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"Do Brand Communities require Purpose?"

A comparative study of best practice communities

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Abstract

This master's thesis investigates the interrelationship between the vitality and engagement of brand communities and brand purpose, a largely unexplored area in current marketing research. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach including netnography, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys, the study analyzes three brand communities from different industries, namely Pamela Reif, GoPro, and Supreme.

The individual contribution to the research goal comprises an in-depth analysis of the contemporary tech brand GoPro. Therefore, the research is structured in six key aspects engagement, sense of belonging, shared values, support and collaboration, brand loyalty, and advocacy. Results indicate that a brand's purpose, aligned with its community values, enhances engagement, and fosters a stronger sense of belonging. Conversely, discrepancies between a brand's purpose and its community's values result in lower engagement and weaker community bonds. These findings emerge as the most relevant and provide strategic insights for businesses aiming to cultivate vital and engaged brand communities, underscoring the importance of aligning brand purpose with community values and the need for brands to maintain authenticity in a rapidly evolving marketing landscape. Research limitations and directions for further research are discussed.

Keywords:

Brand communities, Brand purpose, Socio-cultural analysis, Mixed-methods approach, Community dynamics, Brand Management

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1. Introduction

In an era marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, society loses its internal cohesion and disintegrates into a multitude of interest groups (Taskan, Junca-Silva and Caetano 2023). In times of increasing social fragmentation, communities emerge as essential unifiers and serve as a countermeasure to prevent societal disintegration. Brand communities are defined as specialized, non-geographically bound networks formed around a shared admiration for a brand (Muniz Jr and O'Guinn 2001). Especially in a world of social disintegration, leveraging the potential of brand communities becomes essential for creating meaningful connections around shared interests (Poynter 2008). Moreover, the alignment of the values of brand community members with a brand's purpose, typically results in higher levels of engagement, and a deep sense of belonging within their communities (Martinek 2021). Brand purpose is specified as the brand's central goal that significantly shapes a brand's identity, strategy, and meaning, further transcending merely profit-oriented objectives to encompass societal and environmental engagement (Williams, Escalas and Morningstar 2022).

Despite the growing interest in brand community and brand purpose in marketing research, the interrelationship between these two concepts remains relatively unexplored in academic literature (Calder, Malthouse and Schaedel 2009). This thesis seeks to fill this gap by exploring the central research question:

Does a well-functioning, engaged, vital brand community require brand purpose?

Besides the main research question, this paper aims to answer the following sub-questions:

- *How does brand purpose affect the level of engagement within these brand communities?*

- *How does a brand's purpose contribute to the development of shared interests and identities amongst community members?*
- *How does the existence of a vital brand community affect perceived authenticity and purchasing behavior?*

This thesis starts by defining the concepts of branding, brand purpose and brand community, further addressing the research gap of the interrelationship of the latter concepts. Utilizing a comprehensive mixed-methods research strategy that encompasses netnography, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys, this study undertakes a thorough exploration of brand communities across diverse industries. The analysis focuses on three distinct brands: (I) Pamela Reif, (II) GoPro, and (III) Supreme, which constitute the individual parts of this thesis. Each brand is analyzed separately and in detail to gain a deep understanding of their respective brand community dynamics, focusing on six key metrics: engagement, sense of belonging, shared values, support and collaboration, influence and advocacy, and brand loyalty. Following the individual brand analyses, the study transitions into a comparative phase. Therefore, insights are elaborated to reveal differences and similarities across the three brands. This is further encompassed through the development of a practical guideline for companies, that aims to provide managerial implications for businesses aiming to cultivate vital and engaged brand communities. This paper acknowledges potential limitations that arise from these findings and gives directions for future research.

Findings of this study emphasize the substantial impact of brand purpose on community engagement and vitality. The alignment of a brand's purpose with its community's values emerges as a driving force for elevated levels of engagement, a higher sense of belonging, mutual support, the willingness to defend the brand and higher loyalty towards the brand.

2. Contextual Background

This section lays the theoretical groundwork for understanding brand communities and brand purpose. This foundation is essential for conducting a deeper and more comprehensive analysis of the research question.

2.1 Branding

Initially, branding was primarily focused on using brand names and symbols to distinguish products from commodities (American Marketing Association 1960). Over time, it shifted to influencing how consumers perceive the functional benefits of a product or service and how these benefits connect to social and emotional aspects (B. J. Calder 2022). Additionally, with the rise of social media, the concept of brand personas, or "personal brands" has gained significant prominence (Keller 2011). Individuals, embodying brands, redefine the connection by attracting consumers not just for products but for the values and experiences they represent (Hennessy 2018). This shift highlights the trend towards more personalized and humanized brand interactions in the modern digital landscape. Modern branding goes further by aiming to engage consumers with the brand, making interactions more meaningful and participative (Martinek 2021).

2.2 Brand Purpose

"The brands that will matter in the future are the ones that have a purpose which is beyond profit." - Richard Branson, CEO Virgin group

Defined as a brand's "long-term, central aim that is a predominant component of its identity, meaning structure, and strategy", brand purpose transcends profit-oriented objectives and

extends towards productive engagement with broader societal and environmental issues (Williams, Escalas and Morningstar 2022, 704). The concept has gained traction as brands increasingly recognize the need to go beyond mere product offerings and connect with consumers on a deeper level. Brand purpose involves a commitment to authenticity, aligning with social and environmental responsibilities (Sinek 2011). It serves as a compass for decision-making, guiding brands in turbulent times (Kramer 2017). Moreover, it underscores a long-term commitment to values and principles that extend beyond immediate profits, emphasizing transparency and accountability (Sinek 2011). As brand purpose continues to evolve, it plays a vital role in shaping modern branding strategies, differentiating brands in competitive markets, and serving as a catalyst for positive change (Hemerling, et al. 2018). In essence, brand purpose is not just a concept but should be seen as a strategic tool. It demands careful navigation, with brands needing to align their messages, actions, and purpose authentically. When executed effectively, brand purpose contributes not only to differentiation in competitive markets but also to the creation of genuine emotional connections, enhanced brand loyalty, and a positive contribution to society (Williams, Escalas and Morningstar 2022). However, the concept of brand purpose has been criticized for its potential to be used as a marketing tool without genuine alignment with social or environmental causes, leading to accusations of "greenwashing" (Vredenburg, et al. 2020, 449). Further, there is the risk of using brand purpose manipulatively to influence consumers' trust and willingness to pay a premium (Williams, Escalas and Morningstar 2022).

The concept of brand purpose remains ambiguous, marked by unclarity and several definitions. Despite the lack of comprehensive understanding, there is a growing interest among practitioners, coupled with an increase in research efforts aimed at unraveling the concept of brand purpose.

2.3 Brand Communities

It is important to note that in existing literature, terms like “brand tribes” and “consumer subcultures” often overlap and are used interchangeably with “brand communities” (Goulding, Shankar and Canniford 2013, 817). Muniz and O’Guinn (2001, 412) introduced brand communities as “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand”. Further, they identified three key pillars that characterize these communities, namely consciousness of a kind, shared rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility (Muniz Jr and O'Guinn 2001). Within a brand community, consciousness of a kind is characterized by the strong connection members feel towards each other, marked by a sense of familiarity. The culture and identity of the community are further nurtured through shared rituals and traditions, reflecting established norms and values, which also reinforce a sense of unity. Finally, moral responsibility reflects a feeling of commitment to both the community as a whole and its individual members (Muniz Jr and O'Guinn 2001). Therefore, the ideal way to achieve a successful, loyal, and vital brand community is through extensive community-building measures, providing its members with emotionally added value over and above the products and services offered (B. J. Calder 2022). Furthermore, brand communities differentiate themselves through their preferred communication, whether it’s online, offline, or a hybrid interaction of both (Wirtz, et al. 2013). Additionally, a distinction can be drawn between company-managed brand communities, originating from corporate initiatives, and consumer-run entities, motivated through brand enthusiasm (Bonnemaizon, Cova and Louyot 2007).

The research topic of brand community has gained momentum in recent times. Existing literature primarily focuses on the association between brand communities and elements such as brand loyalty, brand equity or trust, as evidenced in studies by Marzocchi, Morandin, and

Bergami (2013), Hur, Ahn, and Kim (2011), and Casaló, Flavián, and Guinalíu (2007). Additionally, some studies delve into the relationship between brand communities and engagement or participation, as explored by Wirtz et al. (2013), Zhang et al. (2017), and Kamboj and Rahman (2017).

2.4 Interrelationship between Brand Purpose & Brand Communities

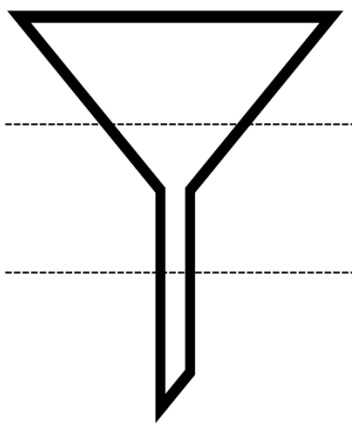
Up to this point, there has been limited research on the relationship between brand purpose and brand communities (Calder, Malthouse and Schaedel 2009). The search query using "(TI=(Brand Communit*)) AND TI=(Brand Purpose)" in Web of Science yielded just one article by Calder (2022) that directly relates to this study's research topic, displaying a research gap. In his paper, Calder (2022) suggests that brand communities can play a pivotal role in reinforcing and amplifying a brand's purpose. Members of these communities often share common interests, values, and objectives, which can in turn foster deeper engagement and loyalty to the brand. Moreover, within the article, these communities are described to serve as powerful channels for extending the reach and influence of a brand's message, as community members often transform into passionate brand advocates (B. J. Calder 2022).

3. Methodology

This section delves into the methodology that guides the research, outlining a systematic approach to investigate the interrelationship between a well-defined brand purpose and vital and engaged brand communities. This methodology is distinguished into two parts: the methodological filter and the methodological analysis. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the central research question, this study deploys a mixed-method framework, combining an observing netnography, qualitative interviews, and a quantitative market survey.

3.1 Methodological Filter

Within this work, a methodological filter is utilized as a systematic approach for selecting appropriate brands for further in-depth analysis. In this context, the methodological filter refers to a set of criteria or process used to screen and select subjects of interest based on specific research objectives (Jenkins 2004). This approach ensures that the chosen brands align closely with the focus of the study, providing relevant and meaningful insights.



150

Filter 1:
Identified a data pool of 150 brands obtaining both, (I) an active, engaged and vital brand community, and (II) a well-defined purpose centered around a shared interest.

38

Filter 2:
To narrow down the scope, three industries have been fixated in (I) health and lifestyle, (II) tech, (III) fashion, as they pose robustness towards the research objective. This results in 38 brands.

10

Filter 3:
Applying for the key-metrics postulated by Madupu and Cooley (2010), identified brands need to comprise all variables in engagement, shared values, sense of belonging, support and collaboration, brand advocacy and brand loyalty. This results in 10 brands.

Laid our filtering process results in three brands being focused on within the underlying thesis: (I) Pamela Reif, (II) GoPro, and (III) Supreme.

