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BUILDING DIGITAL BRAND RELATIONSHIPS: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN BRANDS AND
CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT

The relationships that people form with the products they use each day as well as the company that manufactures them are constantly changing. In today's digital marketplace, the advent of the Internet has allowed consumers to gain access to product information faster than ever before in history. With this new technology, companies are beginning to think about new ways to reach out to customers and gain their attention in a sea of advertising and public relations information. This analysis provides an overview of the development of consumer brand relationships and also analyzes how companies are currently using Facebook to build digital brand relationships with their customers. Furthermore, this work will help companies realize the importance of building relationships with their customers in the digital world. An analysis of Susan Fournier's dimensions of Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) including self-connection and interdependence is discussed in addition to the concept of relationship warmth.

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Introduction

The ultimate question plaguing sales and marketing teams surrounds the idea of building long term customer relationships. During the initial stages of product exposure, companies are focused on making their brands known to the consumer, especially if the brand is new to the marketplace. Various promotional strategies that companies employ are aimed at intriguing new customers to consider buying a company's products, or to entice current customers to upgrade or buy more of a certain product. The customer may not actively think about the relationship that he/she has between a product and the company, but sales and marketing teams are actively focused on developing and maintaining these relationships.

The relationships that companies, products, and people develop amongst one another occur in the early stages of exposure and product usage as well as when they are being consumed or utilized. Over the past century, the relationships people have with brands continue to evolve. In the past, consumers tended to develop relationships through limited ways, such as interacting with the product in the store or talking with a sales person and ordering the product from him/her. Now, with the advent of the Internet and various technological developments, people's relationships with the products they use are changing. As more shopping occurs online, the relationship between a customer and the product is not as much a "physical relationship" as it has been in the past. People buy products without ever seeing or touching them in person. In a way, the relationship can now be seen as a "digital" relationship, and has become more tacit, implied, and abstract.

Throughout the course of history, companies have recognized how important it is to develop long term relationships with their customers. The consumer brand relationships that people form occur within the context of other consumers as well as the brand. The consumer is connected with the brand, and is also connected with the other consumers that use the brand. The brand is the connecting link

between one individual user and other users. This triangular relationship also connects users with other users.

What is a Consumer Brand Relationship? A Literature Review

Consumer brand relationships can be distinguished into two categories, relationships between the consumer and the brand, and relationships between the consumer and other consumers that use a particular product or brand. This first section of the literature review will detail the relationships between an individual consumer and the brand.

The ways in which people are connected to the brands and their parent companies can be best described by relating these concepts to the relationships people form with one another. According to Susan Fournier, author of *Consumers and their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research*, the relationships people form with products can affect one's sense of self. These relationships become part of how we define ourselves, and how we portray ourselves when we are in front of others. Fournier's research defines relationships on three dimensions, the psychological, the sociocultural and the relational (Fournier, 1998).

The types of relationships we have with brands occur partly as a psychological construct. Therefore, the feelings we encounter on a day to day basis affect our feelings towards particular brands. For example, when I visit my grandparents, I am always welcomed by the smell of my grandfather when he uses his Old Spice body wash. When I am in the store picking a new body wash, or smell the scent when other people use it, I am reminded of my grandfather every time I smell his scent. This reinforces this brand because it has an emotional connection to me. Also, Fournier promotes the idea that certain life moments affect our relationships with others and with brands, and include moments like graduating from high school, moving to college, getting married, or celebrating the birth of a child. Many common products are used during these life moments and as we transition from one stage in life to another, we develop relationships with new products and continue to enhance relationships that already exist (Fournier, 1998). For example, some people remember the first time they tried certain foods, like Oreos, Cheerios, or ice cream. After their first encounter and repeat product usage, in many cases, people form

a bond with the brand. They know it, trust it, and enjoy using it. Furthermore, when one moves away for the first time, and now begins to make one's own consumption choices, if they loved Oreos as a child, they may continue to buy them. And as a person begins to experience new foods or new products, new relationships are formed. This does not mean that old relationships will die, although it is possible they will.

Fournier also discusses how relationships contain a sociocultural component. Our lifestyle, age, and gender also play important roles in the brand relationships we form throughout our lives (Fournier, 1998). If one's job involves a lot of travel, that individual has probably developed a keen eye for products that enhance the travel experience such as travel websites, magazines and books, and technology products that assist in making travel easier and more enjoyable. As one ages, one enters into relationships with new products such as age defying makeups, beard coloring products, and various clothing items (Fournier, 1998). Also at a young age, people are exposed to certain brands over others and form relationships simply because there are a male or a female. For example, boys are taught at a young age to play with cars and trucks and girls play with dolls and houses. It is fascinating how early on in one's life, relationships with brands are built and how they are enhanced as one ages.

The final component that Fournier highlights as a component of relationships is the concept that relationships are "relational". As part of the word "relationship", relational refers to the idea that the bonds we form with others and with products, ... "exist within the context of other relationships" (Fournier, 1998). A simple example of this idea is one's relationship with a brand of peanut butter. Because peanut butter often is used in conjunction with jelly, the relationship one has with the jelly is related to the relationship with the peanut butter. The peanut butter and jelly are thus bundled together in the mind of the consumer.

According to Fournier, people "...are not just buying brands because they like them or because they work well. They are involved in relationships with a collectivity of brands so as to benefit from the

meanings they add to their lives” (Fournier, 1998). Some relationships people form are out of functional benefit where as others are more related to emotional or psychological constructs (Fournier, 1998).

Adding more credibility to consumer brand relationship management, Leonard Berry and Lewis Carbone, in their article *Build Loyalty Through Experience Management*, discuss the need for businesses to create value for customers through creating an emotionally targeted experience. They believe that all aspects of marketing communications should be focused on a consistent message and creating an experience for the customer (Berry, 2011). It is not just about creating a great functioning product. According to their research, customers return and keep buying from a company more from their total experience of purchase rather than just the functional and tangible benefits that the product provides (Berry, 2011).

Furthermore, they state that companies develop relationships and loyalty with customers through several sets of “clues” that the customer implicitly interprets when forming an impression of the company/product. The clue sets include functional clues, mechanic clues, and humanic clues. The functional clues involve the physical properties or aspects of a product. The mechanical clues include all remaining aspects of the company, including store layout, design, atmosphere, and the sensing elements a customer experiences. Finally, the humanic clues involve the behaviors of employees and how they treat current and potential customers (Berry, 2011). Some other humanic clues include a sales representative’s as well as the company’s appearance, demeanor, attitude and enthusiasm (Berry, 2011). All of these clues blend together for the customer when they are creating an impression of a brand and forming a relationship. This article will allow me to establish that digital brand relationships also involve the blend of these three sets of clues, but are altered slightly to meet the needs of a digital environment.

The second part of my literature review focuses on the relationships that consumers form with other consumers as well as the brand/product that they utilize. Joe Dysart's article entitled *Build Community to Build Brand* discusses how online brand communities offer customers the ability to see online feedback and decide to make a purchase based on the help of others. He quoted a study called "The Art of Engaging the Customer; Proactive Steps to Delivering a Differentiated Customer Experience" that found that approximately 83% of respondents say they are influenced to purchase a certain product based on online reviews (Dysart, 2011). Also, he notes that even one single negative review can harm the reputation of a brand or company. From the businesses' perspective, online communities offer different ways to connect with customers, including discussion boards, blogging, audio and video uploads, as well as chat-rooms for customers to communicate with one another. The main source of benefit highlighted here is the element of customer interaction or conversation. In an interactive way online, customers can talk with one another about prior purchases, as well as the company can gain insight into what customers are thinking about their products, and the company can then adjust their marketing strategies to meet the needs of their customers. This article highlights a key attribute of a digital relationship: the element of human-like conversation and interaction. Customers and companies alike can learn about products, customer insights, and feelings that may not be available or apparent in conventional purchase methods such as in the store or over the phone.

James McAlexander, John Schouten, and Harold Koenig also have done extensive research surrounding brand community development. In their article, *Building Brand Community*, the authors discuss the development of customer-experiential relationships and the importance of building brand communities (McAlexander, 2002). Brand communities, in their eyes, provide several key benefits. These communities offer people the ability to share resources that include emotional and cognitive aspects. The ultimate goal of a community is to develop a sense a meaning around a brand. The

community allows the customer to think, what does the community provide for me, and what do others think about the brand?

Based on prior research, the authors cite several developmental models of brand communities and brand relationships. The “traditional” model of a consumer brand relationship is between the customer and the brand. This is a singular relationship that exists in isolation of other consumers and other key stakeholders (McAlexander, 2002). A second developmental model was pioneered by Muniz and O’Guinn in 2001. They believe that brand relationships are more complex than the simple consumer brand relationship. They believe that customers are connected to other customers as well as the brand, further enhancing the definition of consumer brand relationships. Finally, the authors of *Building Brand Community* believe that the ultimate consumer brand relationship is a part of a larger community of stakeholders, including the brand, the product, the customer, and the marketer (McAlexander, 2002).

The research that I will present and analyze will add an additional dimension to the analysis completed by McAlexander and colleagues. While previous research has been focused on defining the relationships that people have within the context of other social relationships, not much research has been focused on including the element of digital interaction amongst all of these different parties (consumers, other consumers, marketers, companies, etc.). My research will hope to identify how the interactions amongst many of these parties in consumer brand relationships act synergistically to influence the individual relationship that a customer has with a product, and that these interactions are compounded and positively influenced by the digital world with the Internet and social media sites like Facebook.

Some researchers have conducted research that finds that customers sometimes develop relationships with brands that very closely mimic human relationships and interactions. Pankaj Aggarwal, in his study, *The Effects of Brand Relationship Norms on Consumer Attitudes and Behavior*,

cites how some people form an intense relationship with brands and even consider the product a member of their family (Aggarwal, 2004). The development of these relationships stems from the fact that many brands showcase human qualities or emotions, and therefore customers label the relationship as being somewhat human-like in nature. Also, as brands are given this human relationship type, Aggarwal believes that some people think that the normal rules of social interaction guide our behavior towards that particular product (Aggarwal, 2004).

He also discusses the two main kinds of consumer relationships, exchange and communal. In an exchange relationship, people are often business partners that are working to develop business contacts or to buy a product or service. It almost always involves the exchange of money, and is often a one-time purchase and the relationship is not long lasting. Communal relationships, on the other hand, are similar to those human relationships people have with close family, friends, and their spouses (Aggarwal, 2004). Communal relationships highlight the importance of caring for others, and doing something not always for a benefit in return, which is often what guides the boundaries of behavior for an exchange relationship.

