the conflicts or remove resource resistance. In this situation, experienced consumers employ the compromise strategy to generate the ‘real power’ to all consumers by increasing their expert power in order to eliminate or reduce the domination within the community. Therefore, it would be concluded that social capital can provide consumer authority to co-create value or social interaction within the brand community without any restrictions or domination. On the other hand, this is the way of ‘downward levelling norms’ (Portes, 1998) which dominant or experienced members might unintentionally oppress less experienced members to obey their power. Bourdieu (1977) calls this process as symbolic violence.

In contrast to the Porsche Brand Community (Avery, 2007), in which conflicts have led to some members disassociating themselves from the mainstream community, conflicts within the TIA community have helped to form the unity of the community. Experienced consumers tend to share their resources with others in order to support less experienced consumers and also to help other experienced consumers embody the traditions and culture of the TIA community (see also Bourdieu, 1986). As Figure 7.3 shows, these forms of capital are transformed through the educational process whereby consumers can collectively accumulate the different forms of cultural capital by learning how to post, participate, and interact in the TIA community. This is in line with the conflict between anti-Hummers and Hummer car enthusiasts which contribute Hummer owners to co-create value and strong brand (Ludiecke, Thompson and Giesler, 2010).

Through social interactions, consumers are able to accumulate both the collective resources of the community (social and cultural capital) and their own personal resources (human and symbolic capital). Human capital plays an important role as individuals’ competencies (skills
and knowledge) which enable the negotiation of other forms of capital: social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital. The way that individuals accumulate human capital in the online community is similar to the way that employees gain experience from on-the-job training (Becker, 1964). In order for them to accumulate human capital, individuals need to be educated by participating in discussions and arguments on the TIA community. Consumers who have high levels of social, cultural, and human capital may also contain a high level of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital provides particular consumers with power (or what Stringfellow and McMeeking (2009) have described as ‘the right to be listened to’). Thus, different consumers may have unequal human capital, or unequal resources, leading to conflicts among them. However, human capital helps individuals to co-create other forms of capital and resolve conflicts among themselves.

In contrast to the Porsche brand community (Avery, 2007), these conflicts have the effect of uniting all TIA members and other LFC fans within the ‘YNWA’ tradition. This tradition contributes to the co-creation of cultural power which forms the consumer empowerment against the opponents e.g. the Sun newspaper, American co-owners, and so on. They can employ this cultural power to protect the damaging of their brand and tradition of consumption. The conflicts stimulate TIA members to negotiate social capital and cultural capital (expert power) in order to create a strong sense of community and to combat the stereotype of badly-behaved consumers as the way community members do in the neighbourhood (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, it can conclude that while unequal resources, on the one hand, are a cause of conflicts among members of the co-consuming group and other, they may reinforce the solidity of the brand community through the balancing of power. On the other hand, the solidarity of community may create the myopia among the fellow members by which they may overlook outsiders’ perspectives and insiders’ faults (Alder and Kwon, 2002). So, it may also obstruct an opportunity to gain new knowledge or resources from social interaction.

9.3 CONTRIBUTIONS

The outcomes of this dissertation have been divided into two parts: theoretical contributions and managerial implications. The outcomes of this study have been made possible by the theories that are discussed in chapters Two, Three and Four.
9.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

This section will evaluate the theoretical constructs discussed in chapters Two, Three, and Four: S-D logic, CCT, Value Co-Creation, Brand Community, Consumption Experience, and the Forms of Capital. The theoretical contributions made by the use that this study has made of these theories toward consumer research are presented here through consumer sacrifice and the notion of fanmunity.

9.3.1.1 Consumer Sacrifice

There is a dialog from a film ‘The Perfect Catch’ by Farrelly and Farrelly (2005) that:

You love the Red Sox, but have they ever loved you back?

(Ryan, a young baseball fellow)

In this scene from DVD, Ryan, a young baseball fellow, asks Ben in comparing the love toward the baseball team – the Yankee Red Sox and Ben’s girlfriend. At the end, he found out that he loves to have a happy life with his girlfriend and loves to suffer with his baseball fandom. This provides the example of sacrifice that Ben devotes to his baseball fandom. Therefore, sacrifice would be one of the best answers to respond Cova and Dalli’s (2009) a question ‘Why are consumers not paid?’