Figure 1: *Methodological filter to retrieve case examples relevant to the research topic*

The underlying methodological filter can be screened in Figure 1 and follows three distinct steps. The initial phase of the filtering process comprised a pool of 150 brands, each with both strong communities and a clear brand purpose. This first filter is essential to narrow down the initial database to brands that are potentially relevant for the research of this study. In the second phase of the filtering process, the selection was then further refined by focusing on brands from robust and dynamic industries. This additional criterion reduced the initial pool of 150 brands to 38, ensuring the brands are operating in industries known for resilience and market presence. In the third phase, the following key metrics derived from previous research from Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), Madupu and Cooley (2010), and Jones and Vogl (2020), showcased in Table 1, are applied. Those ensure relevance of the brands in focus to the research topic and are

expected to reveal valuable insights into the brand purpose impacting the activity and vitality of brand communities.

Engagement	*Community members actively engage with the brand and with each other. They participate in discussions, share experiences, provide feedback, and contribute to the overall community conversation. This engagement can take place through various channels, including social media, online forums, events, or even offline interactions.*
Sense of Belonging	*Strong brand communities foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity among its members. Community members feel connected to each other and to the brand, creating a feeling of being part of something bigger.*
Shared Values and Identity	*Brand communities often revolve around shared values and beliefs. Members identify with the brand's mission, vision, and identity, and these shared values form a common bond that strengthens the community.*
Support and Collaboration	*Brand communities provide a platform for members to support and collaborate with each other. They share knowledge, tips, and advice related to the brand and its products/services. This collaborative environment encourages learning, creativity, and innovation.*
Influence and Advocacy	*Brand communities can become powerful advocates for the brand. Members often act as brand ambassadors, promoting the brand within their networks and influencing the perceptions and behaviors of others.*
Brand Loyalty	*Consumer's positive feelings towards a brand and their dedication to purchasing the brand's products or services over time, regardless of changes in competitors' pricing or the external environment.*

Table 1: *Variables of interest comprised in analysis based on Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), Madupu and Cooley (2010), and Jones and Vogl (2020)*

The underlying approach narrows down the initial brand pool to 10 best-practice examples with the potential for in-depth analysis. Through extensive examination of those brands, three distinct brands from various industries are identified for central interest, further encompassing this thesis' individual parts: (I) Pamela Reif, a personal brand and influencer in the lifestyle and health industry (II) GoPro, a contemporary brand from the technology sector, and (III) Supreme, exemplifying the unique dynamics of brand communities in the fashion industry. As a result of this filtering process, the three selected brands demonstrate diverse and robust examples of thriving brand communities in fast-paced market environments. The study will thereof delve deeper into each brand's community activity, further exploring the interplay between their brand purpose and community vitality and engagement.

3.2 Methodological Analysis

The methodological analysis dives deeper into the applied mixed-methods approach, integrating netnography, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys to investigate the influence of brand purpose on brand community engagement. This multifaceted approach allows for a thorough exploration of brand community dynamics across the three distinct brands: (I) Pamela Reif, (II) GoPro, and (III) Supreme. Each method provides unique insights, combining broad online data analysis, personal perspectives, and quantifiable community engagement trends to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Each of these brands represents a separate case study, allowing for an in-depth analysis of its respective brand community dynamics.

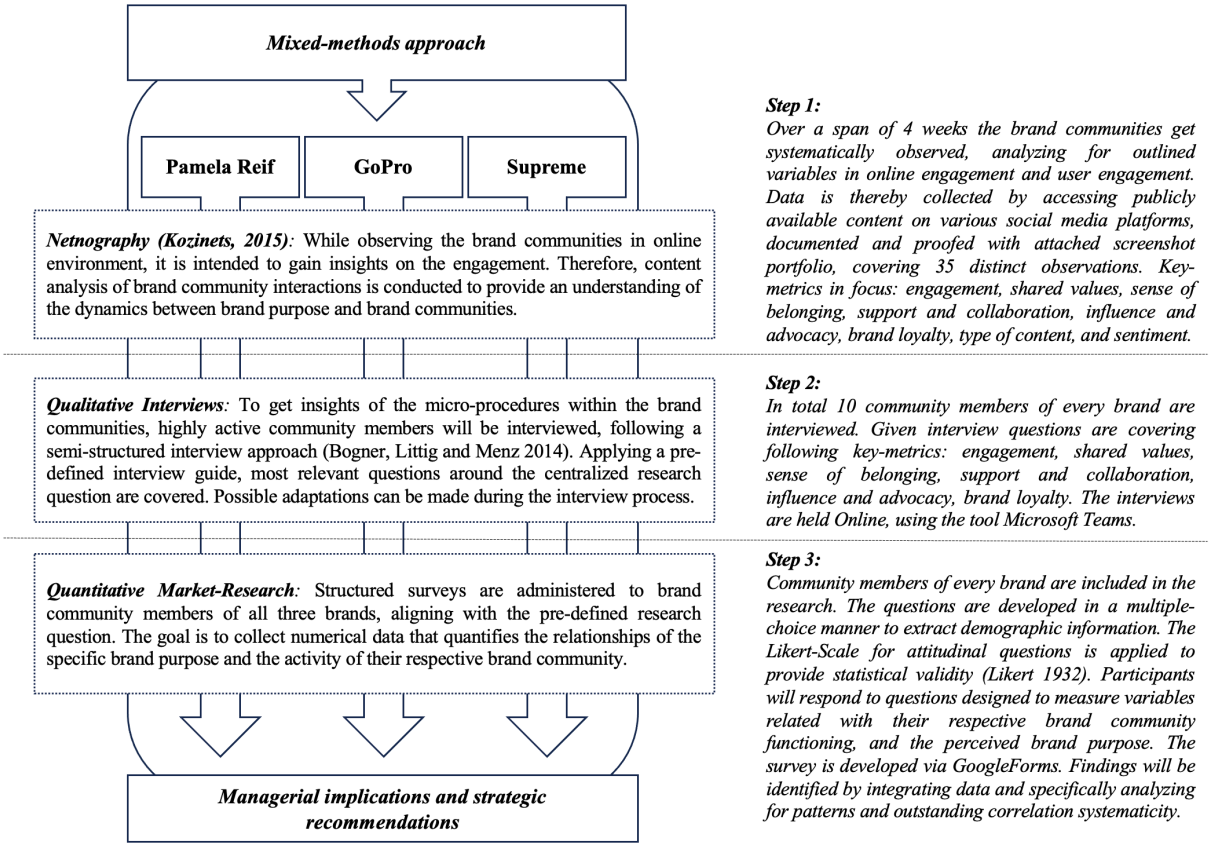


Figure 2: *Methodological approach for data gathering*

Step 1: Netnography

Netnography, as defined by Kozinets (2002), is a marketing research technique using publicly available information to provide insights from online communities. This method is applied to investigate the engagement dynamics within the specified brand communities of Pamela Reif, GoPro, and Supreme (Kozinets 2015). It stands out as a quicker and more cost-effective alternative to traditional ethnography, while offering a non-intrusive approach, compared to focus groups or interviews (Kozinets 2002). Netnography involves a sequence of crucial steps: "(1) making cultural entrée, (2) gathering and analyzing data, (3) ensuring trustworthy interpretation, [sic] (5) conducting ethical research, and (6) providing opportunities for […] member feedback" (Kozinets 2002, 63).

To comprehensively understand the impact of brand purpose on each brand's community, a content analysis of online brand community interactions is conducted on various social media platforms for the respective brands. The selection of the platforms was based on the criteria recommended by Kozinets (2002) for identifying suitable online communities. These criteria include focusing on segments, topics, or groups that are relevant to the research question, prioritizing platforms with higher posting activity, targeting platforms with a significant number of discrete message posters, selecting platforms that offer more detailed and descriptive data, and preferring platforms with a higher level of member-to-member interaction, which aligns with the research question's requirements (Kozinets 2002). Following these guidelines, the selected platforms for the analysis are Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and TikTok. Each of these platforms offers comprehensive insights into the dynamics of brand communities, crucial for understanding how the engagement and vitality of brand communities is influenced by a brand's purpose. On these platforms, the participation of members was observed, evaluating aspects such as sentiment, type of content, engagement levels, brand loyalty, sense of

belonging, shared values, support, and advocacy. Detailed findings from these observations, are presented in the accompanying Excel document.

Step 2: Qualitative Interviews

Furthermore, qualitative interviews with highly active community members are conducted, using a semi-structured interview approach. This guided interview technique is based on the six criteria, defined in section 3.1, and covers the most relevant questions around the central research question, with possible adaptations during the interview process such as open-ended questions (Yin 2018).Therefore, the interviews are designed to gather general facts about the identified brands, as well as following a more subjective structure, containing individual perceptions and opinions. Semi-structured expert interviews are often used to gather technical as well as organizational process information from defined experts, and professionals from a specific industry field (Bogner, Littig and Menz 2014). Further, guideline-based interviews are stated to provide facts and information that cannot be gathered through other external sources (Kaiser 2021). The guideline allows for standardized data collection throughout the interview process and thus enables comparing similarities, as well as underlying differences across multiple variables. Nevertheless, the interviews should be adapted to respective partners to meet individual-characteristic requirements (Bogner, Littig and Menz 2014).

The systematic content analysis, starting with transcription and then extracting relevant aspects, demonstrates a rigorous approach to understanding the participants' viewpoints (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton 2013). The progression of filtering for first-order concepts is a methodological way to distil and synthesize the rich information obtained from the data gathered throughout the collection process. These theoretical themes not only capture but also contribute to understanding the broader narrative inherent (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton 2013).

Step 3: Quantitative Surveys

In the quantitative phase, structured surveys are administered to brand community members of Pamela Reif, GoPro, and Supreme, aligning with the pre-defined research question (Groves, et al. 2009). The goal is to collect numerical data that quantifies the relationship between the brand purpose of each of these brands and the engagement of their respective community and support the identified research findings. Therefore, the research data is significantly enhanced and complemented with a considerable stake in quantitative data. Numerical data gathering is structured around the six underlying key metrics identified in section 3.1, screened in Table 1. Thus, participants will respond to questions designed to measure variables related to brand community functioning, the perceived brand purpose of each brand, and their level of engagement within the respective communities. Therefore, multiple choice questions for demographic information and the Likert Scale for attitudinal questions are applied to provide statistical validity (Likert 1932). The survey also offers space to actively incorporate subjective opinions towards the brand community development. Surveys were developed, using Google Forms, and distributed electronically to participants who were identified as members of the underlying brand communities. Overall findings were identified by integrating the responses into a data-matrix, which can be screened in attached Excel file “Interview_Data-Matrix” and further analyzing for given data patterns and outstanding correlation.

4. Data Analysis

The following section represents the individual parts of the thesis, where a comprehensive in-depth analysis of the three distinct brands is conducted: (I) Pamela Reif, (II) GoPro, and (III) Supreme. The analyses are developed in parallel to obtain comparable insights. Each brand represents a different industry with diverse community dynamics, offering a rich spectrum for the analysis. Pamela Reif, as a personal brand and influencer, provides insights into the

dynamics of influencer-led brand communities. GoPro, a contemporary U.S. brand, exemplifies how product-based communities evolve in the tech sector. Supreme, as a fashion label, showcases the unique aspects of brand communities in the fashion industry. Each brand is analyzed, following the six key metrics: engagement, sense of belonging, shared values, support and collaboration, advocacy and brand loyalty, further elaborated on in section 3.1. While the foundation of the analyses lies in the transcripts of the conducted interviews, insights are further enriched by incorporating information from the quantitative studies and the observations derived from the netnography of each brand. In the following section, the analyzed data is laid out separately and elaborated on further, presenting the results in a structured manner.