With a focus on digital relationships, what impact does the exchange and communal relationship mindset have on defining what a digital relationship becomes? I believe that digital relationships, depending on the stage of their development, occur as both exchange and communal relationships at different points in time. When a customer is first introduced to a product, they may look at online reviews of the product to determine if the product is worthy of purchase, and also to gain insights into the positive and negative experiences previous customers have had. To describe this search process at the initial stages of product awareness in human terms, reading reviews may be seen as a more distanced and cold process. It appears in part impersonal because personal connections are not being made, or if they are, the relationships are brief and with complete strangers. A person may read an online review and make a decision, but then never use that company's products ever again – this would fall under an

exchange relationship for that one interaction. Conversely, the more a person utilizes a brand's products or has been exposed to them in the past, the more likely I believe they are to develop a more "communal" relationship. As people use a product, and enjoy their experience, they tell their friends, and feel more compelled to write online reviews and testimonials of their experiences. These types of communal interactions may be categorized as more warm, humanic, and open. Some common examples of brands that people have formed communal relationships include Volkswagen and Apple. Aggarwal states that one advertising executive he knows tattooed the Apple logo on his chest, the ultimate relationship outcome and loyalty that Apple can hope to receive from consumers (Aggarwal, 2004). The relationship will also be influenced based on the level of personal investment an individual user wants to put into the relationship, just as this occurs in regular human interactions amongst friends or families.

The previous analysis has looked at relationships within the context of consumers and the brand and consumers and other users. As these two separate relationship elements converge and exist simultaneously, the relationships become intertwined and influenced by one another. The Internet has greatly helped the development of relationships amongst product users, the brand, and the company that owns the brand as well.

In David Meerman Scott's book *The New Rules of Marketing & PR*, he discusses the World Wide Web and the relationships people form with one another on the Internet within a metaphor of a city (Scott, 2011). Many of the relationships formed through various mechanisms on the Internet could be characterized as communal relationships. Consumers, along with brands and companies, interact together on the Internet, much like they do in human relationship. Scott shows how different sites on the Internet act and perform different functions similar in a way to which a city operates. For example, he states that eBay is like a garage sale, and corporate websites are like the store fronts along a major city block. Interestingly, Scott discusses how social media and social networking sites are like, "...the bars,

private clubs, and cocktail parties of the city” (Scott, 2011). Here, Scott believes, is where marketers can most effectively reach out to their customer base and get to know them better.

Continuing with the cocktail party reference, Scott believes marketers are faced with several choices about how to communicate when attending “the parties.” Two of the most important questions he poses ask: Do you listen more than you speak, and, Do you try to meet every single person, or do you have a few great conversations? (Scott, 2011). Sometimes a great deal of information can be learned about someone by listening to them. From a marketing standpoint, it is especially important to know and understand one’s customers and what they are looking for in products as well as their general tastes and interests. If one goes into the party talking only about themselves, it may be perceived as a turnoff, and the amount of speaking versus listening needs to be balanced, especially when interacting in an online environment (Scott, 2011). Furthermore, a company needs to determine if they will try to reach out to every potential person or to just reach out to a few people and have more in depth conversations with those individuals. Different companies will have different needs when it comes to reaching out to their customer bases. Large corporations may want to increase their overall customer base to grow the market and reach out to as many new customers as possible. Smaller companies and large ones as well may want to continue to foster relationships with their current customer base and grow product usage and utilization. This goal may be to increase sales from existing customers instead of increasing overall market share from competitors. When interacting with customers online, it may be difficult to have in depth conversations with individual customers, but Scott discusses the importance of knowing and determining who your customer base is and how to go about communicating with them. Overall, the strength of the consumer brand relationship really drives the amount of depth and information exchanged amongst the different parties in the brand relationship.

Another facet of consumer brand relationships that is more hidden in Scott’s work is how relationship building and the city metaphor affect the individual consumers of products. Scott talks

about how best the companies and brand managers should reach out to consumers to learn more information about their buying habits, temperaments, as well as offering suggestions about how to present information to consumers. How do consumers respond to this information and what do they care about? In some ways, consumers like engaging with other consumers because it may validate their experiences, showing that others have experienced similar situations or ideas that they have. When individuals attend a party, they too have a pattern of behavior. Some may choose to talk to many different individuals all for a short period of time, while others will spend their time having extended conversations with only a few people. Some consumers may not want to be talked to or sold to by companies. Many of them want the opportunity to browse different brands but feel comfortable enough to make their own decision and feel confident in their choice. It is up to both the marketer and the consumer to develop a relationship conducive to satisfaction from both parties. The level of effort and relationship depth will depend highly on the wants and desires of the customers.

Definition of a Digital Brand Relationship

All of the articles discussed earlier discuss how companies and brands help to build long term relationships with their customers. Susan Fournier discusses how the relationships people have with the brands they use take on the form of human-like relationships. Her work has been monumental to the understanding of brand relationship formation, and clearly outlines how consumers and brands form connections (Fournier, 1998).

Now, as society moves into the 21st century, the relationships formed between products/brands and customers are taking on a more “digital” form. As technology continues to evolve, companies are beginning to wonder how the Internet as well as other forms of communication will affect the relationship building process with customers. It will be important for companies to understand that this new digital brand relationship formation is crucial to reaching out to new and current customers in new ways and will require more innovative thinking. Companies are also wondering, “What does this new digital relationship mean, and how do I utilize it to reach out to customers?”

I now would like to describe the elements of this new “digital brand relationship.” Before I do this, I would like to preface my definition. As the world and technology continues to develop, this information may become out of date, and need to be updated with further research and clarification. Furthermore, I do not think that I am writing the only interpretation of what this new digital relationship means for companies and customers. The academic and professional business community will work together to formulate what they believe is the true representation of digital brand relationships, and I hope to add knowledge to this community.

Similar to traditional brand relationships, digital brand relationships also, for some companies and individuals, are similar to human-like relationships. By utilizing Facebook and other social networking platforms on the Internet, companies reach out and talk to consumers about their wants, needs, and desires, almost in the same way a person or friend would do. Facebook was originally

designed as a platform for people to communicate utilizing their own profile page as an individual representation of themselves as an individual. Facebook pages for companies act to mimic the concept of a “face” for the company as would the individual pages for a person who has a Facebook profile. Also, through the use of the Internet, customers are allowed to post comments allowing the companies to take into consideration the thoughts and ideas of other customers.

What is more unique to digital brand relationships is the element of direct interaction and how this creates a conversational atmosphere. Through methods like blog postings and customer review boards, companies can learn more information about what their consumers are thinking about, and what aspects of products consumers are looking for or they are currently satisfied with. With traditional advertising and marketing campaigns, feedback on customer insights can be more difficult to obtain. Many times, companies track the visibility of their advertisements on television using ratings and number of households reached. In this manner, it is difficult to determine which individuals are looking at the advertisements, and if they are in the target audience. Furthermore, just because a potential consumer is exposed to an advertisement does not mean that they internalized and understood the message. One could have been watching a television advertisement and walked away to get a snack or use the restroom for example. In order to combat these challenges, companies often need to conduct focus groups to learn from their customers what they like about advertising, product features, and company policies, from a small subset of customers. The advantage of the Internet and the formation of digital brand relationships is that companies can instantly learn more information from a large subset of people more quickly and efficiently, without having to pay customers to participate in one or more focus groups. Overall, the importance of real time feedback imitates real human interactions and relationships. If a person were talking to their friend in a casual conversation, the other friend would respond instantly and the discussion is enhanced. In the same way with digital consumer brand relationships, this element of human-like conversations online in discussion forums and message boards

creates a connection amongst the users, which develops the overall relationship and strengthens the bonds between the consumers, the brand, and the company. Consumers, in dialogue with one another, can reinforce the brand relationships amongst individual people and a brand as well as between a group of users and the brand.

Furthermore, one of the new elements of digital brand relationship formation is the creation of online brand communities. No longer does a relationship simply exist between a customer and the product/brand that they use. This relationship exists within the context of other relationships that customers have with other products and individuals as well. This interconnected web of relationships forms what is known as a “brand community” (Dysart, 2011). Brand communities, as discussed earlier amongst many business professionals, allow customers and company executives to interact in new ways. The purpose of these communities is not simply to talk about a product’s features and benefits. I believe that their main function is to allow customers and companies to connect via methods like talking about products and interacting and learning more about one another through an engaging experience.

Through the development of technology, however, these brand communities are now being formed online through Facebook and other methods on the Internet. As people enjoy the experiences they have purchasing or using a product, they may feel compelled to tell others about their perspective, and they can do this through participating in an online brand community. One of the advantages of the online brand community as opposed to an offline community is the ability to formulate the boundaries of who is a part of the community. In the real world, it may be hard to delineate who is and who is not a part of the community, and it can also be difficult to bring customers and people together to talk about products or brands. Online communities, however, allow the delineation to be drawn and it allows marketers to see who is a part of the community at all times. Online community relationships also allow the marketers the ability to monitor the responses from customers and influence their responses and thought processes.

One of the negative aspects of online brand communities is the size and diversity of the population engaging within the community. Because it requires the customers of the community to find their online page, and post comments or content, the audience that is participating in the community may not truly represent the actual consuming population. The amount of effort to post on the site may only draw participants that really enjoy the products and the company and those that are extremely dissatisfied with their customer experience. To write on a site or page, it may require the individual to have a high level of involvement with the product, which may not been seen by all product users.

Another main element of what I believe defines a digital brand relationship is centered on information discussed by Pankaj Aggarwal, in his study, *The Effects of Brand Relationship Norms on Consumer Attitudes and Behavior*. As discussed earlier, Aggarwal highlights how consumer relationships are often categorized into exchange and communal relationships (Aggarwal, 2004). As society and technology continue to evolve, the question now becomes, “How does the digital world affect the definition of these consumer relationships?” Furthermore, “Do the exchange and communal definitions still hold true in the digital world?” I personally believe that many companies are looking to develop more communal and interpersonal relationships with their customers. Particularly on Facebook, brands and companies are reaching out to their customers to learn more about them and interact with them on a more individual basis.

It is extremely important for companies to develop a strong, dedicated, and loyal customer base so that the customers continue to buy the company’s products. Facebook now provides a more concrete way for companies to communicate with their customers. By creating a profile online, companies are becoming more human-like, with a profile page, interests, likes and dislikes. Companies interact with their “friends” by posting questions and comments. I believe that people who respond to a company’s postings want to interact with the company on a more personal level. This new way of communicating now offers potential customers the ability to form new relationships with the companies they buy

products from, in a way that exists more concretely than by simply using a firm's product. Friends and personal relationships with other people drive human interactions, decisions, and lifestyles. It will be very important as companies grow and develop that they learn how to communicate with new audiences in new formats and methods, such as Facebook.

Some exchange relationships still characterize some digital brand relationships that some individuals have when interacting with companies and individuals online. When researching a product, one might consult the online reviews of other product users on a site like Amazon.com for example. A person might read the reviews and make a decision to purchase/not purchase the product. If the person does not use that particular reviewer's advice again, or not buy similar products, the person temporarily engaged in an exchange relationship. But, as more people read reviews from sites like Amazon.com, interestingly, credibility can be built up for using the site because it provides good product information from previous users. This trust is part of the reason why many people shop on Amazon.com. Overall, the exchange relationship does still exist online, but many companies recognize the need to build long term relationships with their customers to increase profit margins and achieve long term success.