YNWA is a good example to describe how these LFC fans co-create the sacrifice through their ‘devote to suffer’. It is the way that consumers obtain the power over the company. LFC fans, especially TIA members, cannot be paid in any manner, because sacrifice cannot be rewarded. Sacrifice is something that is made for the sake of it. Whenever they receive rewards, it is not a sacrifice, and they also lost their power.

As mentioned earlier through the capitalist lens of working consumers (Cova and Dalli, 2009), double exploitation is an aspect of the value co-creation process whereby consumers are exploited by companies to produce benefits for them. This dissertation has explored a consumer environment in which double exploitation is not produced by the value co-creation process. Because consumption is viewed as one of the value co-creation process, consumers do not always expect economic benefits in return, although they may employ objects or consumption for the purposes of achieving satisfaction, experiences, symbolic meanings, consumer resistance, or self-identity (Holt, 1995).
The findings of this study clarify the reasons for why consumers cannot be paid; ‘devote to suffer’ and ‘voluntary’. Firstly, LFC supporters and TIA members have long been disappointed by LFC’s performance in the Premier League (no trophy for 20 years) and also several tragic circumstances (e.g. around one hundred fans crushed to death during the Hillsborough disaster). Secondly, each football supporter spends a lot of money on club jerseys, tickets, souvenirs, and travel expenses to attend matches. Secondly, through the norm of ‘voluntarism’, moderators voluntarily devote their time, competencies, and knowledge to the community in the form of management without expecting any monetary returns for their services. Voluntarism also includes the energy, time, knowledge, and skills that members dedicate to the community.

This is a form of ‘sacrifice’ whereby consumers dedicate their lives, money, time, and energy to brands without expecting any monetary returns. In this respect, sacrifice can potentially be rewarded with money, but in this study, sacrifice is something that is made for the sake of itself (it may be viewed as ‘spirituality’: Holbrook, 2006a). In the other words, it does not result in pecuniary rewards. However, sacrifice can lead to the positive value of strong commitment among consumers within communities (Van Lange et al., 1997). Moreover, sacrifice may be the linchpin of our understanding between socio-cultural and socio-economic within brand community.

Data shows that double exploitation may not a prominent threat in communities of practice, especially in the context of LFC fans, because consumers do not always expect economic benefits; instead they expect ‘satisfaction’. Moreover, companies may not expect to gain monetary profits from their business practices; however, they may search for goodwill or renown. For example, companies may wish to gain sustainability, consumer loyalty, or an excellent corporate image, whereas consumers may wish to extend their self, gain group membership, save money or enjoy their lives.

Thus, value is subjective, uncountable and incomparable; it is not merely economic value. For these reasons, this dissertation would propose that consumers may discard the economic value in the value co-creation process. However, we should agree that there is also double exploitation within the brand community, but in some circumstances, consumers may choose to ignore the exploitation. Hence, sacrifice is not only the willingness of consumers to share knowledge, experiences, and stories in order to co-create the values of brands; it is also their willingness to use their economic resources or money for the purposes of purchasing or possessing branded objects without the expectation of monetary benefits in return.
9.3.1.2 The Notion of ‘Fanmunity’: New Construct of Community

From the discussion above, the passion is the main drive to influence consumer sacrifice. This finding may extend our understanding of brand community through a new form of community where its members do not only co-create value or consumption around the boundary of brand, but also everyday of life and strong passion of consumers. This kind of community would be called as ‘fanmunity’ which is derived from fandom (i.e. fans collectively, as of a motion-picture star or a professional game or sport, Dictionary.com, 2010) and munity (i.e. freedom, Dictionary.com, 2010). In this sense, fanmunity is:

...[a] group of uncontrollable, sacrificial, passionate and online consumers who co-create the cultural code, and heavily devote in social, culture, emotion and economic resources for the community, consumption and the particular brand.

This definition is constructed within the idea of sport fandom, especially football fandom. The word ‘fan’ is employed to construct this definition for the group of active consumers who have strong passionate to the brand, the consumption objects, and the collective group. Its notion is different from general spectators. While sport spectators are people who willing to spend more money, time, and emotion for following and watching their favourite sports and purchasing merchandises of these sport clubs for satisfying their leisure time (Trial and James, 2001), fans’ unique characteristic which differ from mere spectators are that fans devote strongly themselves to the clubs or teams (Zillmann and Paulus, 1993), ready to get the positive (wins) and negative (losses) results (Hirt et al., 1992), and have the strong sense of community and social identity (Richardson, 2004).