4.1 Individual Part, Case 1: Pamela Reif

This section introduces the personal brand and prominent influencer Pamela Reif and provides a detailed overview of her brand community. This is followed by an in-depth analysis, incorporating insights from multiple research streams, including netnography, qualitative interviews, and a quantitative study. These insights are organized into six key dimensions as presented in Table 1 in section 3.1, offering a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and the interplay between Pamela Reif's brand community and her brand purpose.

4.1.1 The Social Media Influencer and Personal Brand Pamela Reif

The rise of personal brands and influencers in recent years, driven by social media, marks a significant shift in contemporary marketing, fundamentally reshaping, and transforming how individuals engage with products, services, and information in the digital age (Keller 2011; Hennessy 2018; Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders 2017). Pamela Reif serves as a best practice example of a thriving social media influencer, characterized by her commitment to almost daily

interactions with her community and her efforts to cultivate and maintain a strong connection with them.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the prominence of influencers and personal brands, as social media usage and online screen time, and interest in topics such as health, nutrition, exercise, and mental and physical well-being grew exponentially (Callaghan, et al. 2022; Sui, Rush and Rhodes 2022; Kaur, et al. 2020). This period marked a pivotal turning point for the health and fitness influencer Pamela Reif. As gyms were closed, her home workout videos garnered millions of views on YouTube, with up to 300,000 people working out every hour (Lenz 2020). As a result, Pamela Reif gained international popularity and a rapidly growing social media community (Gardt 2022).

Born in Germany in 1996, Pamela Leonie Reif has become a prominent fitness influencer on various social media platforms. Since starting her social media journey on Instagram in 2012, she has attracted over 9.3 million followers to date and has become the most popular German fitness YouTuber in 2023, with 9.72 million followers and over 1.8 billion views on this platform (Reif, Instagram 2023; Reif, Facebook 2023; Lohmeier 2023). She is also recognized globally for her leading role as a female fitness influencer (Feedspot 2023). In addition, Pamela Reif has a significant following on TikTok, with 917,200 followers and 7.2 million likes and amassed a total of 276,804 followers on Facebook (Reif, TikTok 2023; Reif, Facebook 2023). Her content is primarily focused on fitness, food, and beauty, with a strong emphasis on promoting and spreading her purpose of a healthy and fit lifestyle. With a steadily growing base of millions of followers, she has laid the foundation for a thriving health and fitness business. Beyond social media, she has published two bestselling cookbooks, developed the “Pam” App with weekly new recipes and workout plans, and founded two brands, namely “Naturally Pam”

and “Ela Beauty”. Her recognition in Forbes' “30 Under 30” at the age of 23 underscores her success in the health and fitness industry (Dawkins 2019).

4.1.2 Brand Community of Pamela Reif

Pamela Reif has built a strong connection with her followers by regularly sharing her daily life, including her fitness routines, based on following her workout plans, her diet, and current projects. By interacting with her followers on an almost daily basis, she has fostered a strong, loyal, and engaged community, and created a sense of intimacy among them (Ziegler 2017). In 2019, she was honored with the “Place to B Award”, given to the most influential young content creators on social media (Senft 2019). She stays even closer connected to her community by exchanging real-time text messages on her Instagram broadcast channel called “Pam’s Besties”, further strengthening this bond. Members also refer to each other as “Pammies”, which underscores their strong connection and identity within the community. Her community is highly engaged on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and TikTok. Members frequently share co-created content such as photos of themselves doing her workouts or reels of making her recipes, often using hashtags, or tagging Pamela in these posts. Pamela regularly reposts this user-generated content on her channel, which serves as a fitness inspiration and motivation for millions of members within her community. The main hashtags, used by her community are #pamelareif, and #pamelareifworkout, and revolve around her brand and her brand purpose (Reif, Instagram 2023). Her vital and engaged community and her brand purpose, centered around living a healthy and fit life, make her a compelling subject for investigating the research question.

4.1.3 Insights of Pamela Reifs Community

This section provides an in-depth analysis of Pamela Reif's online community based on netnography, expert interviews, and a quantitative study. The expert interviews were conducted virtually with 13 active members from her Instagram and Facebook communities during October and November 2023, lasted between 25 and 45 minutes, and followed a semi-structured interview methodology outlined in Appendix A.1. To augment these qualitative insights, a market survey was carried out, involving 112 active members of Pamela Reif's community. In addition, the analysis incorporates data obtained from netnography, to provide a deeper understanding of the engagement, interactions, and behaviors within her community on social media platforms. The main observations can be found in Appendix A.4.1. In the following, the analysis is structured around the six key topics: engagement, sense of belonging, shared values, support and collaboration, influence and advocacy, and brand loyalty.

Insights: Engagement in the Pamela Reif Brand Community

All survey respondents and interviewees actively follow Pamela Reif on one or more social media channels and are below categorized as 'members' of her community. The most popular platforms among members include Instagram (93.8%), YouTube (85.7%) and the "Pam" App (34.8%). The majority of them started following Pamela mainly during COVID-19, 2-3 years ago, which led to significant growth of her online community.

While Pamela Reif's community demonstrates active and engaged members on social media channels, the level of participation varies significantly among the members, leading to the identification of three distinct groups: 'consuming' members, who engage more passively by watching, playing a role in maintaining an audience and reach; 'active' members, who actively participate by liking, commenting, using hashtags, contributing to the vibrancy of her

community; and ‘connected’ members, who not only actively engage with Pamela’s content, but also interact with others, both online (through fan groups) and offline (through in-person meetings), deepening the bond between community members. These observations were made through netnograhy. Notably, 89% of interactions take place online, while only 11% meet in person, according to the results from the market study; typically, between members who knew each other previously, further revealed from the interviews (Interviewee #3, #4). However, when members interact, either online or offline, they exchange information about Pamela’s new products and her latest content (Interviewee #3, #10). Overall, the diversity in engagement levels underscores the different roles members play in contributing to the communities’ vitality.

Pamela Reif's official social media channels serve as the primary source of motivation and inspiration for the fitness goals of the community, with 93.6% of the participants visiting her profile at least twice a week, trending toward daily or every two-day visits. In addition, staying up to date with Pamela’s content was important (65.2%) to very important (28.6%), further demonstrating a deep interest in her personal life and her fitness and health content, indicating a strong alignment with her brand purpose (Interviewee #5). This is also evidenced by the fact that 46.8% actively like and 33.3% comment on her social media accounts every two days. Some members also feel a deep personal connection to her, as articulated by interviewee 2: “Pamela is part of my life”. Moreover, nearly half (47.7%) have joined her Instagram broadcast channel “Pam’s Besties” to stay even closer connected with her. To foster engagement, Pamela actively interacts with her followers by responding to messages and comments, taking photos, and organizing meet-and-greets, as observed in netnography.

While engagement between Pamela and the members on her official social media channels is significantly high, direct member-to-member communication is less frequent, with a substantial

75.9% indicating annual engagement. Results from the market survey support the initial observations, that members primarily engage directly with Pamela and her content on these platforms, rather than with each other. Most members like or comment on Pamela's posts, while fewer engage with each other, particularly on Instagram. Member-to-member interaction primarily occurs within smaller Pamela Reif sub-communities, as depicted in Figure 3, and includes liking, commenting, and chatting.

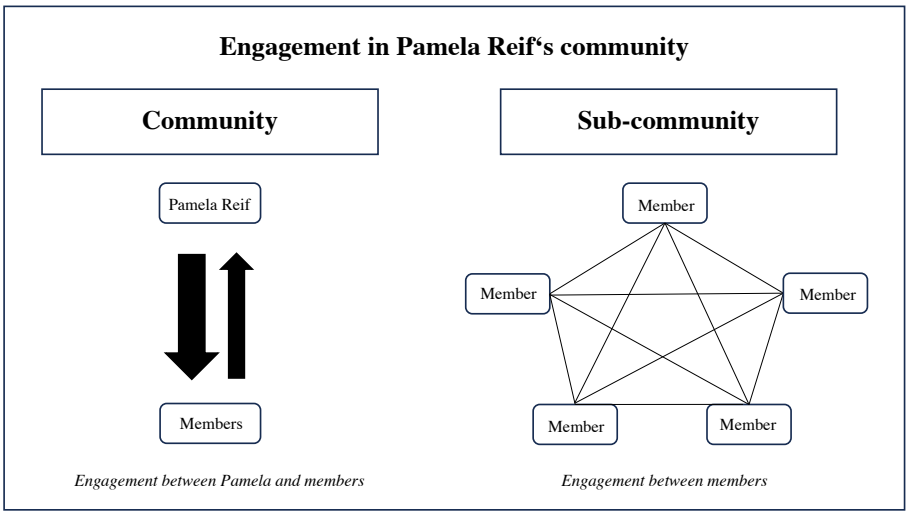


Figure 3: *Engagement dynamics in the Pamela Reif community*

Smaller sub-communities, such as the "Pamela Reif Workout Group" on Facebook, with 15.952 members to date, serve as spaces for members to connect, offer mutual support and establish deeper personal relationships that extend beyond fitness, as observed from netnography. Members share their workouts, motivate each other by liking or commenting and provide mutual support on each other's fitness journeys (Appendix A.4.1.1). They also maintain daily contact through their Facebook chat group "Our Feelings", which is used to connect beyond fitness-related discussions (Interviewee #7, #9). These interactions within the sub-community illustrate how Pamela's purpose extends to fostering deeper, more meaningful connections among members, further strengthening the community bond. However, it's important to note that these sub-communities represent a small portion of the overall community and play a less relevant part, with only 20.5% participating in such groups.

Nevertheless, regardless of the specific platforms and types of interactions, engagement consistently revolves around her purpose of living a healthy and fit lifestyle, as observed in netnography, and further illustrated in Appendix A.4.1.1, uniting members on official social media platforms and in sub-communities on Facebook and serves as the key driver for engagement within the community.

Insights: Shared Values in the Pamela Reif Brand Community

As observed through netnography, Pamela Reif's community is characterized by a strong presence of shared values. The sentiment within this community is overwhelmingly positive expressing enthusiasm, passion, and gratitude for Pamela Reif's free content and her inspiration that goes beyond fitness. Interviews support these findings, as all participants committed to a healthy and fit lifestyle by working out several times a week and focused more on a healthy diet since following her (Interviewee #1, #4). Pamela Reif's community on social media is perceived as a group of like-minded individuals with common interests and values, who get inspired by Pamela (Interviewee #3, #4). The smaller Facebook sub-community is further described by Interviewee 7 as people, who share the "same mindset, and strive to be healthy, fit and happy". Quantitative market research supports these insights, as a significant portion of the participants (70.5% agree; 27.7% strongly agree) believe that members share the same values. Furthermore, all interviewees committed to a healthy and fit lifestyle working out several times a week. This was quantitively validated as nearly all participants (61.6% agree; 34.8% strongly agree) believe that Pamela's purpose aligns with their own values and the majority (54.1% agree; 41.4% strongly agree) believe that it also aligns with their personal interests. These findings highlight the strong alignment of values and interests among the members as they could resonate and identify themselves with her brand purpose, fostering a strong connection within the community. According to recent research by Calder (2022, 750),

high levels of engagement within brand communities are frequently associated with common interests and shared values among its members, which could be validated by the findings of this research.