Within the definition of exchange and communal brand relationships, Esch, Langner and colleagues have conducted research analyzing the classification of exchange and communal brand relationships. They have come to the conclusion that three measurements of the outcomes of brand relationships are brand satisfaction, brand trust and brand attachment (Esch, 2006). Marketers can consider their marketing campaign a long term success if satisfaction and trust can lead consumers to become attached to the product. Attachment is defined by the authors as, "...a longer-lasting, commitment-inducing bond between the brand and the consumer" (Esch, 2006). Interestingly, the more attached consumers are to a product, the more this attachment influences their current and future purchase behaviors. The reason brand attachment is important for the discussion of digital brand relationships is that attachment levels influence purchasing behavior and behavior with others.

Furthermore the authors discuss how consumers, when purchasing products, develop attachments to brands to help reduce the costs of looking for other alternative products (Esch, 2006). This shows why consumers continue to buy the same product in a particular category, provided that the benefits provided by the product are worth the price that the consumer pays for the product. If the benefits to cost dynamic shifts, this may affect consumers' purchasing behaviors and result in seeking out new products to fulfill a certain need or void. Finally, Esch, Langner and colleagues highlight the importance of developing an engaging and intricate relationship with one's customers. They discuss how companies need to move beyond traditional marketing techniques to really understand their customers, what they are looking for in the products they buy, and how important it is to form long-term relationships and brand attachments amongst their customers and their products (Esch, 2006).

What is also unique is that some relationships that customers create with products and brands they use exist with aspects of both a communal and an exchange relationship. Susan Fournier, in her research on consumer brand relationships, discusses through ethnographic research, the development and classification of brand relationships in several categories including committed partnership, close friendship, dependency, and casual friendship to name a few (Fournier, 1998). With her 15 different brand relationship classifications, this creates a cumbersome challenge to clearly define what a brand relationship is made up of, let alone attempting to define a digital brand relationship. Therefore, the exchange and communal aspects of brand relationship classification provide more concrete delineations of what is and what is not a brand relationship. In the digital realm, some relationships rely on both the aspect of exchange for benefits as well as communal for long term attachment and sentimental feelings or values. These types of relationships are hard to quantify and define. When companies utilize a social networking site like Facebook to market their products, they are engaging in more long term relationship building marketing as opposed to methods like sales promotion, advertising or personal selling which are more focused on making the consumer want to act and buy a product. The customer who is

browsing a company's Facebook page is not actively making a purchase transaction, but is developing a more personal connection with the company. Yet on some level, both the company and the customer are making conscious choices to interact with one another. Therefore, when companies engage in relationship development, the marketing and selling process is never ending. It is constantly being enhanced and modified through new product developments, changes in the purchasing environment, the culture of a society, and the individual needs of the consumer.

Companies should take advantage of building digital relationships with their customers because the company can easily disseminate new product information to customers. Because many people check their mobile devices and the Internet multiple times per day, companies can receive more time of awareness amongst their consumer base. Especially through mediums like Facebook and Twitter, people can be updated about the happenings, interests, and goals of a company several times per day. Compared to other methods of communication like print and radio advertisements, digital communications can be monitored and tracked to see who is paying attention and what they are paying attention to. Not only can this save money for companies by narrowing their target audience, but it can also help them develop new marketing programs to better target their customers.

Case Analysis: Consumer Brand Relationships on Facebook

Facebook is one of the largest, if not the largest, social media sites in the entire world. What began in a college dorm room on the Harvard campus has now expanded to include all regions of the world, and more than 750,000 people worldwide (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Originally, when Facebook began, it shied away from advertising, because the founders were worried that it would detract from the “coolness” of the site. Shortly after its market appeal started to grow, Mark Zuckerberg and his colleagues agreed that advertising was necessary in order to keep the site operational. One of the unique aspects about Facebook for advertisers was that it provided more targeted approaches to advertising. According to David Kirkpatrick, author of the book *The Facebook Effect – The Inside Story of the Company That is Connecting the World*, he says that, “...Targeting of this type is enormously promising...a media kit...lists the following parameters an advertiser could use for targeting college students: geography, gender, course, keywords in profile, class year, major, relationship status, favorite books, movies or music, political affiliation, and university status (student, faculty, alumni, or staff)” (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Based on this information, advertisers for companies can now more accurately target potential and current customers based on information provided by the customers themselves. Now that Facebook is making preparations to go through an Initial Public Offering to become a public company, it will be interesting to see if any content or advertising is limited by governmental regulations or regulations placed on the company by social watch groups or agencies like the Securities and Exchange Commission.

As the social networking site has grown beyond college students, so too has its base of people and its potential as a place to grow markets for a wide variety of different products. What began as simple banner ads on Facebook has now blossomed into specific pages for companies, even for specific products based on popularity. The question now becomes: how do companies connect with consumers

and build relationships utilizing this new technology that even some of the corporate executives are unfamiliar with?

I now begin my analysis of how several companies are currently utilizing Facebook to connect with consumers. For my research, I chose to analyze several companies within three separate industries. The three industries that I focused my research on were food, technology/electronics, and the automotive industry. Within these industries, I chose two companies and compared how they are currently laying out their Facebook marketing strategies. Within the food sector, I analyzed Nestle and Quaker. In the technology/electronics space, I researched Samsung USA and Hewlett Packard. Finally, in the automotive industry, I investigated Mini USA and Chevrolet. A summary table can be seen at the end of this document (see Appendix A) depicting a summary of each of the brands researched. These industries were selected for analysis to provide a wide variety of discussions and price ranges for products. Food products are relatively inexpensive, are perishable, and are of frequent purchase to customers. Technology products are more durable than food products but are not as durable as automobiles. However, technology products are purchased more frequently than automobiles, but automobiles are much more expensive than either food or technology products. Furthermore, by comparing within and amongst the industries of food, technology, and the automotive industry, this will allow the reader to analyze and determine how consumer brand relationships operate within the larger context of the consumer marketplace.

Nestle: “Forced Friendship”

Nestle sets up their main page with several subsections with links on the left hand side of the page: Wall, Info, Discussions, Photos, Notes, and Events (see Appendix B for a screenshot). Under the Wall, which is viewable on the main page in the center of the screen, it shows a variety of comments from individual users as well as the company. Some of the wall topics (9/5/11) include information about a recall of banana baby foods in France, new initiatives in the green energy sector, 100 year celebration facts and information, as well as videos in both English as well as other languages. The Wall also posts health articles, including one about how diet and exercise can best promote and maintain muscle growth. The company has the page set up so that individual users cannot write on the Wall without first “liking” the company. This barrier creates a distinction between users and non-users, and is the first instance that highlights a “forced friendship” between the company and its users. To access the content, a user needs to “like” the page and cannot view the content otherwise.

Nestle’s “Info” section provides information about the values and mission of the company, while also posting links to their websites. In the “Discussions” section, individual users and the company discuss topics that are important to them, in a variety of different languages including English. Some people are discussing issues with products, while others are trying to connect with other employees as well as problems with certain products they are using. The discussion board allows customers to talk and discuss ideas/complaints with other customers. The photos section is rather sparse, with very limited pictures, mostly focused on the brands that the company owns.

In the notes section, Nestle clearly outlines their policy on Facebook. The company is very concerned with people posting profane and obscene language on the page. It may be perceived that Nestle distrusts its customers by limiting what can be posted on the site. However, Nestle asks its users about their thoughts on the policy, and they also ask for advice. One commenter discussed how it is a slippery slope to be editing out and removing certain comments, but at the same time, viewers have

complained that some posts contain obscene and inappropriate comments that would rather not be looked at or condoned. At one end of the spectrum exists free speech but also the company needs to respond to the wants and desires of their customers.

The Facebook page for Nestle allows customers to post their needs and concerns, but the company could improve the overall customer experience. In order to post on the site, a user needs to not only find the page in the plethora of Facebook pages, but also needs to “Like” the company first by clicking the “Like” button. Customers need to feel compelled enough to visit Nestle’s Facebook page to want to comment on and leave feedback for the company. Also, it would require effort on behalf of the customer to want to visit Nestle’s page to begin with. In a sense, the Facebook page for Nestle is an extension of their website, providing information to customers with the opportunity to talk to one another via discussion boards. How is a relationship being developed between Nestle and the customer? The customer would need to actively think to themselves, “I want to comment on the Nestle page, I will now look them up on Facebook, and leave a comment.” Once a user “likes” the page, then more information is available to them, but this information is sparse and not very detailed.

In order for a user to get more detailed and thorough information, they would need to visit the company’s website, thus forcing the consumer to take additional actions to gain information. This aspect furthers the idea of a “forced friendship” between Nestle and their consumers. The company does not appear to be reaching out via Facebook to connect with current and/or new customers. Also, the company does not appear to respond to active comments about problems with products, unless it is a massive wide recall, and then the company will post information similar to a press release. This discourages an individualized interaction between the company and individual users of Nestle products, and it is almost as if the company is treating everyone as one massive customer. The average customer’s comments may be going unanswered, at least with a comment on the Facebook page.

Many of the discussions appear to be between customers. Overall, the feeling that is showcased on this page is one of forced information and a “forced friendship.” In order to see the information on the site, one needs to “like” the page, and people need to be engaged enough with the brand to want to comment. Finally, Nestle does not do a great job of reaching back out to customers, so it is almost as if the Facebook page is an extension of their corporate website.

Quaker: “Caring Friend”

The second food company that I researched on Facebook was Quaker (see Appendix C for a screenshot). Quaker appears to take a different approach to connecting with consumers as opposed to Nestle. Similar to the Nestle page, Quaker features an Info section, a Wall, a photos page, as well as discussion boards. Some new areas that Quaker offers include video postings, a polling section, as well as a section for Bob Harper, Heart Health, and Quaker Oatmeal Squares.