The notion of fans can be considered in another perspective as the one who falls in love with person, film, novel, character, sport team, and so on (Hills, 2002). So, fandom is used in this construct for demonstrating the strong passion and emotional attachment with brand and the group. Being fans, they sacrifice their resources to the brand or consumption object with the strong commitment, engagement, dedication, emotion and passion. Although we may consider the fandom through the notion of fan culture which is drawn from the discourse of media and culture (Jenkins, 2006; Hills, 2002), fanmunity can provide our understanding of community where consumers play dynamic roles of value creation (provider and beneficiary) outside the company field. Thus, consumers in fanmunity do not only actively consume the objects or employ objects to construct the symbolic meaning e.g. self-identity, status, experience and so forth, but also have strong passion with brand and the community. Moreover, it would be concluded that sacrifice is an important aspect to make this fanmunity different from other types of community.
9.3.2 Managerial Implications

The value co-creation process is an emergent paradigm which marketers accept as the new dominant logic. It has been discussed through different perspectives: e.g. S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a), co-creation of value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000), and working consumers (Cova and Dalli, 2009). This dissertation has shifted the focus on the value co-creation process from company-consumer to consumer-consumer interactions. It contributes to clarify the current thought in marketing on active consumers in 3 ways: 1) How company can manage these active consumers? 2) What is company role for co-creation of value with active consumers? 3) What can company do to co-create value with consumers in value co-creation process?

9.3.2.1 Managing the Brand Community

This dissertation has synthesised S-D logic with the cultural framework of CCT in order to understand value co-creation within brand community. This study shows that active consumers pose both opportunities and threats to companies depending on whether companies engage with brand communities without obstructing them or for commercial purposes. The findings of this study show that companies need to change their current perspectives and strategy in order to manage brand communities and active consumers. Although some scholars (e.g. Arvidsson, 2005; Gabriel and Lang, 2008; Zwick et al., 2008) mentioned that active consumers are unmanageable and uncontrollable, this does not mean that companies cannot manage consumers. Firstly, marketers need to engage with consumers’ social interactions in order to understand their collective resources. These resources can contribute to companies’ brand strategies and thus their ability to co-create value with consumers. Companies can employ these resources to strengthen their brands (Allen et al., 2008; Holt, 2004; Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling, 2006).

Secondly, an important aspect of value co-creation within brand communities is consumer resistance to companies (Denegri-Knott et al., 2006; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004); therefore, companies need to develop ‘trustworthiness’ with consumers. Companies can also provide brand community with in-depth information which draws consumers into the interaction process. As mentioned earlier, companies cannot directly manage or control brand communities (even company-sponsored brand communities). However, they can indirectly manage brand communities. Companies need to become close to their consumers. For example, companies may work closely with a community’s moderators or board administrators. The TIA community shows that there are conflicts between LFC supporters...
(including TIA members) and the club (management level and American co-owners). Cooperation between the community and the club can clarify implicit rumours or conflict between the club and LFC supporters. Moreover, it also reduces the anger or resistance of fans who have increasingly expressed their empowerment. On the other hand, it creates a friendly atmosphere and enables future cooperation among them.

It is worth noting that to engage in the community, companies need to understand the most powerful consumers in brand communities. In the TIA community there are two main groups of consumers: more experienced and less experienced members. The former group consists of members who always fight to protect the brand and also provide relevant information to institutionalise less experienced members. Marketers should focus on this group by providing them with information. Moreover, marketers can invite these active consumers into the company meeting in order to provide consumers honour and awareness of consumer empowerment. In contrast, less experienced members tend to be media victims who are sensitive to negative rumours or news. Marketers should carefully watch these less experienced members because this group may have a negative impact on brands through word of mouth.