To conclude, sharing the same values and a common interest in fitness and health, as well as their affinity towards Pamela Reif serve as a unifying force, forming the basis of their connection. This collective commitment is a key element in her community, essential in binding members together, and fostering a strong sense of unity.

Insights: Sense of Belonging in the Pamela Reif Brand Community

Within Pamela Reif's community, the sense of belonging is notably high, with 75% of respondents agreeing and 21.4% strongly agreeing, that they feel like a part of her community. Despite limited direct interaction between members on her official social media channels, more than half of the participants (57.1%) feel connected to each other. Interviewee 1 pointed out, that the sense of belonging is unique, compared to other social media brand communities. Recognizing the names of highly active members, who frequently comment, increases the feeling of familiarity and connection, even though members don't know each other personally (Interviewee #1). This sense of belonging and mutual recognition is even stronger in smaller sub-communities such as Facebook groups. These groups typically involve daily interactions among a circle of five to ten highly active members, including group administrators who, according to netnography and interviews, play a pivotal role in maintaining engagement (Interviewee #12, #13). Members in these groups share not only their workout routines, but also their emotions, daily activities, inspirational quotes, and personal photos.

Furthermore, the interviews also revealed a strong correlation between the level of engagement and a sense of belonging within the community as described by interviewee 5:" I have the feeling, that when I interacted and posted more, I would feel more of a member there". Members who actively participate by writing comments, liking posts, or creating posts reported a stronger sense of belonging and connection to others (Interviewee #9, #11). This is exemplified by interviewee 13, who expressed feeling "[…] extremely connected to everyone in the group", while interviewee 11 described the group as a place where she "found many friends". Respondent 9 even referred to the group as a "second family", underscoring the depth of connections within the sub-community. The group nurtures this bond through shared rituals and traditions, such as posting daily activity polls and sharing workout routines, which strengthens the sense of connection. This is in line with the research of Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, 413), who analyzed this as a typical behavior within engaged communities.

In addition, a significant 78.4% of the survey participants agree that the purpose of living a healthier and fitter life contributes to a stronger sense of belonging. This brand purpose is familiar to an impressive 98.2% of respondents, underscoring its vital role in Pamela Reif's community. The alignment of personal values with her brand purpose connects the members. Members reinforce this sense of togetherness by sharing their experiences, commenting, and using hashtags related to Pamela Reif. Pamela further nurtures this community spirit by reposting co-created content from her members, whether it's doing her workouts, wearing her collection, cooking her recipes, or sharing feedback on her latest products, as observed through netnography. The visibility of these shared experiences and the feeling of being part of a collective journey, as mentioned by Interviewee 4, "It's nice to see who else is doing her videos […]", increases the sense of connection and belonging. Quantitative market research supports these observations, with 79.5% of respondents agreeing and 17.9% strongly agreeing that they

feel like members of the community. Comments about the impact of Pamela's workouts and shared physical results not only motivate but also make the fitness journey more relatable.

Overall, Pamela's brand purpose, embodied by the community as a collective commitment to living a healthy and fit life and their shared experiences enhances feelings of connection and belonging among the members.

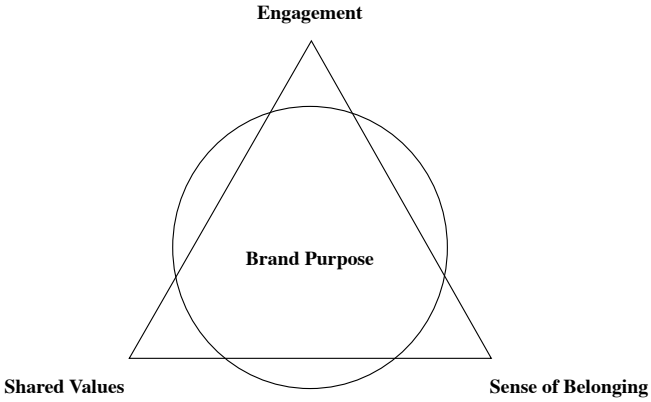


***Figure 4**: Interplay of shared values, sense of belonging, engagement, and brand purpose*

This Figure illustrates the interconnected relationship between shared values, a sense of belonging, and engagement within Pamela Reif's brand community, with the brand purpose acting as the central unifying element. It visually demonstrates how these elements mutually reinforce each other, contributing to the cohesiveness and vitality of the community.

Insights: Support and Collaboration in the Pamela Reif Brand Community

Especially in fitness, where personal goals can be daunting, additional support can be beneficial. This was the key reason for members seeking smaller sub-communities, as insights from the interviews revealed. Most of them were looking for a group to stay active by working out with Pamela Reif's videos, achieve fitness goals and hold each other accountable, as articulated by interviewee 6: "I'm in the group, so I am doing my workouts". By posting screenshots of their workouts and liking and commenting on each other's posts, they provide

each other with mutual support. These communities serve not only as a source of motivation but also as a platform for guidance, help and accountability. They also support Pamela's brand by consuming her workout videos, sharing their own experiences through co-created content, and embodying her brand's purpose. Pamela amplifies this by reposting this co-created content, frequently sharing workout videos and challenges, creating recipes, and providing informative content to help members achieve their fitness goals, all while fostering community spirit, resulting in a mutual support system within the community, illustrated in the Appendix A.4.1.2.

A key observation from the analysis is the direct correlation between the duration of the membership and the level of support. The longer members have been part of the community and the more active they have been, the stronger their feelings of connection and support towards Pamela have become. These dedicated, long-term members play a pivotal role in the community, consistently showing high levels of support, even in times of disappointment, exemplified by interviewee 9: "Even though those people don't know her, they would support her, help her and do anything for her", reflecting their strong support for Pamela. These core members form the heart of the community and are fundamental to its vitality. Recognizing and valuing these members is important to nurture and strengthen the community bond, as they contribute significantly to the community spirit and are instrumental in spreading and reinforcing the brand's values and purpose. In the sub-community, interviewee 7 described the atmosphere as "[…] friendly, warm and supportive", with a focus on encouraging each other without fostering a sense of competition. While most enjoy this "lovely bond" (Interviewee #6) and the feeling of being part of it, Interviewee 7 noted that the extreme enthusiasm "doesn't seem real to me." However, Pamela's official community exhibits a more complex dynamic. While the majority (68.8% agreeing; 25% strongly agreeing) perceive it as positive and supportive, nearly half (48.2%) observe it as negative, toxic, or competitive. Seeing the physical

results of other's fitness journeys can be a source of motivation, but it can also lead to an unhealthy sense of comparison (Interviewees #3, #4).

In essence, levels of support and collaboration in Pamela Reif's community are remarkably high, with members actively encouraging each other to achieve their fitness goals and supporting Pamela by engaging with her content and creating co-created content. Pamela further supports this by frequently providing new workouts or recipes, resulting in a mutual support system within the community.

Insights: Influence and Advocacy in the Pamela Reif Brand Community

Pamela Reif's brand purpose, focused on a healthy and fit lifestyle, has significantly influenced her community. As observed through netnography and interviews, members experienced notable improvements in their physical and mental health by following her approaches from her purpose-driven content, which is offered for free and highly valued by the community (Interviewee #11, shown in Appendix A.4.1.2). Members reported weight loss, increased strength, and achieved common fitness goals, often with just 30-minute workouts (Interviewee #2). They also experienced increased confidence and happiness, leading to improved self-esteem and a more positive self-image, particularly notable among members who began following Pamela's workout plans during the COVID-19 pandemic (Interviewee #1, #4). Pamela influences her community to stay active and encourages them to make healthier lifestyle choices (Interviewee #5, #12). Beyond that, community members also become influencers by embodying her brand purpose and sharing their positive experiences with others, effectively spreading it through word-of-mouth. Remarkably, 111 out of 112 members are very likely or likely to recommend her products or workout videos. Members actively provide feedback on Pamela's products through reviews, stories, and comments and actively share their fitness

success stories on social media, using hashtags such as #pamelareifworkout, and posting before-and-after pictures, often reposted by Pamela herself (Interviewees #7, #11). These authentic experiences and opinions shared by community members serve as persuasive advertising (Interviewees #7, #10). Member reviews, similar to recommendations from trusted friends, turn brand enthusiasts into brand advocates through electronic word-of-mouth.

In addition, members are enthusiastic advocates of Pamela's products and workouts, primarily because of the physical and emotional improvements they have experienced (Interviewee #7). They often feel a strong emotional connection to Pamela because of her pivotal role in their fitness journey, leading them to actively support and engage with her content, which often translates into product purchases. Pamela's food products complement her fitness and health-focused brand purpose, as they contain less sugar and protein-rich ingredients and receive strong advocacy from the community. Additionally, Pamela's transparency in product development, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, has built trust among members and influenced their decision to purchase Pamela's products (Interviewee #10).

Overall, advocacy within the Pamela Reif brand community is notably high. By sharing their experiences, members actively promote and embody her brand purpose, influence others along the way, and spread it to a wider audience, turning from followers into passionate brand advocates.

Insights: Brand Loyalty in the Pamela Reif Brand Community

Loyalty within the Pamela Reif community manifests in three key areas: social media engagement, her own products, and product collaborations. This loyal behavior is further strengthened by Pamela's constant engagement with her followers and her perceived authentic

personality. On social media, especially on Instagram and YouTube, members are highly engaged and interact with Pamela's postings, reflecting their interest and alignment with her purpose-driven content. Her YouTube channel has become a stable part of many followers' daily lives, as evidenced by Interviewee 1, who hasn't "stopped doing her workouts since January 2020", even during her illness, highlighting the enduring loyalty of her community.

Further than that, more than half of the community (52.7%) often purchases products from Pamela's brands such as Naturally Pam, Ela Beauty or the Pam Box. These products closely align with her brand's purpose of health and fitness, driving strong loyalty and advocacy, evidenced by members' enthusiastic purchasing behavior. Even members outside of Europe express a strong desire to try out her products, with some importing them from friends and colleagues (Interviewee #6). The fact that her products sell out quickly, often accompanied by technical problems due to the overwhelming demand, is a clear indicator of the strong sense of loyalty within her community. Limited editions, like the advent calendar, create a sense of exclusivity, further enhancing demand, as shown in Appendix 4.1.1.3. Being part of Pamela's community and regularly seeing her products featured in her stories has further influenced 66.1% of members to make purchases. Interviewee 3 emphasized how this exposure increases the feeling "[…] that you need to have her products". Additionally, 75% agree, that her brand purpose of promoting a healthy and fit lifestyle significantly influences their decision to buy her products. While product collaborations with other brands, such as GHD or Puma, are also popular within her community, they are bought less frequently than her own products, with 40.2% of followers often making such purchases. These findings suggest that products, more closely aligned with her fitness and health-oriented brand purpose, such as Naturally Pam, resonate more deeply with her community, and result in increased purchasing behavior and brand loyalty, compared to beauty collaborations like GHD, as illustrated in Figure 5.