On the Wall, Quaker provides pictures and promotions for their products, but they also reach out to consumers on a more personal level than just to promote their products. Thus, the company’s relationship with their consumers can be categorized as a “caring friendship”. For example, they ask of their users, “Happy Labor Day, What did you make for breakfast to get ready for the day's activities?”. This particular post had 167 likes and 182 total comments at the time of this writing (October 2011). Quaker reached out to their customers as individuals to learn their specific needs, and not just as an entire customer base. In a more personal way, they were able to talk about breakfast to have customers talk about their habits, but through a way as to not ask directly, “Are you using Quaker products?” Some people commented that they used a Quaker product, others commented with other popular breakfast foods. The company, from this posting, is able to learn about the habits of its customer base, and find more effective ways to promote their breakfast products. Furthermore, Quaker talks about events featuring celebrities and their products, such as the Quaker Chewy Granola Bars Superstar Search with Nick Jonas from the Jonas Brothers. Additionally, Quaker asks questions such as, “Do you prefer soccer or football?” The first question that may be asked in response to this post would be – why does Quaker care if its customers like soccer or football? What does this have to do with Quaker Oats products? Well, in this case, the answers to these questions may not serve a functional purpose in the most direct sense. However, questions like these help to build a relationship with their customers by talking about routine everyday topics that friends would discuss. Quaker is developing a “human-like

relationship” with their customers on a personal and individual level by finding out their customers’ likes and dislikes. According to researchers Berry and Carbone mentioned previously, humanic clues like appearance, demeanor and attitude allow customers to form impressions of a company/brand (Berry, 2011). In the case of Quaker, the aesthetic appearance of the website as well as the engaging and enthusiastic demeanor of the comments and postings allows customers to form favorable impressions. Therefore, this enhances the human-like relationship that a customer has with Quaker. It is almost as if Quaker is acting as someone’s friend, asking personal questions and eliciting responses from its “friends.”

By taking an active interest in its users’ hobbies and activities, the “caring friendship” is constantly developed and consumers feel connected to Quaker on a more personal level than those consumers actively using Nestle for example. If people “like” Quaker on Facebook, the updates to the Quaker page show up on the person’s “News Feed” with new status updates and information from their friends and the pages the person subscribes to, in this case, Quaker would show up. People can then provide answers and comment as if Quaker is one of their friends. These kinds of relationship building tactics are hard to execute through traditional media advertising like television or radio. Conventional advertising does not provide a direct interaction and conversation mechanism but Facebook allows for this.

Quaker also provides much more information about the products they manufacture as compared to Nestle’s Facebook page. There is a specific page dedicated to Bob Harper, Quaker’s healthy eating coach, to help others learn about eating and living healthy and how to start every day right by eating Quaker oatmeal products. What is interesting about this page is that it is not dedicated to Quaker products specifically, but is more focused on healthy exercise habits as well as positive mental health. The site provides several videos for helpful morning workouts including leg lifts, squats, morning workouts, how to maintain a positive attitude, and the importance of whole grains in to morning to name

a few. For the customer, Bob Harper embodies the image of Quaker through his physical fitness and support of Quaker products. He becomes not only the spokesperson of the brand, but a helpful resource that people can refer to throughout their life and during the use of Quaker products. Bob Harper personifies Quaker and consumers can actively relate to Bob. By focusing not only on selling and promoting its products but on improving the lifestyle and overall physical fitness of its consumers, users develop a close friendship with Quaker, almost as if Quaker was one of their real human friends. Perhaps this personal connection keeps customers engaged and continuously buying Quaker's products. Furthermore, because the food products Quaker sells are often purchased repeatedly over time, this caring friendship is constantly reinforced. The Facebook page of Quaker embodies Quaker's image and personality of a friend that truly cares about its customers and is not solely focused on selling its users on its products' benefits.

The Quaker Facebook page also offers a variety of polls to engage viewers to learn more about their lifestyles as well as their personalities. For example, one of the polls Quaker asks its Facebook fans is, "Which good-for-you "vice" would you rather indulge in?" People then can respond with several choices including fats found in nuts, and fiber found in Quaker products. Questions similar to this one allow Quaker to better understand their audience without the viewers feeling like Quaker is attempting to sell a product. Quaker, through these techniques, is building relationships with their customers through non-conventional methods. Another non-conventional method of response comes from answering viewers' questions. Through many traditional marketing techniques like television, radio, and print advertising, the message travels one-way from the marketer to the consumer. Television and radio do not usually allow for follow up communication from the consumer to the marketer or company. Through their Facebook page, Quaker allows their customers to post questions to the company, and even more specifically to Bob Harper to learn more about Quaker products and ask questions related to health, diet, and exercise. Interestingly, Bob Harper often posts video responses to

viewer's questions, allowing the viewer feel as if they are participating in the brand relationship, and thus growing their overall loyalty to the Quaker brand through interactive methods such as a this question and answer format. Through the character of Bob Harper and the integrated communications methods of the Quaker Facebook page, Quaker is acting as a caring friend, one that reaches out to others with a clear concern for one's health and wellbeing.

Chevrolet: “Wise Teacher, Grandfather”

The next area of company Facebook utilization for building relationships with customers that I will focus on surrounds the automotive industry. Because automobiles are large purchases for a consumer and are not purchased frequently, customers want to feel that they are making the right decision. Therefore, often car manufacturers need to make extra efforts to make sure their products are known to the new consumer, but also continue to enhance and validate the relationship with current customers that have already purchased their products. The first example that I would like to highlight is the Facebook page for Chevrolet (see Appendix D for a screenshot). Chevrolet tailors their Facebook page mainly based on product offerings. They provide functional clues of brand quality including links to each of their separate brands’ Facebook pages including Camaro, Cruze, Corvette, Malibu, and Silverado to name a few. They also provide a discussion board to allow customers to talk with one another regarding product features, offerings, advice on which car to buy, and the opportunity to voice problems with their cars. Furthermore, Chevrolet clearly states that if there is an urgent issue regarding one’s car to call their customer service department.

One of their largest efforts to build relationships with their customers is through their event entitled “Chevrolet’s Centennial Celebration.” Chevrolet is currently celebrating its 100th anniversary as a company and Chevrolet is traveling around the United States to learn more about its rich and unique heritage. Because of the age of Chevrolet, the company has a lot experience in the automotive industry and as an American company. On their website, Chevrolet offers customers and other viewers the opportunity to learn about the history of various cities as well as the influence that Chevrolet has had on the various towns throughout the United States. Chevrolet utilizes humanic clues by individually reaching out to customers with a nostalgic frame of mind. Their belief, as a company, is that one cannot move forward if one does not know where one has been. The history is chronicled through various video mini documentaries, and the Centennial Celebration is also being celebrated through image

libraries of people's Chevrolet vehicles throughout the years as well as through music and clothing as well. This event showcases Chevrolet's profound impact on American history since 1911, and also their dedication to building a brand community of Chevrolet owners. By showcasing the impact Chevrolet has had on American history, the company further establishes its relationship to its consumers as a wise teacher or grandfather who has had many life experiences and wants to share these with his students or grandchildren.

Interestingly, the relationship between users and the company does not appear forced. Chevrolet actively engages its audience with new knowledge that is appreciated by the customers. I believe that by hosting events throughout the nation and by chronicling the history of Chevrolet online, this helps to build customers' sense of loyalty to Chevrolet, and it also entices potential customers to learn more about Chevrolet. Through the interactive method of online promotion of this event, this allows current and potential customers to learn more about the event and interact with other people, thus building a sense of community around Chevrolet and learning more about the products the company offers.

Chevrolet is very focused on letting customers know about their great history as a company and car manufacturer. By reaching out to new customers and older lifetime customers, they are helping to build brand awareness through teaching and showing others what their brand and company mean. In this regard, Chevrolet can be seen as a wise teacher or an older grandfather type of relationship with its customers. Chevrolet actively showcases its knowledge of history and its company and communicates through nostalgic references and feelings of hope and patriotism.

Mini USA: “Young Teenager, Show Off”

Mini USA connects and builds relationships with their customers through a variety of different ways on their Facebook page (see Appendix E for a screenshot). One of the main differences of the Mini page as opposed to other pages that I have viewed is that customers actually post questions directly on the “Wall” of the site, as well as links to Mini articles, pictures, and video clips as well. One of the unique techniques that Mini USA is using to appeal to customers is through the use of viral marketing. According to Theresa Howard from the *USA Today*, she states that viral marketing helps to generate advertisements that are enticing so that other consumers want to share this information with other people (Howard, 2005). The spreading effect would have a great multiplying effect like a computer virus infecting a network of computers. For the launch of the new Mini Coupe, Mini USA created a rocket and placed a Mini Coupe on the rocket stating that customers better “Prepare for Launch” and “Hold On.” The rocket stands several stories high at the corner of 9th avenue and 14th Street in downtown New York City. The use of viral marketing prompted many on lookers to take photos and videos that were then proudly uploaded and displayed on Mini’s Facebook page. This ingenious and creative way of reaching out to customers showcases its modern and young brand image, almost as if the brand is “showing off” its new features, like teenagers often show off. This promotion allowed customers to understand the importance of the new Mini Coupe and get customers excited for the car’s launch.

Another interesting relationship building tactic involves Mini USA’s promotion to develop people’s “manualhood.” This involves educating customers on the benefits and usages of a manual transmission which all of Mini’s cars are offered in. Mini plays off of an older video of male sexual maturity education to humorously say how when one is developing their driving career, they will hit a point called “manualhood.” This developmental stage is important for drivers to understand, and Mini USA describes how manual transmissions operate and function. In a promotional video, Mini describes how “manualhood” develops as one matures and demands more exhilaration from their driving

experience. This video provides customers with a humorous yet educational video of the basics of operating a manual transmission.

Mini USA also provides discussion forums for customers to talk about their product interests and concerns with malfunctions as well. Throughout the discussions listed on the Facebook page, many Mini users enjoy talking about their experiences driving their Mini's as well as comparisons between Mini and other car brands like Porsche and Hyundai during races that viewers conduct in other countries. By engaging customers and asking about their experiences with Mini's cars, Mini USA is actively showing off its characteristics as a company through the experiences of its customers. Also on Mini USA's Facebook page, the company displays links to video advertisements and product feature descriptions that describe the different models Mini USA offers.

Mini USA is a stark contrast in the way it goes about building relationships with its customers as compared to Chevrolet. Mini USA could be categorized as the "young teenager, and show off" type of human-like personality trait. Mini USA reaches out in new ways like viral marketing with the rocketship car, and through building a community of likeminded users. Whereas Chevrolet focuses on history and nostalgia, Mini USA focuses on the modern day, new and current features, and development of wants and needs for the present day. Chevrolet acts more nostalgic whereas Mini USA is more "standout and showoffish."

Samsung: “The Engineer/Business Person”

The last product category that I will be analyzing on Facebook is the technology sector. I picked this segment to analyze because the price range and durability of the products is greater than that of food products, but less than that of automobiles. This analysis will help provide a balance in between the two extremes that I have previously analyzed.

The first technology company that I will analyze is Samsung USA (see Appendix F for a screenshot). Samsung’s “Wall” mainly posts information from the company itself, posing questions to viewers such as, “...What’s the perfect size for a monitor?” and “Fill in the blank: The best video game console of all time is...” As of the end of October 2011, 230,100 people “like” the Samsung USA Facebook page. The two questions listed above achieved 126 and 274 comments respectively. Interestingly, Samsung provides its viewers with a virtual product catalog, listing and describing all of the products they are currently offering, including up-to-date sales promotions on certain products. Some of the products they sell include cell phones, computer monitors, televisions, cameras, and computers to name a few. Unique to their page is also a support section, where any customer can fill in their personal information and describe the details of the issue that they are having with a Samsung product. Samsung’s page focuses on describing and highlighting the features and benefits of its products, in a well thought out and logical manner. In this way, Samsung could be described as portraying themselves as the “engineer or business” person.