9.3.2.2 From Producer to Facilitator

This dissertation does not only address the new role of consumers (active roles), but also companies’ roles in the value co-creation whereby they need to perform another role as 'facilitator'. Consumers have moved into the realm of production by producing and creating their own consumption (i.e. ‘fan culture’: Jenkins, 2006). Within this culture, consumers can co-create meaningful communities of practice and provide information, knowledge or experiences. By studying this culture, marketers can participate with consumers in the co-consuming group in order to facilitate or share company resources with consumers. These resources may be materials which consumers can employ to co-create value with other consumers (e.g. pictures, video clips, statistics, rewards, and so forth). This serves to strengthen the relationship between the company and brand communities and also to naturally embody consumers with the brand. This role would benefit companies by increasing the ‘loyalty’ and ‘relationship’ that consumers have with brand. However, marketers should be concerned with the privacy of consumer proximity within the brand community by avoiding commercial or propaganda communications. Moreover, a company may develop meaningful signs such as stickers, badges, T-shirts, etc., which express the coordination between
consumers and community, and also the brand, in order to extend the brand loyalty and sense of community among consumers.

9.3.2.3 Value Proposition as Brand Identity

As FP7 states, ‘the enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions’ (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a: 7). Accordingly, companies need to develop value propositions in order to co-create value with consumers. In this way, marketers can employ consumers’ resources to develop value propositions (as shown in Figure 3.1), through the broken line, from consumers’ to companies’ operant resources. This dissertation supports S-D logic by demonstrating the active roles played by consumers in the value co-creation process in which consumers are value co-creators. This study shows that companies cannot produce ‘package value’ from their own perspectives (as is demonstrated by LFC knights who act as Brand Warriors). When they are presented with brand warriors, companies cannot change their brand strategies if consumers resist (see also in Chapter Six). For example, LFC knights, alongside other LFC supporters, disagreed with the decision of the club’s co-owners to sack the team’s manager, Rafael Benitez in 2008. Their resistance grew to encompass a much broader range of LFC supporters, thus forcing the club to postpone this plan. Finally, LFC supporters’ empowerment influences the club to extend Rafael Benitez’s contract to 2014.

Therefore, marketers can develop value propositions through the communication of brand identity. For example, in terms of the notion of ‘snapshot aesthetic’ (Schroeder, 2008), marketers can adapt the snapshot image of their advertising campaign. These snapshot ads function as value propositions which communicate to consumers what brand can do for them: e.g. consumer identity projects, status making, masculinity, and so forth. Moreover, they also allow consumers to interpret the meaning of ads which they can then employ to achieve their life goals.

9.4 LIMITATIONS

There are some limitations to this study which need to be acknowledged and explained. These limitations can be identified with the method and context of this study.

As Kozinets (2002b) has noted, data from netnographic research cannot identify individual or personal details and there are many free riders who come and go within the place of study (the online context). However, this dissertation does not intend to include demographic data in the
analysis; instead, it has emphasised social interactions and the process of value co-creation from activated members who still participate within the TIA community. Although this dissertation has observed and analysed the individual level of process, it focuses only on how individuals engage in the collective process of value co-creation.

Moreover, this dissertation has focused only on one brand community (TIA fan-site) which relates to a particular context. These issues raise the concern of generalising data from one group (a football fan-site) to other brand communities which may have different settings. Therefore, applying the findings of this dissertation to other types of brand community requires careful consideration. For example, the majority of TIA members are male and football remains a male-dominated pastime; therefore, it may be problematic to extend the findings of this study to female consumers.

Additionally, it is realised that the relationship between the producer (the Football Club) and consumers (supporters or fans) is blurred in as much as supporters often play an important role at the management level in many football clubs (e.g., Stockport County, Exeter City, and so forth: SupportersDirect, 2008). Moreover, local supporters tend to have a strong relationship with the history of their local football club through ties of kinship or community. Therefore, studying the case of English football may illustrate a limitation for applying such a methodology to other products or services because the relationship between producers and consumers of other types of products or services may be viewed as being characterised by the roles of seller and buyer and tend to have no relationship with the history of firms. Thus, this dissertation has placed utmost emphasis on the value co-creation process beyond the marketplace in as much as there is no economic exchange. Moreover, it has also focused on the roles of TIA members within the value co-creation process in order to understand how value co-creation works rather than what value is.