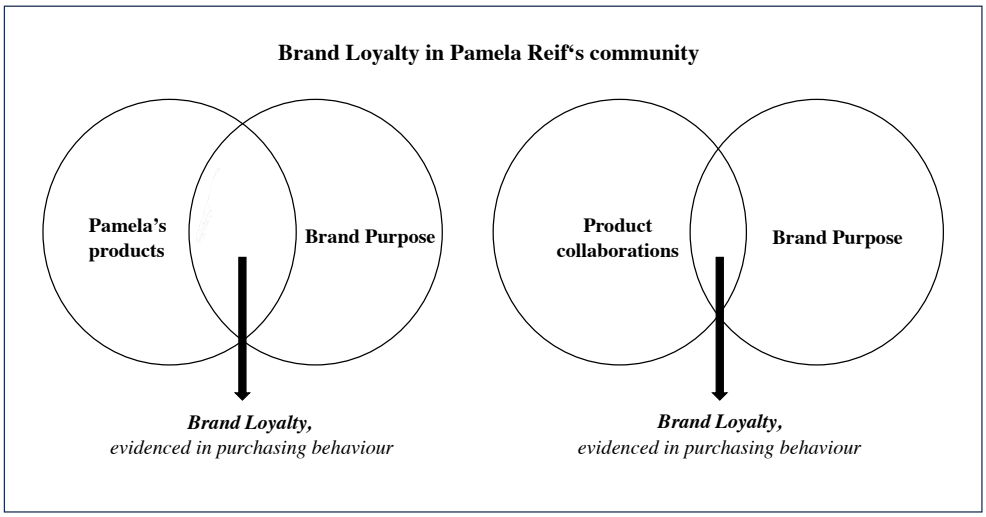


Figure 5: *Impact of product-brand purpose alignment on brand loyalty*

Overall, two overarching factors could be identified as major loyalty drivers within her community: Pamela's authenticity and humble personality are key loyalty drivers. Community members trust her recommendations and perceive her as authentic, which sets her apart from other influencers (Interviewee #5). Her authenticity, combined with her down-to-earth and hardworking personality, resonates deeply with her followers, elevating her status from a typical influencer to a "virtual best friend" (Interviewee #1). The personal connection, some members in her community feel is expressed by interviewee 1, who stated that she "[…] would love to hang out with her". Her authenticity, rooted in her early career and the 'girl next door' image she cultivated during the COVID-19 pandemic, remains, and makes her relatable. Although some community members may feel somewhat disconnected due to her changing lifestyle, her commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle remains the same, fostering strong loyalty within her community (Interviewee #3).

In summary, members of Pamela Reif brand community feel strongly connected to her and towards each other. Members share the same values and identify with her purpose, which leads to an increase in engagement and frequent purchases of her products and product collaborations.

Furthermore, her authenticity and personality are key drivers of the community's strong support and loyalty towards her and her products.

4.2 Individual Part, Case 2: GoPro

The following section analyzes the contemporary brand GoPro. First, general information about the brand is shared. Then, the brand community of GoPro is further described. The last part analyzes insights from the netnography as well as the qualitative and quantitative studies from the brand community of GoPro, structured around the six key criteria: engagement, shared values, support, sense of belonging, advocacy, and brand loyalty.

4.2.1 Action Sports and GoPro

Sports, whether it's surfing, snowboarding, mountain biking, or any other adrenaline-pumping activity, have a unique way of fostering a sense of camaraderie among enthusiasts. The shared passion for pushing physical limits and embracing challenges creates a bond that goes beyond the specific sport or activity. It becomes a collective celebration of the human spirit, resilience, and the pursuit of personal excellence. In today's dynamic business landscape, the intersection of technology and adventure has given rise to innovative brands that not only provide cutting-edge products but also foster vibrant communities around shared passions. Among these, GoPro stands out as a compelling example.

GoPro is an American technology company founded in 2002 by Nick Woodman, a photo and video enthusiast. It manufactures action cameras and develops its own mobile apps and video-editing software, called Quik (GoPro 2023). GoPro further produces various accessories for its cameras. GoPro's brand purpose is communicated through its official website, where it emphasizes that "sharing and reliving our experiences makes life more meaningful and fun"

(GoPro, About Us 2023). The company further states to be a force for positivity, celebrating all awesome things while inspiring people to pursue their passions (GoPro 2023). GoPro is present on various social media platforms. On Instagram, GoPro has one general account ("gopro") with around 20.5 million followers, and several country-specific accounts (e.g. "goprode") tailored to local audiences (GoPro, Instagram 2023). GoPro's Facebook account has 11 million followers and several user groups, which are especially dedicated to each specific GoPro Hero model (GoPro, Facebook 2023). On its TikTok account, GoPro has 2.9 million followers and 42 million likes (GoPro, TikTok 2023). GoPro's YouTube channel has 10.7 million subscribers and billions of views. The account features playlists of more specific content like Snow, Motorsport, and Surf. In the "community" tab the brand announces new product launches or live streams (GoPro, YouTube 2023). On X, GoPro has around 2 million followers and engages with users through retweets, likes, and comments (GoPro, X 2023). While being less interactive, GoPro maintains a presence on Pinterest with 50,000 followers and a focus on guides and tips (GoPro, Pinterest 2023).

4.2.2 GoPro and Its Brand Community

GoPro actively cultivates a dynamic brand community through various initiatives and programs designed to engage and inspire its users. One prominent feature is the "GoPro Awards", a series of challenges that encourages users to capture and share their experiences using GoPro cameras (GoPro, Awards 2023). These challenges cover diverse themes and activities, providing an avenue for the community to showcase their creativity. With appealing incentives, including gear, cash rewards, and global exposure, these challenges not only motivate users but also amplify the brand's user-generated content. By featuring the best submissions on official channels, GoPro highlights the versatility of its cameras and the extraordinary moments captured by its community (GoPro, Awards 2023). The term "GoPro Family" refers to standout

individuals within the community known for exceptional content creation and the ability to capture breathtaking moments (GoPro, Heroes 2023). GoPro recognizes and features these individuals on its official channels, providing them with a platform to share their adventures with a broader audience. This diverse group includes athletes, adventurers, filmmakers, and everyday users who showcase the possibilities of GoPro cameras. The GoPro Family serves as an inspiration, encouraging the broader community to explore the full potential of the brand's cameras and fostering a sense of pride and belonging among users (GoPro, Heroes 2023). GoPro further extends its impact beyond its community with the "GoPro for a Cause" program, where it leverages the brand's products and global reach to support nonprofit causes aligned with GoPro's core values. By empowering nonprofit organizations to tell their stories, “GoPro for a Cause” embodies the brand's commitment to social and environmental engagement and making a positive impact (GoPro, For A Cause 2023). Further, social sharing is seamlessly integrated into the GoPro experience through its Quik App, allowing users to easily edit photos and videos and share them directly on various platforms (GoPro, Quik App 2023). On social media, the brand actively engages with its community, responding to comments and questions, thereby fostering a sense of connection and interaction. Across all platforms, official GoPro accounts prominently feature the brand's mission of "Helping the world capture and share itself in immersive and exciting ways" (GoPro, About Us 2023). The active sharing of experiences, images, and videos by community members, often using GoPro-related hashtags, reinforces the brand's mission and purpose and creates a vibrant online community. The extensive presence of GoPro across multiple platforms, its emphasis on user-generated content, and its strategic partnerships make it a compelling case to explore the interrelationship between brand communities and a clearly defined brand purpose.

4.2.3 Insights of the GoPro Brand Community

The following analysis is based on observations, qualitative expert interviews, and a survey with various active members within GoPro's brand communities on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The quantitative survey received responses from 451 community members and is therefore representative of the GoPro community and builds a solid foundation of the analysis. The 10 expert interviews were conducted between October 2023 and November 2023 and followed a semi-structured approach, detailed in Appendix A.2.2. The interviews were held online and had durations ranging from 20 to 60 minutes. The insights are further complemented by the netnography, where GoPro's online communities were observed on various platforms. The following analysis is organized around the six key topics: engagement, shared values, sense of belonging, support and collaboration, influence and advocacy, and brand loyalty.

Insights: Engagement in the GoPro Brand Community

All interviewees and almost all survey participants (96%) actively follow one of the official GoPro accounts on social media. The preferred platforms for following these accounts are YouTube (56.3%), Facebook (44.8%), TikTok (31%), and Instagram (26%). The majority of the community has been following any official GoPro account for approximately 2-4 years on social media. Additionally, 94% of survey participants follow GoPro-related brand communities, with Instagram (53.8%), Facebook (37.4%), TikTok (34.6%), and YouTube (31.6%) being the most popular platforms. The majority has been part of a GoPro online brand community for one to four years (55%). Further, over 80% of participants report to follow GoPro ambassadors or athletes. Many community members are part of multiple communities or follow different accounts, as these are often country- or sport-specific.

Most survey respondents express engagement through liking posts and stories, with 49.8% doing so weekly and 23.6% every 2 days. They further comment or post within the brand community every 2 days (39.2%) or weekly (33.5%). These member activities not only underscore the alignment with GoPro's emphasis on "sharing", but also contribute to a common narrative that celebrates diverse experiences captured with GoPro cameras (GoPro, About Us 2023). The main reasons for participating in brand communities, backed up through the survey and netnography (Appendix A.4.2), include obtaining information about products and gaining inspiration from others. 94.2% of the survey respondents say that they have made friends through the GoPro community, and 69.8% have even met people, which they initially met through the online community, in person. 69.1% state to interact with other GoPro brand community members at least once a week. The formation of friendships, real-life meetings, and the emotional connections established within the community aligns with GoPro's purpose of "making life more meaningful" (GoPro, About Us 2023).

Eighty-one percent of the survey respondents report having participated in a GoPro challenge, and a significant majority of them has already been featured on one of GoPro's accounts. This aligns with the brand's proactive efforts to leverage the diverse experiences and adventures captured by its community members, further resulting in an increase of user-generated content (GoPro, Heroes 2023). The content not only strengthens the brand's image but also enhances brand awareness. Throughout the interviews it became evident that members express enthusiasm and excitement about GoPro's challenges and awards, highlighting the significance of receiving recognition from GoPro and other community members for their content. The thrill of participating and the mystery surrounding the selection process fuels their creativity and exploration of new ideas to stand out within the GoPro community and further aligns with GoPro's purpose of adding an element of "fun" to their lives (GoPro, About Us 2023).

However, the tone shifts when the person gains insights into the procedures and rules behind the selection process of the challenges. Learning about the competition dynamics and how pictures are chosen seems to have demystified the experience for some of the interviewees and tempered the initial excitement. Interviewee #4 reveals: "As soon as I realized it was just people behind it, the illusion sort of disappeared. I mean, I still enjoy doing it. I still love doing it. I'm just not chasing it like a crazy person anymore".

The varying levels of engagement that became evident throughout the evaluation of the survey and interviews can be categorized into three main groups, visualized in Table 2.

Type of Community Member	**Observing Member**	**Active Member**	**Family Member**
Follow GoPro account	✓	✓	✓
Follow GoPro ambassadors	−	✓	✓
Watch content	✓	✓	✓
Like content	✓	✓	✓
Comment on content	−	✓	✓
Post own content	−	✓	✓
Engagement with other members	✗	✓	✓
Part of sub-groups	✗	✓	✓
Participation in Challenges	✗	✓	✓
Sponsorship	✗	✗	✓
Legend: ✓ True | − Partly true | ✗ False			

Table 2: *Categorization of GoPro's community members` engagement*

Overall, GoPro's purpose is not merely a corporate statement but appears to be embedded in the day-to-day interactions and shared experiences of its community members. It serves as a

guiding principle that shapes GoPro's relationship with its users, fostering a community where the act of sharing and reliving experiences is central to the community's engagement.