Another interesting tactic to build consumer brand relationships is done through the Samsung USA Top Fan program. On their Facebook page, Samsung posts how many points viewers have achieved. These points are earned through “liking” Samsung’s Facebook page, contributing through comments and posts on the page, as well as points earned for quality of responses determined by Samsung. The point totals are viewable by anyone who “likes” the page, and customers can see how they compare against other top fans of Samsung. Although there does not appear to be any tangible

rewards for having the most points, it does spur competition amongst avid users, and builds a relationship with Samsung that is hard to create through basic advertising methods. Samsung promotes its company and brands through personal achievement. Through the Top Fan program, the individuals who perform the best and comment with the most quality comments are rewarded with public recognition. With this focus on achievement and personal attainment, Samsung further can be described as an “engineer or business person.” Both engineers and business people are known for their focus on achievement and personal results, and these characteristics can be seen in Samsung’s portrayal of its company on its Facebook page.

Another unique public relations tactic that Samsung USA employs on their Facebook page is their “Solve for Tomorrow” philanthropy effort. This program is designed to offer public school students the opportunity to win part of \$1 million in Samsung technology for their school. Samsung believes this program is important because it is challenging students to excel in the academic areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Students and teachers are asked to apply online and if chosen, they are to create a video showcasing how they would use the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math to help improve their local community. These finalists will then be narrowed down to the final winners that may receive up to \$100,000 in technology for their school. This program helps show customers that Samsung USA is not only concerned about profits. They care for the community and the people that they live with. In today’s society, many businesses and firms are beginning to showcase their concern and value for societal development through various philanthropic efforts. Samsung’s focus on community development through science and math education further establishes their image as an “engineer or business person.” Although it may not be salient to the customer, the company is influencing their customers’ perception of the Samsung brand by offering the “Solve for Tomorrow” program.

Samsung's Facebook page focuses mainly on functional clues such as product features and benefits, as well as the philanthropic focus on science and math education. In this regard, the personality type of Samsung can be characterized as "the engineer/business person." Samsung's page is very methodical and thought out, and they reach out to their customers in calculated ways with very deliberate words and actions. There is not much superfluous verbiage in their words. They connect with their customers in finite ways without much creativity or ingenuity. This does not mean that Samsung is not an innovative company, but they are appealing to an audience that wants the best technology products and they focus on the features and benefits these products provide.

HP: “Warm, Caring Friend”

The final company that I will be looking at in the technology area is Hewlett-Packard or HP (see Appendix G for a screenshot). HP is a technology company that specializes in producing personal computers, printers, and business computing services. As of February 22, 2012, HP has 1,199,778 people that “like” their page.

Similar to Samsung’s Facebook page, most of the posts on HP’s “Wall” come from the company. HP, however, posts ideas and comments on their wall that seem to, at first, have nothing to do with technology. One example of this is the photos of fans carving pumpkins for Halloween. At first glance, one might wonder why HP cares about posting pictures of pumpkin carving if that has nothing to do with business. On the contrary, HP is helping to develop personal and caring relationships with its customers. People care about carving pumpkins and getting into the holiday spirit around Halloween. HP recognizes this and is able to help build an almost like human relationship with their customers. Real human beings would post pictures of pumpkin carving, so HP is trying to develop a similar friend like relationship with their customers. By doing this, they hope to not only develop a relationship with their customers, but also have them purchase HP products and use them at events like Halloween.

It is also important to note that HP discusses their products throughout the entire page, and does not offer one specific page for product listings. One might ask why a business does not post a listing of their products on their Facebook page. I believe that HP does not want to inundate customers with product listings because the company thinks that people may not want to be “sold to” on the page. There are more subtle ways of listing products without advertising them directly to the customer for purchase. HP uses more unobtrusive ways of talking about the different products they offer. For example, they talk about developing mobile applications for people who suffer with autism. Additionally, HP offers a photo album app with their printers so that customers can upload their Halloween costume photos and print them directly from their printers. Through these and other ways,

HP promotes their products while also involving the customer on a more personal level than just listing the functional benefits of the products HP offers. Through engaging its customers with situations and issues that customers are concerned about and care for, such as Halloween and autism, they appear to be a “warm and caring friend.” HP also promotes their eco-friendly product solutions by offering abilities to reduce and reuse ink cartridges for printers, as well as help to conserve natural resources in our environment. Customers also can post questions to HP in the support forum that can be answered by HP directly or by other members of the HP community, such as other customers.

On their Facebook page, HP offers an ink program called “Inkology.” This program is tailored to specific pages for businesses, families, and students based on their needs and uses of printer ink. The family page offers discounts on ink as well as printed coloring pages and family cards for different holidays. The student section promotes printing academic calendars, planners for school projects, and birthday cards. Finally for businesses, HP advocates utilizing their business plan templates and tips on saving money on ink and paper. This tailored program helps customers feel like the company cares for their individual printing needs and not just promoting products. The site also is interactive allowing customers to ask questions and contact HP corporate for more information regarding certain products and promotions.

In contrast with Samsung USA, HP as a brand appears to be more family oriented. With a focus on Halloween and the “Inkology” program, HP is appealing to families as a central focus. Their page focuses not as much on product features and benefits but rather on what you can do with the products, such as creating family greeting cards, printing Halloween photos of your children, or helping your child with their homework. The atmosphere and feel of the page appears to be nurturing and focused on developing a rapport with mothers, fathers and children. HP’s personality could be deemed as the “warm and caring friend” or even “motherly”. It is also interesting that HP has more than double the amount of likes on their page as opposed to Samsung USA.

Analysis Of Consumer Brand Relationship Building Tactics

Each of the brands that I have analyzed above utilizes different tactics to help build better relationships with their customers. All of the brands I looked at had two common goals in mind: to better connect with their customers and to create a situation where customers will become repeat purchasers of their products. Interestingly, attached in the appendix are two screenshots at different points in time for each of the six brands analyzed. Some companies are looking to change their image while others are trying to portray a consistent image. Nestle's and Quaker's Facebook pages are different in many ways. Nestle's page can be characterized as an extension of their already existing website, offering product information, discussion forums about problems and issues, and the ability to contact the company for more information about a product. Quaker, on the other hand, reaches out and connects with customers on a more personal level. Quaker makes their Facebook page interactive by offering videos, discussion boards, and interactions with their spokesperson Bob Harper. Chevrolet and Mini USA provide a good source of supplementary information about their company on their Facebook pages, including techniques of viral marketing which catch the attention of the viewers. Finally, Samsung USA and HP do a wonderful job of showcasing their philanthropy efforts on Facebook in addition to describing the products they offer.

Susan Fournier, author of *Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research*, discusses what she has deemed the Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ), or facets that determine the overall quality of consumer brand relationships along several dimensions. These six dimensions include love/passion, self-connection, commitment, interdependence, intimacy, and Brand Partner Quality (Fournier, 1998). Each of these dimensions helps describe the intensity of a consumer brand relationship. In relation to each of the brands looked at in the analysis of Facebook conducted earlier, attached in the tables and figures are several graphs which depict the facets of self-connection, interdependence, and a new category called relationship warmth. These facets were chosen from the

larger selection because these elements show a wide differentiation amongst the brands analyzed. The elements of love/passion, commitment, and intimacy are more easily related amongst people's relationships with other people, and when on Facebook, it may be difficult to relate the actions of the users and companies to aspects of love, commitment, or intimacy. These three aspects of relationships are more evident and observable in actual consumer brand interactions in the physical world in a store, for example, as opposed to the digital world of Facebook. And for that reason, the elements of self-connection and interdependence are more salient from the Facebook interactions. According to Fournier, self-connection is defined as, "...the degree to which the brand delivers on important identity concerns, tasks, or themes, thereby expressing a significant aspect of self" (Fournier, 1998). In other words, the degree of self-connection showcases how well the brand helps an individual identify with their own sense of self and how the brand defines who they are as an individual (Fournier 1998).

Based on this definition, I have constructed a continuum (see Table 1) of self-connection and have placed each of the six brands analyzed earlier on a scale from low sense of self-connection to high sense of self connection. As seen from the graph, I have classified Nestle as the overall lowest in this category. Because their Facebook page provides mainly information about their product listings, and some consumer forums, it could be said that consumers are not utilizing Facebook in this brand relationship. Samsung is slightly higher in this category, but is still hard to determine if customers actually identify with the products and say that they are an active part of their lifestyle. Chevrolet does a better job than Nestle and Samsung because many users are connected to the Facebook page, and there are many comments about Chevrolet's impact on American history. Quaker and HP provide a very good sense of self-connection with their customers. The products are used frequently by customers. HP discusses how customers can use their products to make greeting cards and Halloween photos, and therefore they create better connections with their customers. Quaker's Facebook page actively engages the user in improving their physical fitness while still enjoying healthy Quaker food products as well.

Finally, Mini USA creates the best sense of self-connection amongst brand users. People who own Mini cars enjoy driving them and actively post on the page their fun activities with their cars. The sense of brand community seems to be greater amongst the users of Mini cars than of Chevrolet cars or the other brands analyzed. The users of Mini cars often interact with other Mini users and it appears that the users heavily identify with their cars and they are a part of their personality and life.

Fournier's dimension of interdependence, "...involves frequent brand interactions...[and] consumption rituals emerged as a central process through which interdependence was fostered and celebrated" (Fournier 1998). Interdependence highlights how often a person utilizes a product or brand but also is measured through the level of affective or emotional involvement that occurs when a product goes through repeated usage over time (Fournier 1998).

Table 1 shows the levels of interdependence of each of the six brands categorized from low interdependence to high interdependence. As compared to the scale of self-connection, the scale of interdependence is slightly different than the self-connection scale. Interdependence is fostered and developed through repeated product usage. The more one uses a product, the more dependent they become on that product and the more that they may feel emotionally connected to the product. One main difference from the interdependence scale as compared to the scale of self-connection is that Quaker is placed at a slightly higher level of interdependence compared to HP and Nestle is placed higher than Samsung and Chevrolet. On the scale of self-connection, however, HP appears at a higher level than Quaker does. Quaker and Nestle may have a slightly higher level of interdependence and affective emotional involvement because the products are physically consumed as food. When people consume food products, there is a high level of emotion involved. This increases the overall sense of positive feelings as one eats, and this may increase the level of interdependence as well. This allows the interdependence to be rated higher for Quaker and Nestle than for Samsung and HP because when one

uses the technology products, he/she may not actively be thinking about the brand of technology product.