Another limitation of this dissertation is the understanding that is provided of ‘brand loyalty’. This is because within the context of football fandom, ‘brand switching’ or changing to support other football clubs may be viewed as shameful behaviour (Richardson, 2004). Therefore, it is difficult to find examples of football supporters changing club loyalties. In this respect, it is acceptable for a local football fan who supports the local football club and also supports another football club; for example in Hornby’s (1996) Fever Pitch, an Arsenal fan has supported additional football club, Oxford United FC, when he relocated to live in Oxford. However, these football supporters have provided an example of consumer empowerment against a company.
Additionally, this study only employed participant and non-participant observation because it is difficult to access TIA members in the offline world. Many community members declined to be interviewed face-to-face, but they were happy to answer questions through email or PM. It was difficult for me to gain face-to-face access to TIA members because I was not known personally by them. In contrast, the online community is a place where it is normal for strangers to interact. During the data collection process, I received greater cooperation from higher status or ranking members of the TIA community. I have employed non-participant observation and maintained a low profile on the TIA community in order to remain unobtrusive and gain a more natural data set. Moreover, I made use of personal messages in order to gather additional data from some members.

9.5 FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation has demonstrated the value co-creation process within the context of a brand community of football supporters. The findings of this dissertation may pursue a generalisation issue with other communities because of the peculiarities of brand communities that are formed around football as a consumption object. However, this study only focused on football fandom to the extent that it is a consumption object which consumers employ to co-create value within an online community. Moreover, the dominant members of the TIA community are male. Therefore, further research should be done to extend our understanding of the value co-creation process to different contexts or types of brand community: e.g. female dominated or mixed groups, groups which focus on different products and services, and non-western groups.

In order to extend our understanding of value co-creation through the notion of working consumers (Cova and Dalli, 2009), further research is necessary to demonstrate how consumers can co-create brand value. Future research may be enriched by employing different concepts such as brand culture (Schroeder, 2009), metaphors of consuming (Holt, 1995), fan culture (Jenkins, 2006), or spirituality (Skousgaard, 2006) to understand active consumers. Because constructing new definition of community is not the main objective of this dissertation, the discussion of fanmunity is not discussed in details both theoretical and empirical discussions. Therefore, further research may extend our understanding of fanmunity by extending our inquiries to different community contexts in order to extend the double exploitation and working consumers. However, further research may also focus on
understanding how we can analyse the credibility of posts on internet forums because most data gathered from online communities comes from posts.

For example, it might employ the notion of ‘working consumers’ to understand how collective groups can control the credibility and trustworthiness of strangers within online communities. Further research may explore working consumers to investigate whether there is the double exploitation within co-consuming group and how brand community reacts against it. Moreover, regarding to the historic culture of brand found in this dissertation and Ludiecke \textit{et al.} (2010), further research could place on the understanding of how consumers co-create and inscribe history of brand culture through their every of life.

One issue emerging through the understanding of the conflicts among consumers is the ‘authenticity of LFC fans.’ As mentioned earlier, some consumers may be confident that they are more authentic than others because they are local fans who go for the most of home games at Anfield and have seen real trophies exhibited in Trophy room at Anfield, while others do not. In contrast, some consumers may be confident that they are authentic because they love and dedicate to LFC in the same way with the local LFC fans do. This provides further direction of research for investigating how cultural capital relates to the authenticity.

Another issue of further research is the global ideology of brand (Askegaard, 2006) by investigating how the relation of macro and micro-social level. Further work could place on the conflict between local and global consumers or to understand the localisation power of brand. It may extend Pongsakornrungsilp \textit{et al.’s} (2008b) Left Behind: Local Fans of Global Brand by investigating how local consumers maintain local culture of brand from the globalisation. This issue may include the co-creation of myth and cultural meaning within brand communities.

Given the nature of my research methodology, netnography, this dissertation aims to develop rather than test theory. Therefore, further research should be done on the quantitative methods for testing the theory of value co-creation process. For example, it might be interesting to investigate the level of value co-creation through the 3Es (Engaging, Educating, and Enriching) or consumer roles (provider and beneficiary). It might also be extended to investigate the casual relationship between symbolic capital and the other forms of capital: human capital, social capital, and cultural capital. Moreover, it would be fruitful to employ interviews as an additional form of data collection in order to improve our understanding of the value co-creation process and why consumers engage themselves.
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