Insights: Shared Values in the GoPro Brand Community

Within the GoPro brand community, a powerful sense of shared values unites its members, confirmed by 84% of the survey respondents. This solidarity extends to an in-depth understanding of GoPro's stated purpose, familiar to 94.5% of the community. One member describes it quite accurate: "I think the general overall brand message is just a way of capturing life's best moments in terms of all of life's most extreme moments" (Interviewee #4). 67.6% of the survey respondents believe that the brand's purpose is not only recognized but also suitable for GoPro. This alignment is not merely conceptual but resonates deeply on a personal level, where 86.3% find that GoPro's brand purpose harmonizes with their own values and interests, contributing to an even stronger bond between the brand and community. Communication plays a pivotal role in fostering this sense of shared purpose and 87.4% of the respondents believe that GoPro effectively communicates its brand purpose to its customers. It is crucial, that community members understand and embrace GoPro's purpose, as it helps members connect with the brand on a deeper level.

GoPro transcends its identity as a mere camera, being hailed as a tool for capturing and sharing life's experiences and enabling to provide insights into otherwise inaccessible activities. The values embraced by both the brand and interviewed community members encapsulate a rich tapestry of themes, including valuing adventures, passion, creativity, taking risks, and sharing happiness. Appreciated qualities of the brand further underscore its appeal to the community, with durability, ease of use, versatility, high quality, and innovation being frequently mentioned in the survey and interviews.

In conclusion, the brand's qualities, and embodied values with focus on sports and adventure, also deeply rooted in GoPro's brand purpose, resonate with the majority of the community and contribute to the overall engagement and vitality of the brand community.

Insights: Sense of Belonging in the GoPro Brand Community

The sense of belonging within the GoPro community is a powerful and pervasive sentiment, with 85.3% expressing that they feel a (strong) sense of connection to the community (26.8% strongly agree; 58.5% agree). Participants recognize the significant role that GoPro's brand purpose plays in fostering this sense of community, with 84% believing that it contributes to the overall camaraderie (see Figure 6).

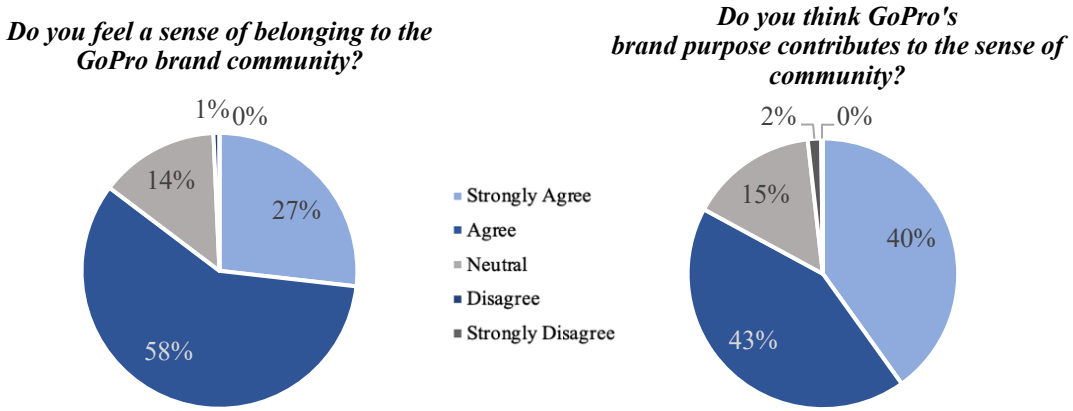


Figure 6: *Perception of survey respondents to the relationship of GoPro's brand purpose and sense of belonging*

Within this vast community, sub-groups like "GoPro Mafia" and "GoPro Legends" have been created by members, offering spaces for regular interaction and collaboration. These consumer run groups align with GoPro's purpose of "sharing experiences", creating a network of support and enhancing visibility for active users (GoPro, About Us 2023). One member states that the GoPro community is "more than just a collection of camera enthusiasts - it's a reflection of the brand's adventurous spirit" (Interviewee #8). Survey and interview respondents state to identify with the community's emphasis on exploration and forming friendships with like-minded

individuals who share a passion for thrill-seeking and adventures, in line with GoPro's stated purpose. Even though some members have never met others, they claim to feel a connection to them. Further, they highlight, that engaging in activities with others, who also use GoPro cameras, enhances the likelihood of interaction, fostering an environment where tips and experiences are exchanged (Interviewee #10). The global community of GoPro users transcends geographical boundaries, forming connections that go beyond the camera. The rise of social media has played a crucial role in making the GoPro community more open and interconnected. Members feel that the community's diversity has expanded, creating a vibrant spectrum of users with varied interests, backgrounds, and levels of engagement (Interviewee #6). GoPro's strategic shift towards reaching beyond its traditional user base of sports enthusiasts has been generally well-received among the interviewed members. Nevertheless, there are pockets of resentment with some members expressing reluctance, emphasizing that GoPro's core identity revolves around sport-related activities in contrast to vlogging or the usage as a webcam (Interviewee #7). This observed dynamic is in line with previous research from Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, 419), who state that core members differentiate between legitimate users, who "really know" the brand, in contrast to users who use "the brand for the "wrong reasons."". This reflects the challenge of navigating a transition from a predominantly sports-centric brand to one that embraces a wider spectrum of user interests.

Overall, it can be confirmed that an alignment of the member's values with the brand's purpose contributes to a stronger sense of belonging and results in a more engaged community, for example visible in the creation of sub-groups.

Insights: Support and Collaboration: in the GoPro Brand Community

Through the GoPro community, exchange of information and inspiration is facilitated and active collaboration among its members is supported. Based on the netnography (Appendix A.4.2) and confirmed by interviews, it is evident that more expert users often contribute by sharing settings, secrets, and tips, and advising others on how to make the most of their GoPro, including recommendations for mounts and accessories. Nevertheless, they also note that the quality of discussions, especially in Facebook groups, can be compromised by a lack of expertise among most participants (Interviewee #2). Further, around 65% of the surveyed members have engaged in transactions within the community, buying or selling GoPro cameras through dedicated groups and marketplaces on platforms like Facebook. This not only fosters a sense of community support but also contributes to the circulation of GoPro devices within the dedicated user base. Moreover, the majority of the respondents believes that the GoPro community has played a significant role in helping them achieve personal or professional goals, reflecting a tangible impact on the lives of its members (21.7% strongly agree; 37.3% agree). The positive atmosphere within the GoPro brand community, as perceived by almost 90% of the survey participants, further emphasizes its supportive nature. The only negative sentiment comes from individuals within the community who get upset or frustrated if they don't receive the response or recognition they desire (Interviewee #4). These individuals may have been rewarded with a GoPro camera in the past due to active posting or winning a challenge, and now expect similar treatment annually. Some people in the community seem overly invested in the pursuit of attention and recognition, and their sensitivity to these matters can lead to disappointment (Interviewee #4).

Overall, the collaborative and supportive nature of the GoPro community extends beyond online interactions, creating a vibrant ecosystem where users actively contribute to each other's journeys and the brand's success.

Insights: Influence and Advocacy in the GoPro Brand Community

84% of the surveyed community members believe in the community's substantial impact on the brand's reputation and success, with the majority strongly agreeing that the community significantly contributes to GoPro's standing in the market. The influence of GoPro's brand purpose on users' decisions to purchase and use the product is pervasive, with 83.3% acknowledging this impact, underlining the significance of the brand's purpose in shaping users' choices. This commitment extends to the community's readiness to defend the brand against criticism. While valuing constructive feedback and open expression of reasonable and backed-up opinions, interviewees and survey respondents express a willingness to support GoPro, attributing most frustrations to potential knowledge gaps rather than inherent issues with the camera itself (Interviewee #1). Members actively advocate for and recommend the brand on various platforms, showcasing its diverse possibilities for content creators and beginners alike (Appendix A.4.2). This advocacy is not just about the product's features but extends to the brand's purpose, implying that a meaningful brand purpose can turn customers into brand ambassadors who authentically promote the brand based on shared values. The collective effort serves as organic and genuine advertising for GoPro, contributing to heightened brand awareness and a positive image. Despite their sponsorship, interviewed GoPro Family members state to still embrace the idea and purpose of the brand, also representing the everyday user and standing in for their concerns (Interviewee #5). One interviewed Family member, driven by a desire to shift GoPro's focus from celebrities to everyday users, even sent an email to the

management team, offering insights into the company's direction and emphasizing the crucial role everyday users play in its success (Interviewee #5).

Further, driven by community members, GoPro has made strides to become more sustainable. Working with charitable organizations, the company leverages the power of images with "GoPro For A Cause", communicating social and environmental issues (GoPro, For A Cause 2023). This signals, that members can have a significant impact on a brand, driving it towards committing to a more responsible approach in line with the community's values. Moreover, GoPro actively seeks user feedback, involving the community in beta testing of new updates and features. The brand values user experiences, suggestions, and opinions, using them as crucial inputs to enhance products and services (GoPro, Labs 2023). This commitment to an iterative and user-centric approach underscores GoPro's dedication to continuous improvement based on the insights of its community.

In essence, the findings highlight that a well-defined brand purpose is not only influential in shaping consumer choices but also acts as a unifying force within the GoPro community. It fosters a sense of advocacy that extends beyond product attributes, ultimately contributing to the brand's positive image and commitment to responsible practices.

Insights: Brand Loyalty in the GoPro Brand Community

Brand loyalty is a cornerstone of the GoPro community, where 83.1% view getting featured on one of GoPro's social media accounts as a personal goal. Throughout the interviews and online community observation, it became evident that users go to great lengths to achieve this, strategically planning niche content, investing in the latest cameras, and orchestrating complex shoots (Interviewee #6, Appendix A.4.2). This aspiration reflects a deep commitment to the

brand and a desire to actively contribute to its popularity and destiny. Utilizing hashtags is a common practice within the community, serving various purposes like enhancing visibility, connecting with others, sharing experiences, and seeking feedback (Appendix A.4.2).

Ownership patterns reveal that while most survey respondents own several GoPro cameras, they might not necessarily possess the newest model. Nevertheless, some users even own multiple units of a single model, using them for specific conditions or obtaining them as part of their GoPro Family status (Interviewee #2). The GoPro subscription enjoys popularity among the community, offering perks like unlimited cloud storage, insurance, and technology updates, therefore simplifying the editing, and sharing of their work. The majority of the survey respondents and interviewees identify as loyal GoPro users, expressing satisfaction with the product's quality and innovation: "I started with GoPro and I'm going to stay with it […] I'm happy with the products and results" (Interviewee #8). Further, open-ended questions in the survey revealed, that there is a shared belief in GoPro's superiority over competitors, such as DJI or Insta360. Collaborations with other tech companies are seen as beneficial, contributing to product improvements and enhanced camera performance. Positive sentiments are echoed about GoPro's variety and abundance of mounts, a practical aspect that contributes to users' overall positive experience. Most respondents remain dedicated to the brand, showcasing a reluctance to switch to competitors. Interviewed GoPro Family members emphasize the invaluable support received from the company, reinforcing a collective commitment to the brand's ethos (Interviewee #3). Community members state to often visit forums to gain insights and leaks about new models before their official release, showcasing an eagerness for the latest advancements in GoPro technology (Interviewee #1). This collective interest contributes to a culture of staying informed and engaged within the community, fostering discussion among the users.