Finally, the aspect of relationship warmth is compared amongst the different brands in the Facebook analysis. Although not listed as one of the six facets of the Brand Relationship Quality, Fournier describes relationship warmth as the degree to which the brand expresses a degree of friendliness, hopefulness, nurturing or homeliness (Fournier 1998). It is interesting that certain brands can display more warmth and personal connections than others can. It is almost as if, when utilizing Facebook, the brands are becoming like individual people, with personality characteristics, likes, and dislikes, and they differ in their strengths and weaknesses when communicating with people online.

For this analysis, I would like to distinguish the Facebook pages based on their degree of relationship warmth for developing a consumer-brand relationship and developing a consumer-consumer relationship. Consumer-brand relationships, as discussed earlier in this analysis, involve great connections between the consumer and the products/brands that the company manufactures. Consumer-consumer relationships, on the other hand, involve connections between the many users of a product or service, and there is not as strong a connection between an individual user and the products/services. This does not mean that a connection does not exist between consumers and brands, but that the connection amongst the users becomes paramount.

Relationship warmth can be displayed and inferred from a variety of different factors including company logos, pictures on the Facebook page, color utilization, as well as the words and phrasing of comments and communications on the Facebook page. For Nestle, as compared to the Quaker Facebook page (see the appendices for screenshots of the Facebook pages), this company does a clear job of creating a consumer-consumer relationship and displaying warmth and connection amongst the different users of Nestle products. Their company logo is a bird's nest with a mother bird feeding her babies. This logo promotes the idea of motherly nurturing, and that Nestle helps to nourish its customers who

use their products. Furthermore, the pictures featured on their Facebook page include consumers bonding together over using a Nestle product, as well as families connecting with one another in various social settings. Their main photo on the homepage (see attached screenshot) has a notebook in the background, signaling a homely and inviting atmosphere for the Facebook page. In this way, Nestle is promoting an image of a consumer-consumer brand relationship, with not as much focus on the specific products that Nestle manufactures. Nestle's colors featured on its Facebook page include shades of red, blue, pink, as well as other colors. These different colors showcase the nurturing qualities of Nestle. Humanic clues including pictures of families and friends, as well as the company logo allow consumer-consumer relationships to be fostered, with Nestle as the connecting link. In the description of Nestle as a company, they state, "...everyday we strive to make our products tastier and healthier choices that help you care for yourself and your family." In this description, the words you and your are prominent. Nestle wants you as an individual consumer to connect with other members of your family and other product users. In this way, their level of consumer-consumer brand relationship warmth is high.

When comparing Nestle's Facebook page to Quaker's page, Quaker focuses more on promoting their own products and creating a strong consumer-brand relationship with its customers. Quaker's logo of the Quaker man promotes a sense of history, nostalgia, and human warmth. Quaker, it appears, wants its customers to relate to and feel a personal connection with the company, and the picture of the old and wise Quaker man helps to foster this connection. Based on the pictures posted on Quaker's Facebook page, a viewer will notice how consumers are forging an individual relationship with the company. The pictures on the page include functional pictures of the products Quaker offers, but also celebrity endorsers including Nick Jonas from the Jonas Brothers, as well as Miranda Cosgrove from the television station Nickelodeon. Through Bob Harper's individual portion of the site, consumers can learn to improve their overall health with Bob Harper's guidance and advice. Interestingly, the videos and pictures that Bob Harper utilizes when talking about health are very individually focused, furthering

the idea that individuals are forming an individual relationship with Bob Harper and Quaker, as opposed to relationships with other users. Furthermore, the colors that Quaker predominantly uses are reds, blues, and browns. Through the colors in the pictures of the Quaker products, this promotes a healthy and warm image. Finally, the wording that Quaker uses on its page promotes an individualized consumer brand relationship. Quaker states that, “With the help of Quaker Coach Bob Harper, our goal is to help every American get the most out of mornings... We want to hear from you and encourage you to leave comments, post photos and videos and other info about Quaker.” Quaker wants its users to post content about the company individually. Breakfast is often a meal that is eaten alone, and Quaker is trying to learn as much about its consumers as it can by having them post content on the Quaker Facebook page.

Chevrolet, like Quaker, does a good job of establishing and creating consumer-brand relationships with its customers. The logo for Chevrolet on its Facebook page uses a nostalgic font, with the tagline “runs deep.” Chevrolet wants to let its customers know that it truly cares about them and has a diverse and long history as a company. The pictures found on Chevrolet’s Facebook page highlight the importance and growth of Chevrolet throughout the 20th century, including pictures from older cars as well as current models. Chevrolet also features a section called the Garage, where pictures and descriptions can be found of each of the current models of cars that Chevrolet manufactures. On the page that features Chevrolet’s Centennial Celebration, the tagline for their video promotion is “Where has your life taken you?” and they also say “Come Create the Ride of Your Life.” Interestingly, there are not many pictures or discussions amongst the different users that own Chevrolet vehicles. By Chevrolet promoting and asking “Where has your life taken you?” it is asking an individual question in which the user is interacting solely with the company, and not with other users directly. In the company description, Chevrolet is mainly focusing on describing how it manufactures 3.5 million cars annually in over 130 countries. Also, they discuss the portfolio of cars that they manufacture and their fuel

efficiencies. Overall, the Facebook page has a very functional and business tone to it, but also creates a rich environment for users to learn more about Chevrolet's history and the current car that they may own. Chevrolet's page has a warm and inviting atmosphere, but is more focused on an individual relationship with each consumer as opposed to a community of users.

Mini USA, compared to Chevrolet, showcases its strength in creating a connection amongst the many users of Mini USA's cars, as opposed to creating individual consumer brand relationships. The logo of Mini USA is young and flashy, displaying to the audience a winged logo for the company. Almost as if the wings signal a company that is flying and soaring ahead, it has a modern tone and appeal. The pictures are much different than those found on the Chevrolet Facebook page, in which many of the pictures include users in neat situations with their Mini Cooper as well as when groups of users and their Mini's are together. Additionally, the viral marketing technique of the rocket being placed in New York City is prominently showcased with various people posing in front of and admiring the sculpture. Interestingly, there is one particular photo that shows about a hundred or so individual Mini users and their cars together. As a whole, they are interacting in the brand community of Mini USA, and creating strong consumer-consumer relationships with one another. In the company description, Mini USA states, "This is the place to get the latest news about MINI. You can let your opinions be known, connect with other MINI enthusiasts, share your experiences and post your best pics and videos." The key differentiating part of this description is the part focusing on Mini enthusiasts. Mini USA prides itself on creating a great brand community of Mini users across the United States and the globe. This factor is very different from the consumer brand focus of Chevrolet, and highlights the importance of relationship warmth amongst the different users of Mini cars.

When looking at the companies in the technology sector, both Samsung and HP emphasize relationship warmth and strength in forming individual consumer-brand relationships with the users of its products. The logos of HP and Samsung are very similar, showcasing the company name in a strong

blue color. When comparing their logos to Nestle's for example, Nestle's has a more familial and nurturing appeal whereas Samsung and HP's logos only emphasize their names in a more professional and business sense. Samsung's photographs posted on their Facebook page are mainly of the different products that they feature, as well as photos that discuss the features and benefits that the products provide. Additionally, Samsung has some pictures that show a social aspect to the company, including product conferences and business leadership in the technology marketplace. Samsung's company description mainly discusses how the company wants to become a digital leader in the technology market as well as its focus on strong values and ethical standards when conducting business. HP, in contrast, contains photographs on its page that describe and highlight the products that HP makes, but more importantly, many of the photos show the HP products being used with families, at Halloween parties, and with dogs and animals. This more personal aspect shows more nurturing warmth as opposed to the features and benefits that Samsung mainly focuses and displays on their page. Finally, Samsung uses its page description to talk about and emphasize its focus on becoming a market leader. In contrast, HP comments about how it wants to drive business value, create social benefit, and improve the lives of customers. HP connects with its customers by not only the features that their technology products provide but also how the products will improve the lives of the consumers (providing better quality pictures, greeting cards, etc). HP is able to more warmly connect with customers on an individual level, as opposed to Samsung which, in appearance, focuses more on promoting products and their features and benefits.

Figure 1 is a graph comparing the strength of consumer-consumer relationships and consumer-brand relationships amongst the six brands analyzed earlier. What is important to note here is that all of the brands involve aspects of creating warmth through both consumer-consumer and consumer-brand relationships, and that no one brand exists solely in one category or the other. The appearances of warmth are blended in aspects that forge relationships amongst the users of the products and between the

company and the individual user. Based on the analysis, Mini USA displays the highest level of consumer-consumer relationship warmth, as it actively promotes its users to connect with other Mini enthusiasts. Nestle is focused on creating consumer-consumer relationships as opposed to consumer brand individualized relationships. Chevrolet and Quaker are stronger in creating a warm inviting page through consumer-brand relationships by emphasizing product features and benefits and also improving one's life through using the products to stay healthy in Quaker's case or through reliving history as in Chevrolet's case. Both HP and Samsung connect with consumers through an individual brand relationship but HP is also concerned about users interacting with other users to some degree, and this is why HP is placed higher on the consumer-consumer scale as opposed to Samsung.

The elements of self-connection, interdependence, and relationship warmth provide a framework for looking at how products and brands build relationship with their customers on Facebook. Different companies have different strategies and beliefs as to the best way to build consumer brand relationships. Some companies, like Nestle, are focusing on having their customers visit their website for more information, as opposed to Quaker or HP who are actively engaging with and connecting with their customers almost as if they were "friends" with their customers.

What makes the Samsung and HP Facebook sites so successful in building relationships with customers is that they do not actively try to promote their products in a direct sense. They ask their customers questions about what they are looking for in technology products, and through creative ways, show how their products fit the needs of their target market. For example, HP promotes their printing services through advocating that their customers share their Halloween memories with others. Samsung actively asks their customers' opinions about products, and how they use them in their everyday lives to gain a better sense of who their customers are. They also ask questions about other related interests to people who enjoy technology, like their customers' video game interests.

Chevrolet and Mini USA reach out to their customers through Facebook to provide them with more information about efforts the company is working on related to their main product offerings. Through viral marketing techniques like the rocket launch for the Mini Coupe and the Chevrolet Centennial Celebration, current and new customers are exposed to events that help build a community of car owners. Customers are made aware that there are many other individuals that love and enjoy using the products they use themselves. This creates a common bond between customers, and strengthens the relationship between customers, and the relationship between customers and the brand/company.

A common theme seen across all of the Facebook pages for the various companies analyzed here is that there is not much personal connection between the Facebook user and their own “friends.” A relationship develops between the marketer/company and the individual consumer, but not many connections are made between the various users and their particular friend circles or groups. On several of the pages, there is a small space on the right hand side of the page that lists one’s similar friends that “like” or are interested in a particular company, brand, or product. Interestingly, this is the extent of the connection, and it is not further enhanced.