Moreover, analysis revealed that GoPro's brand legacy is deeply rooted in its association with capturing adventurous and extreme moments. Over the years, GoPro has become synonymous with action cameras, particularly in activities like snowboarding, skiing, surfing, and other adventures. The brand's early entry into the market played a pivotal role in establishing its identity as the go-to camera for individuals seeking durable and high-performance devices for recording action-packed experiences (GoPro, About Us 2023). This legacy has not only solidified GoPro's position in the market but has also influenced the way other action camera brands are perceived, with many being referred to as a "GoPro" due to its enduring impact and historical prominence (Interviewee #4).

In general, it can be said that consumers, who share the same values as represented in GoPro's purpose, are more likely to maintain a long-term commitment to the brand and are less prone to competitive offerings over time. Further, loyal members are more likely to also have a higher engagement with the brand.

4.3 Individual Part, Case 3: Supreme

The subsequent section delves into a close examination of the fashion brand Supreme. Therefore, a foundation is laid out covering general information about the brand and the fashion industry posing robustness towards the research goal. As Supreme exemplifies a strong relation between the defined brand purpose and the community surrounding the brand, a distinct elaboration thereof is covering the second step. Finally, a concluding analysis dissects findings from netnography, qualitative, and quantitative studies on the Supreme brand community, organized around six pivotal criteria presented in Table 1, located in section 3.1 of the thesis.

4.3.1 Supreme and the Fashion Industry

As fashion is an immersive way of self-expression and communicating one's self-image, people evoke strong emotional connections with fashion brands (Affuso 2023). Furthermore, fashion obtains the opportunity of reflecting societal values, describing it as a way for people to identify with their cultural and subcultural affiliations (Grusky 2014). One of the most renowned and extensively discussed fashion brands in the history of the industry is Supreme, which was founded by James Jebbia in April 1994 in New York City (Supreme, About 2023). Initially, the company's product offerings were limited to T-shirts, but over the years, it diversified its product portfolio, ultimately ascending to become one of the most influential brands in the fashion world (Hine 2023). In addition to designing a wide range of apparel, Supreme has expanded its product line to include accessories and skate-related items (Ayuningtyas and Adhitya 2021). Furthermore, Supreme is known for its unique "drop" model, where the brand releases limited quantities of new products each week, typically on Thursdays (Supreme, Shop 2023). Supreme has garnered significant attention and generated controversy through its release strategies. The limited availability of items creates an artificial rarity and hence a sense of scarcity and desirability among fans (Ayuningtyas and Adhitya 2021). By specifically targeting the younger demographic, Supreme has achieved dominant presence in both physical retail outlets and online platforms, solidifying its position as a cultural and fashion phenomenon. Supreme actively involves and addresses its community, while "working with generations of artists, photographers, designers, musicians, filmmakers, and writers who defined conventions and contributed to its unique identity and attitude" (Supreme, About 2023).

4.3.2 The Supreme Brand Community

When discussing the concept of brand communities and their potential impact on a brand's success, it is impossible to overlook the significant impact of the streetwear phenomenon

embodied by the brand Supreme. Through its publicly defined purpose of "growing to embody downtown culture and playing an integral part in its constant regeneration", the brand aims in transporting the Afro-American hip hop subculture, as well as the local skateboarding scene of the 1990s Manhattan into their brand identity (Supreme, About 2023). It thereof has become a symbol of counterculture and rebellion, attracting a diverse fanbase. Supreme strategically employs a variety of online marketing channels to actively engage with its community. Notably, on their official Instagram account, the brand commands an audience of nearly 13.2 million followers (Supreme, Instagram 2023). Within the official Facebook site, more than 2.3 million followers observe the brand's activities (Supreme, Facebook 2023). Through these platforms, Supreme actively interacts with its community, endeavouring to build and nurture customer relationships, all the while enhancing the overall user experience. Despite, Supreme has opted not to establish a presence on TikTok (Supreme, TikTok 2023). Additionally, the brand's Twitter account is officially considered outdated (Supreme, Twitter 2023). These strategic choices in platform selection reflect Supreme's focus on specific channels that align with its target audience and brand identity.

Brand-managed interaction is mainly taking part on Instagram, posing an impactful way of communicating brand activity, such as new collections, as well as upcoming collaborations to its target audience. Devotees of Supreme mostly utilize various online media platforms to cultivate and organize their own dedicated community. Member-managed and orchestrated community engagement predominantly occurs within exclusive Facebook and WhatsApp groups, as those platforms enable multiple-channel interaction. Participation in these groups is not open to the public. Instead, prospective members require a recommendation to gain access to the Facebook groups first. Among the most renowned groups within the Supreme community are "Supreme Talk Worldwide" and as a more regional endorsement group "Supreme Talk

UK/EU." The geographical distinction in group names, indicates a further segmentation that allows for more localized discussions and exchanges within the globalized Supreme community. Upon demonstrating activity and engagement within these Facebook groups, individuals may receive invitations to join WhatsApp entities. These WhatsApp groups afford access to more exclusive offerings and discussions, specifically tailored for confirmed enthusiasts. Mentioned online communities serve as hubs for a wide range of activities, including discussions about the brand's latest developments, the resale of its iconic products, and the dissemination of rumours regarding forthcoming releases, collaborations, and events. This specific community activity can be observed within the netnography to be screened in the Appendix A.4.3. Within these exclusive groups, secret insider information is divulged and subsequently deliberated upon by the community. The sharing of insider details serves to stimulate engagement and contribute to the ongoing discourse within the community.

4.3.3 Insights of the Supreme Brand Community

The following analysis is anticipating 10 expert interviews, including different active members of Supreme brand communities, all obtaining various functions. All interviews were held between October 2023 and November 2023 and followed a semi-structured interview approach, which guideline can be screened in the Appendix A.1. The interviews were conducted in an online format and ranged in duration between 30 and 45 minutes. In addition, to support the qualitative findings, a market survey was disseminated and received responses from 51 members within Supreme’s brand communities. Due to its high exclusivity, as well as the decrease in hype, the willingness to participate in the market survey was rather low. Although, this quantitative approach was employed to gather statistical data and provide a broader, more comprehensive understanding of the community dynamics and sentiments. The subsequent

analysis is structured, based on the methodological approach delineated in section 3.2. The aim is to interpret the caused impact of the brand purpose on brand community activity.

Insights: Engagement in the Supreme Brand Community

Rising from a small SoHo New York neighborhood store, Supreme has manifested its position as one of the most influential brands in the world (Ayuningtyas and Adhitya 2021). The utilization of limited production runs within unique collections strongly constrains the accessibility of available pieces, thereby artificially restricting supply and thereof driving up prices on the resell market. Those elevated prices contribute to the perceived exclusivity of the brand's products, incentivizing individuals, further referred to as "resellers", to actively engage within online brand communities. These resellers, motivated by commercial interests rather than personal affinity for the brand, participate in an ever-ongoing purchasing and reselling of Supreme products (Interviewee #1). This exchange creates a whole resell industry within the Supreme ecosystem, further resulting in a polarized, yet close interrelationship between resellers and passionate brand enthusiasts. The Supreme ecosystem thereof consists of the brand's operations, the exclusive products and services offered, as well as the surrounding brand communities. Muniz Jr and O' Guinn (2001, 419) even argue "differentiating [between] those who are true believers in the brand, and those who are merely opportunistic is a common concern voiced by brand community members". The interplay between the two groups is dynamic, with enthusiasts, seeking to collect iconic items, further referred to as "collectors", while "resellers" capitalize on the scarcity-driven market dynamics. This relationship is visualized in Figure 7.

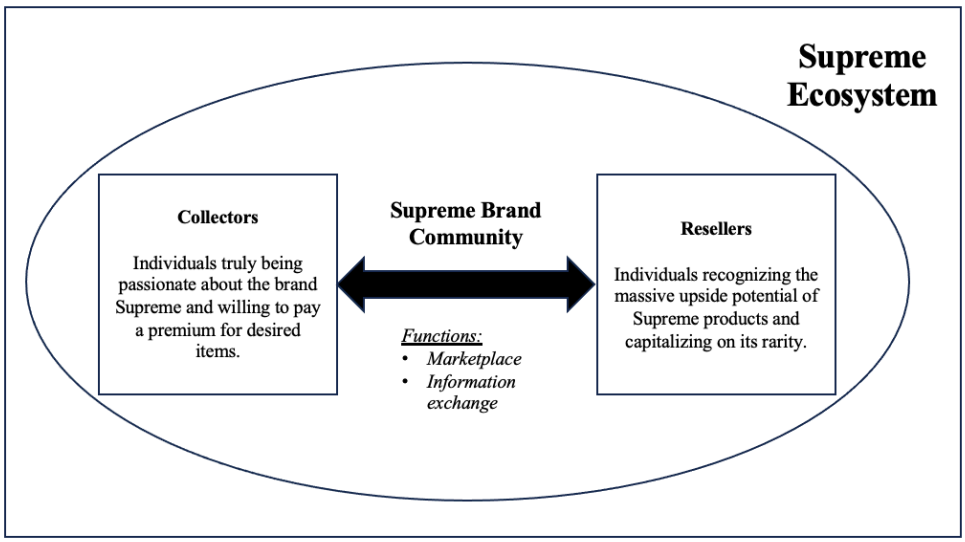


Figure 7: *Interrelationship of polarized roles within Supreme brand communities*

While this commercialization of the brand and its brand community peaked in some point of time, it poses a turning-point in Supreme's community engagement (Interviewee #7). Earlier, the brand community members exhibited notable levels of active discourse within the community, particularly concerning upcoming collections and caused rumours. This is backed by information received from Interviewee #1, explaining the community to display a high degree of engagement during this period, providing comprehensive and precise information about the upcoming releases, often published one or two days in advance of the designated release date. Subsequent to the pronounced commercialization, there has been a discernible decrease in the members' level of activity within forums, showcasing 45.1% of respondents in the quantitative survey to "not at all" comment or post and 41.2% to "not at all" chat and interact with other community members. This significant reduction in interaction was also strongly reflected in the qualitative research, as the interviewees state their "approach [towards Supreme] is more critical now due to the brand's increasing commercialization and the massive shift of the brand community towards reselling products for a price premium" (Interviewee #10). In the initial stages, interactions were characterized by a more personal and direct engagement. As the community expanded significantly, the nature of communication

underwent a dramatic shift. The increased size led to a more anonymous mode of interaction, making it challenging to communicate in the same direct and personal manner as before. “Private interactions among community members also became more complex and less intimate” (Interviewee #1). In general, the engagement and activity within the brand communities were consistently high in frequency. However, when observing the average interaction over a 7-day period, a periodic movement in engagement becomes evident. This regularity pattern is illustrated in Figure 8.