One way to augment the relationships between the brands and the customers is to invite the customer’s friends into the mixture. According to James McAlexander, John Schouten, and Harold Koenig, they discuss in their research about the development of the brand relationship model that includes other stakeholders than simply the brand and the customer. Other users are involved including the marketer and company as well (McAlexander, 2002). To further enhance the digital brand relationships people form with products, companies should consider involving advertisements that include one’s friend’s endorsements of the products or incorporate one’s friend’s opinions if possible. People may be more intrigued to learn about a friend’s experience with a product because they may see it as more credible and unbiased as opposed to a message coming from a marketer of a large company. Furthermore, pre-existing levels of consumer-consumer relationship self-connection, interdependence,

and relationship warmth are also likely to positively affect and influence the consumer-brand relationships that exist between consumers and brands. Levels of both consumer-consumer relationships as well as consumer-brand relationships help to reinforce one another as the intensity of the relationship grows over time.

Conclusion

Overall, this research analysis has focused on the development of consumer-brand relationships, and the definition of what a digital brand relationship means in today's marketplace. Consumers and companies alike interact today through a variety of mechanisms, and the Internet has bolstered this interaction and communication network. As can be seen from this analysis, companies are employing a variety of techniques and signals to communicate to users the company's image, wishes, and value. Future research may shed light on issues of information and company privacy online, as well as how to reach out to customers that may not take an active role and seek out a company or brand online through Facebook or other mediums. There is no one best way to build customer relationships and this analysis hopes to provide some insights to the benefits and challenges that Facebook provides in the brand relationship development process. As time and technology evolve, new ways to develop relationships will emerge and older ways may cease to be functional. What will never cease to be important is the fact that marketers need to actively engage consumers and build consumer brand loyalty to insure that customers not only enjoy using a company's products but tell their friends and family about their experiences.

Limitations and Future Research

This section will discuss possible limitations of this research analysis as well as directions for future research. In this analysis, I analyzed the Facebook pages from three industries, food products, technology products, and automobiles. Future analyses could look at Facebook pages from other industries to provide a broader perspective on how brand relationship development occurs on Facebook. Additionally, in this analysis, of the six dimensions of the Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) discussed by Susan Fournier, the dimensions of self-connection and interdependence as well as relationship warmth were discussed. Additional research could look into determining to what extent the dimensions of love, commitment, and intimacy play a role in the development of consumer brand relationships in the online domain. For example, terms like “Facebook fan” used in consumer-brand relationships imply a lack of commitment and intimacy, unlike the term “Facebook friend” in consumer-consumer relationships.. Furthermore, additional research studies could interview consumers and ask their perspective on the elements of the BRQ that they notice are utilized on the company’s Facebook pages.

Finally, future research could look at to what extent the consumer-consumer brand relationships interact with the development of consumer-brand relationships. A useful example of building digital brand relationships online in conjunction with consumer-consumer relationships is the partnership between Pandora online radio and Facebook. When a user creates a radio station on Pandora, they have the ability to see the artist and song name that they are listening to at a particular time. Pandora asks the user if they would like to link their Facebook account to their Pandora account. When the two accounts are linked, when a song plays on Pandora, it also lists one’s friends that like the song or band that is currently playing. By linking Facebook and Pandora together, this helps to build credibility for not only Facebook and Pandora for providing this neat feature, but for the artist as well. This synergistic effect of brand relationship development highlights the importance of one’s friends in the process of utilizing and trying out new products. In a friendly conversation, one’s friend may recommend that you try a new CD

that features a band he/she may think you like. This same discussion now can take place online in a different way, but that also benefits the companies of Facebook and Pandora. Situations similar to this one just described could be analyzed amongst a wide variety of different companies to analyze the development of relationships between products, customers, and the general public.

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Appendix A

Relationship Summary Table

Brand Name	Product Category	Frequency of purchase	Overall Price	Number of Facebook "Likes" (as of February 22, 2012)	Relationship Category
Nestle	Food	Several times per week/month	Low price	344,852	Forced Friendship
Quaker	Food	Several times per week/month	Low price	723,447	Caring Friend
Chevrolet	Automotive	May purchase once every 5 to 10 years or more	High priced (\$ thousands)	921,798	Wise Teacher, Grandfather
Mini USA	Automotive	May purchase once every 5 to 10 years or more	High priced (\$ thousands)	243,278	Young Teenager, Show Off
Samsung USA	Technology	Once every few years (1-2 years)	Moderately priced (\$ Hundreds)	437,032	The Engineer/ Business Person
Hewlett Packard (HP)	Technology	Once every few years (1-2 years)	Moderately priced (\$ Hundreds)	1,199,778	Warm, Caring Friend

Appendix B

Screenshot of Nestle Facebook Page (as of February 22, 2012 and April 1, 2012 respectively)



Appendix C

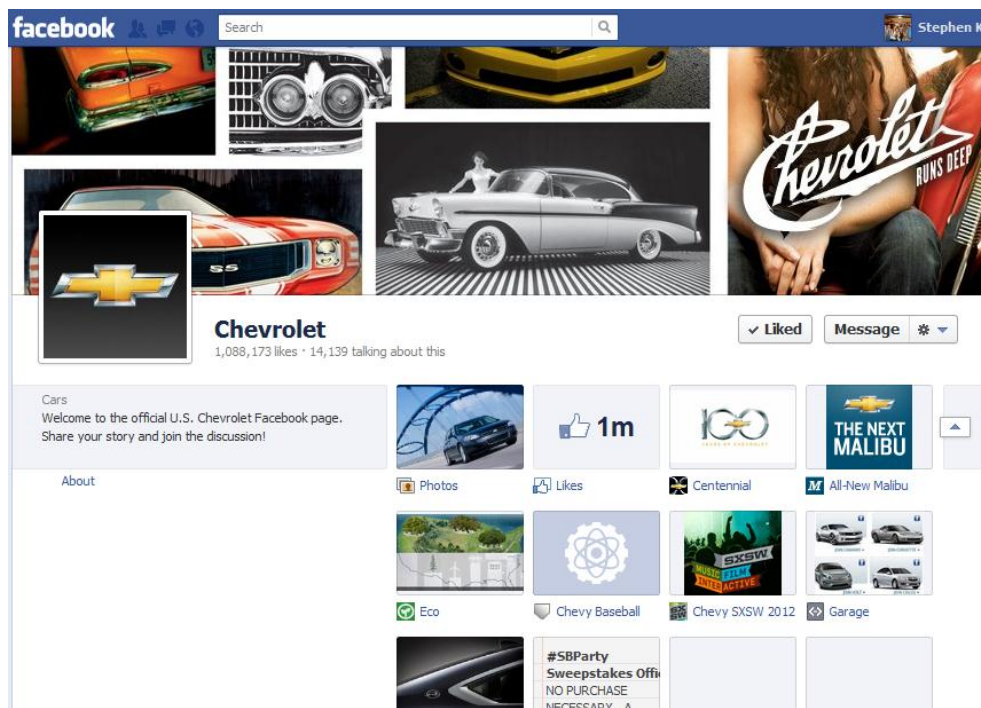
Screenshot of Quaker Facebook Page (as of February 22, 2012 and April 1, 2012 respectively)

The screenshot shows the Quaker Facebook page interface. The top navigation bar includes the Facebook logo, a search bar, and a notification bell with a red '1'. The left sidebar features a large image of a Quaker man's head above a bowl of oatmeal, with a 'Wall' button and a list of links: Info, Friend Activity (1+), Heart Health, Breakfast IQ, and Bob Harper. The main content area displays the Quaker profile header with the name 'Quaker' and category 'Food/Beverages'. Below this is a promotional banner for 'This Week's HEALTHY HEART Topping Is...' featuring almonds and a bowl of cereal. A 'Wall' section shows a post from 'Liz' about her heart health journey, accompanied by a video player for 'Nourish What Counts - Liz'. The post has 40 likes and 2 shares. The bottom of the page shows a 'Quaker' logo.

The screenshot shows the Quaker Facebook page interface as of April 1, 2012. The top navigation bar includes the Facebook logo, a search bar, and a user profile picture for 'Stephen K'. The main content area features a large banner for 'OATMEAL COOKIES FROM THE OATMEAL PEOPLE.' with an image of cookies and a box of 'SOFT BAKED OATMEAL COOKIES'. Below the banner is the Quaker profile header with the name 'Quaker' and category 'Food/Beverages'. The page shows 833,107 likes and 51,133 people talking about this. The left sidebar includes an 'About' section with a welcome message. The right sidebar features a grid of links: Photos, Likes (833k), Breakfast IQ Quiz, Heart Health, Coupon Instructions, Poll, Videos, Support, and a 'FINALLY! QUAKER COOKIES' banner.


Appendix D

Screenshot of Chevrolet Facebook Page (as of February 22, 2012 and April 1, 2012 respectively)







Appendix E

Screenshot of Mini USA Facebook Page (as of February 22, 2012 and April 1, 2012 respectively)

facebook  Search


MINI USA
Cars





Wall MINI USA · Everyone (Most Recent)



Share:  Post  Photo  Link  Video

Write something...

MINI USA
Where in the States is Jim? Here he is with due #3 for the MINI TAKES THE STATES 2012 route.




 Like ·  Comment ·  Share · about an hour ago · 

facebook  Search  Stephen






MINI TEST DRIVE TAKE[⚡]DOWN






MINI USA
262,919 likes · 4,225 talking about this

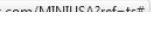




✓ Liked 

Cars
Welcome to the official Facebook page of MINI USA.

About

Appendix F

Screenshot of Samsung Facebook Page (as of February 22, 2012 and April 1, 2012 respectively)

This screenshot shows the Samsung USA Facebook page interface from February 22, 2012. The top navigation bar includes the Facebook logo, a search bar, and a notification badge. The left sidebar contains a large Samsung logo, a 'Wall' button, and a list of links: Info, Friend Activity (1+), Solve for Tomorrow, Catalog, Samsung CHRONOS Magazi..., Our Pages, Support, Photos, and Videos. Below these links is an 'About' section with a welcome message and a 'like this' button showing 437,038 likes. The main content area features the Samsung USA profile picture and cover photo, followed by a post titled 'Waterproof. Magnet proof. And Shockproof.' with a link to a Samsung USA page. The post includes a photo of a Samsung device and text about new microSD and SD memory cards. Below the post are buttons for 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share', along with a comment from Marti Ruiz.

facebook Search

Samsung USA
Company · Ridgefield Park, New Jersey

Wall Samsung USA · Everyone (Most Recent)

Share: Post Photo Link Video

Write something...

Samsung USA
Waterproof. Magnet proof. And Shockproof.

LIKE this if these SD cards are as tough as your lifestyle!

<http://smsn.us/6037Rfyf>

New microSD and SD memory cards
smsn.us

Since Samsung already supplies RAM to the world, why not dive into the world of memory cards? They have just announced a spanking new range of advanced SD and microSD cards that will target digital imaging and mobile devices. The [...]

Like · Comment · Share · 3 hours ago via Samsung USA - Publisher

61 people like this.

View all 4 comments

Marti Ruiz When willu launch it about an hour ago · Like

This screenshot shows the Samsung USA Facebook page interface from April 1, 2012. The top navigation bar includes the Facebook logo, a search bar, and a user profile picture. The left sidebar features a large Samsung logo and a 'Welcome to the Official Samsung USA Page!' message. The main content area displays a large image of Samsung products (monitor, smartphone, tablet, laptop) and a 'Samsung USA' profile picture. Below the image are buttons for 'Liked', 'Message', and a dropdown menu. The right sidebar shows a '525k' likes button and a 'Solve for Tomorrow' button. The bottom section contains a grid of buttons: 'Photos', 'Support', 'Solve for Tomorrow...', 'Our Pages', 'Catalog', and 'Videos'.

facebook Search Stephen K

Samsung USA
525,178 likes · 21,071 talking about this

Company
Welcome to the Official Samsung USA Page! We're very glad you're here. "Like" us to interact with other fans and get access to the latest and greatest about Samsung.

About

Samsung **START TV**

Photos Support Solve for Tomorrow... Likes

Our Pages Catalog Videos

Appendix G

Screenshot of HP Facebook Page (as of February 22, 2012 and April 1, 2012 respectively)

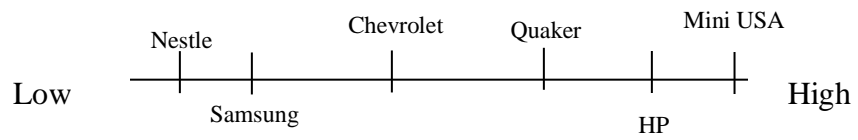
The screenshot shows the HP Facebook page interface. At the top is the Facebook navigation bar with the logo and a search bar. The HP profile picture is a large blue circle with the white 'hp' logo. To the right of the profile picture, the name 'HP' is displayed above 'Product/Service'. Below this is a horizontal strip of four small images. The 'Wall' section shows a post from HP dated 45 minutes ago. The post text reads: 'Who wants the NEW HP Envy Spectre? How about an HP Envy Printer + supplies? \$500 gift cards to the HP online store anyone? Enter the HP Ultimate Fan sweepstakes for a chance at winning all of the above: <http://on.fb.me/HP1million>'. Below the text is a promotional image for the 'ARE YOU THE ULTIMATE HP FAN?' sweepstakes. The image features an HP Envy Spectre laptop and a printer. Text on the image includes: 'Enter to win an HP prize bundle of some of our newest products*', 'THE MAIN PRIZE: THE HP SPECTRE HP ENVY T10 all in one Supplies for printer \$500 Gift Card', and 'WEEKLY PRIZE: ENTER FOR A CHANCE AT A \$500 GIFT CARD TO HPDIRECT.COM'. Below the image are the interaction buttons: 'Like · Comment · Share · 45 minutes ago · *'. At the bottom of the post, it says '57 people like this.' On the left sidebar, the 'Wall' section is expanded, showing a list of links: 'Info', 'Friend Activity (1)', 'HP and the Lorax', 'Project Getaway Contest', 'Ultimate HP Fan', 'Ink - WELCOME', 'Around HP', and 'Consumer Support Forum'. Below the links is an 'About' section with the text: 'Find out about what is happening around HP, view photos and learn about wha...'. At the bottom of the sidebar, the page count is shown: '1,199,860 like this'.

The screenshot shows the HP Facebook page interface as of April 1, 2012. The top navigation bar is the same. The HP profile picture is the same blue circle with the white 'hp' logo. To the right of the profile picture, the name 'HP' is displayed above 'Product/Service'. Below this is a horizontal strip of four small images. The 'Wall' section shows a post from DJ Hannah Rad. The post text reads: 'Submitted by: DJ Hannah Rad. "From the clubs of NYC to live on the RADIO, spinning with my HP Beats"'. Below the text is a promotional image for the 'ARE YOU THE ULTIMATE HP FAN?' sweepstakes. The image features an HP Envy Spectre laptop and a printer. Text on the image includes: 'Enter to win an HP prize bundle of some of our newest products*', 'THE MAIN PRIZE: THE HP SPECTRE HP ENVY T10 all in one Supplies for printer \$500 Gift Card', and 'WEEKLY PRIZE: ENTER FOR A CHANCE AT A \$500 GIFT CARD TO HPDIRECT.COM'. Below the image are the interaction buttons: 'Like · Comment · Share · 45 minutes ago · *'. At the bottom of the post, it says '57 people like this.' On the left sidebar, the 'Wall' section is expanded, showing a list of links: 'Info', 'Friend Activity (1)', 'HP and the Lorax', 'Project Getaway Contest', 'Ultimate HP Fan', 'Ink - WELCOME', 'Around HP', and 'Consumer Support Forum'. Below the links is an 'About' section with the text: 'Find out about what is happening around HP, view photos and learn about wha...'. At the bottom of the sidebar, the page count is shown: '1,199,860 like this'.

Table 1

Brand Relationship Quality Scales

1. Self-Connection



2. Interdependence

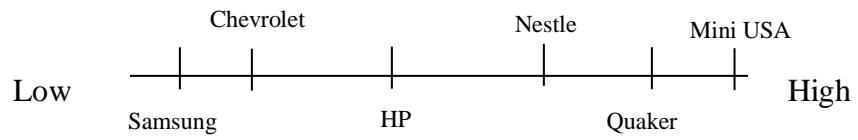
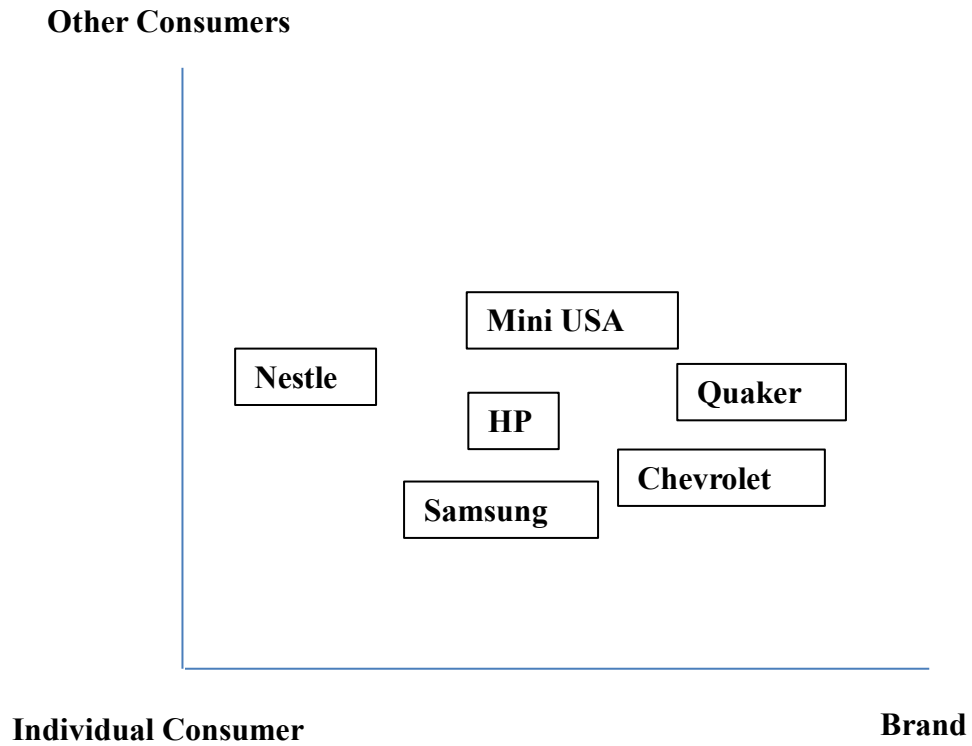


Figure 1

Consumer-Consumer vs. Consumer-Brand Relationship Warmth



ACADEMIC VITA of Stephen J. Kingsbury

STEPHEN J. KINGSBURY

2468 Huckleberry Way, Jamison, PA 18929

(215) 534-6058, sjk5140@psu.edu, stephen.kingsbury@gmail.com

EDUCATION	<p>Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 2008-2012 <i>Schreyer Honors College, Smeal College of Business</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bachelor of Science in Marketing, Minor in Psychology• Awarded Lamartine Hood Endowment Scholarship – Penn State Alumni Association• Thesis: <i>Building Digital Brand Relationships: Interactions Between Brands and Consumers</i> <p>Central Bucks High School East, Doylestown, PA 2004-2008 <i>Scholar's Diploma</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recipient of University of Rochester/Kodak Young Leaders Award• National Merit Scholarship Program Commended Student – 2006
EXPERIENCE	<p>Ethicon Inc., a Johnson & Johnson Company, Somerville, NJ 5/2011 – 8/2011 <i>Global Strategic Marketing Intern, Biosurgery</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Researched and created a market model to prioritize development of new products to treat Ventilator Associated Pneumonia and Urinary Tract Infections, totaling a market potential of over \$200 million.• Designed a commercialization portal website while partnering cross-functionally to effectively globalize Ethicon's Biosurgery products.• Developed a market assessment for the Surgicel™ product family, including in depth analysis of global competition and market dynamics to provide guidance for future marketing efforts. <p>Cordis Corporation, a Johnson & Johnson Company, Bridgewater, NJ 6/2010 - 12/2010 <i>Pricing and Contracting Co-op, Commercial Operations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designed compliance tools of contracts for Cypher™ as well as Cardiovascular and Endovascular products totaling more than \$250 million in annual sales.• Implemented pricing strategy changes to effectively monitor compliance of contracts to their committed sales quotas.• Partnered with the sales organization and cross functionally to execute compliance outcomes and ensure communication of terminated, updated, and newly initiated contracts.• Calculated and paid administrative fees for corporate accounts. <p>Penn State Lion Scouts – Executive Board Member, University Park, PA 2009-2012 <i>Orientation Coordinator, Membership Advisor, and Tour Advisor</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guided prospective students and their families on tours of the University Park Campus.• Served three leadership positions on the executive board of a 150 member organization throughout my sophomore, junior, and senior years.• Designed and organized training programs for new members of the Lion Scouts organization.• Oversaw and developed our recruitment and retention programs for new and current members.• Managed the tour allocation system for the Lion Scouts organization.• Chosen to represent Penn State University in an Undergraduate Admissions video. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vn3GLxFOEE
SKILLS	<p>Advanced skills in Microsoft Excel, Proficient in Microsoft Office and Microsoft Sharepoint Comfortable in Mac OS X and Windows Operating Systems Proficient in reading and writing Spanish</p>
ACTIVITIES	<p>Boy Scouts of America – Eagle Scout (2006) Piano Lessons Catholic Campus Ministry – Eucharistic Minister</p>