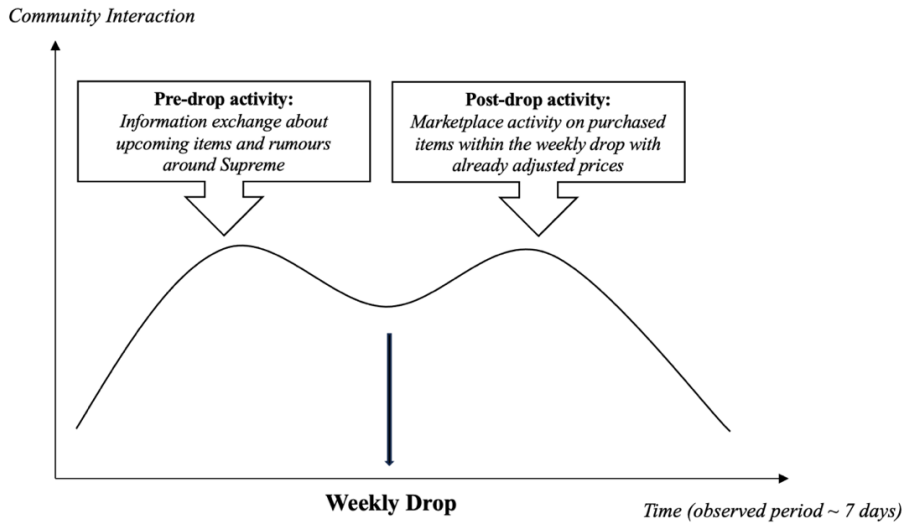


Figure 8: *Periodic activity of Supreme brand community, centered around weekly drops*

Particularly noteworthy is the surge in interaction just before, and right after the weekly collection drops on Thursday, aligning with Supreme's typical publication schedule (Interviewee #1). Right before the collection drop, there is a significant increase in the exchange of information about upcoming pieces and heightened discourse among community members. Subsequently, right after the drops, there is a notable increase in resell activity, enhancing the marketplace function within Supreme brand communities (Interviewee #6). Hence, the level of community activity is strongly event-driven, and thereof incentivized through the weekly item access. Over the past years, the weekly interaction mode within the community has undergone a notable shift (Interviewee #5). The data from respondents indicates a significant portion engaging in transactions on a more infrequent basis, with the majority participating in monthly

(19.6% “purchase products”; 19.6% “resell products”) and yearly (33.3% “purchase products”; 37.3% “resell products”) transactions within online Supreme brand communities. This signifies a departure from the previous pattern where the community was primarily focused on the weekly drops.

In conclusion, a high level of engagement was initially to be attributed to the alignment of community members' values with the brand’s purpose. As Supreme has experienced a significant shift in its community values, the overall mode of engagement decreased. This further showcases the brand purpose to play an integral role in engaging the brand community of Supreme, while impacting the overall level of activity.

Insights: Shared Values and Identity in the Supreme Brand Community

The primary aim of Supreme brand communities was to facilitate the exchange of information regarding product releases and background details, creating a platform for members to gain access to limited items (Interviewee #7). Quantitative market research supports the observation that a significant stake (90.2%) of respondents is not only familiar with the brand purpose of Supreme but also, notably, more than half of the respondents (56.9% “Agree”; 5.9% “Strongly Agree”) align the brand's purpose with their personal values, as well as their personal interests (54.9% “Agree”; 11.8% “Strongly Agree”). However, over time, the composition of this initial community has undergone a substantial transformation, evolving into a "hype"-driven mainstream entity. This shift towards a hype-centric approach involves creating an artificial shortage of product supply, resulting in a skyrocketing resell price in the aftermarket. Thus, the commerciality of reselling Supreme products has moved more and more into focus of the users, resulting in a paradigm shift from originally owning the products, to selling them for a price premium. Passionate individuals who deeply appreciate the brand's pieces have encountered

significant competition in terms of access and availability (Interviewee #6). This heightened competition has resulted in a sense of frustration among enthusiasts, as securing desired items becomes more challenging due to increased demand and limited availability (Interviewee #4).

Another pivotal key-moment in the brand's history occurred with the acquisition of Supreme by the VF corporation, which oversees operations for brands such as Vans, The North Face, and other lifestyle-oriented entities (Interviewee #1, #2). For many Supreme enthusiasts, this development marked a significant turning-point of the brand's initial purpose and raison d'être. The acquisition itself raised concerns and criticisms among the community, mostly perceiving a dilution of the brand's authenticity and a shift away from its roots in subcultures. Outlined shift in shared values, as well as the brand's communicated identity, has led to emotional distancing of brand community members and incentivized those to leave the brand community, as they "cannot access the brand on that [previous] level anymore" (Interviewee #1). Generally, through perceived authenticity, members of the brand community accelerate the feeling of being valued and belong to the community. As Supreme kept engaging in collaborations with high-profile entities such as LVMH and Rimowa, there is a discernible movement towards the luxury segment, further contributing to the decrease in perceived authenticity and credibility. This development is also screened in the netnography, depicted in Appendix A.4.3. The association with these prestigious brands and the nature of the collaborations signify a departure from the brand's roots, reflecting an evolution towards a more elevated market positioning. The impact of trustworthiness and authenticity on the perception of the Supreme brand community is also evident in quantitative research. 52.9% of the respondents "Agree", as well as 21.6% "Strongly Agree", that an authentic image of Supreme has a strong influence on its brand community.

Nevertheless, the change in ownership, the evolving market positioning, and the ever-ongoing influx of individuals into the brand communities has led fans to reconsider, if the brand still embodies its original values that initially attracted and fascinated them, and thus still aligns with its brand purpose. From a member's perspective, "generally speaking a brand should be criticized when it is not aligning with its values anymore. The brand should also be open to criticism as the community is key in order to make a brand successful." (Interviewee #3).

Insights: Sense of belonging in the Supreme Brand Community

Previously, the function of active information exchange was more comprehensively fulfilled through the community's interactive dynamics. "Members actively engaged in sharing outfit pictures, seeking advice, and offering assistance", as explained by Interviewee #9. This facilitated the opportunity for individuals to showcase their outfits, receive evaluations, exchange opinions on specific pieces, and convey a distinct lifestyle. This participatory process not only allowed for personal expression but also contributed to a common sense of belonging to a community of people gathering around shared interests and aesthetic preferences. Just beyond dedicated online environments, members of the Supreme brand community actively seek opportunities for in-person engagement (Interviewee #3, #8). This involves participating in local meetups, as well as joining skateboarding events where fellow enthusiasts gather. Mentioned face-to-face interactions serve as a valuable platform for individuals to connect with like-minded peers, sharing the same mutual passion for both Supreme and its communicated cultural purpose, according to the subjective experiences of Interviewee #8. Both these aspects contribute to an emotional sense of belonging just within the brand community, due to direct, interpersonal exchange. This is also reflected in the numeric data gathered from the quantitative market survey, showcasing the sense of belonging to still be persistent in nowadays community set-up (35.3% "Agree"; 15.7% "Strongly Agree").

Nevertheless, as the brand becomes increasingly associated with commercial success and high-profile collaborations, some fans who were initially drawn to Supreme for its authentic cultural roots may feel a sense of disconnection within the brand community (Interviewee #1). This is also displayed numerically, as approximately 2/3 of respondents (35.3% "Agree"; 31.4% "Strongly Agree") align a significant contribution of the brand purpose to the sense of belonging within a community. The perceived purpose has evolved due to the brand's shift into commercialization, leading to migration of some brand enthusiasts to other brands, resonating better with their cultural interests. The difference between the communicated and perceived brand purpose thereof lies in the misalignment between the intended message conveyed by the brand and its respective interpretation by its audience. When there is alignment between the communicated and perceived brand purpose, it fosters a sense of trust, authenticity, and resonance within the community. Misalignment can lead to confusion, scepticism, and a sense of disconnection among the audience. This is particularly important in the context of brand communities where shared values play a crucial role to activate a common sense of belonging. The significant relationship is further elaborated in Figure 9.

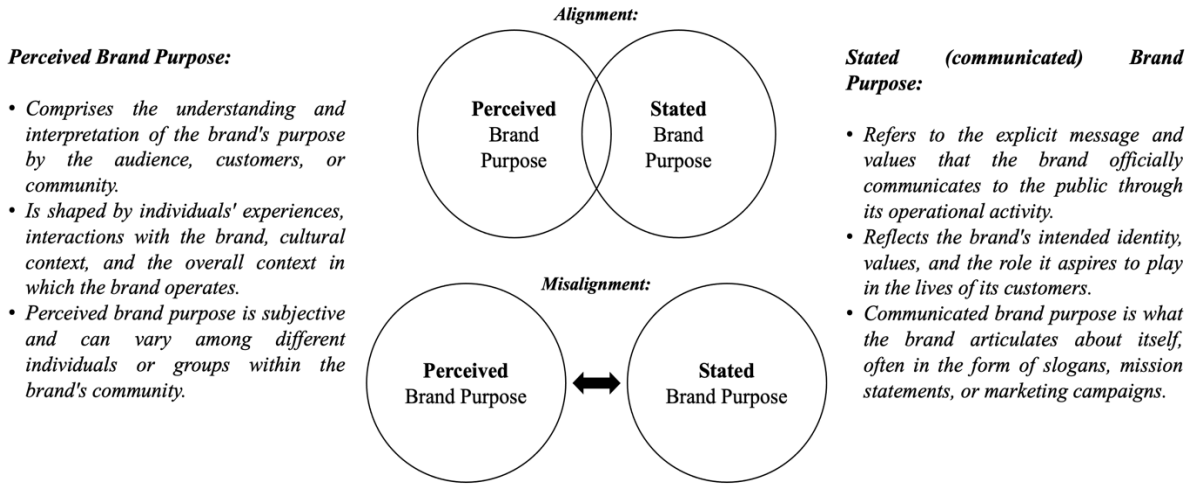


Figure 9: *(Mis-) Alignment of perceived and stated brand purpose based on research*

Moreover, fashion serves as a means of communicating a particular image to the public, allowing individuals to convey how they wish to be perceived by others (Grusky 2014).

Supreme anticipates this phenomenon, while serving as a shared point of interest that fosters a sense of belonging within a community. Taking this to an even higher level, shared interests, and the resulting sense of community foster profound interpersonal relationships among community members. Some interviewees expressed, that forming emotional connections with others within the Supreme brand communities "was even easier, than closing friendships in school […], as we all share a common interest and a passion within a highly specialized niche of society we are not forced to be in" (Interviewee #8). In contradiction thereof, the tastes and design preferences between passionate collectors and mainstream resellers strongly diverge. This discrepancy results in a notable polarization of opinions within the Supreme community, with some members not wanting to be associated with the motivations and preferences of other group members (Interviewee #4, #8). When the community is divided along lines of appreciation for the brand's cultural roots versus its more contemporary commercial success, it can also create a sense of disconnect among members, leading to a decrease in the sense of belonging to the community. Providing countermeasures to limit the polarization within a brand community is thereof a powerful tool to re-align with the brand purpose and maintain a vital sense of belonging.

Insights: Support and Collaboration in the Supreme Brand Community

A marked alteration in tonality was observed throughout the developmental stages of the community. In its initial phases, members upheld a supportive manner, also being recognized by most respondents to the quantitative market survey with 43.1% "Agreeing" and 11.8% "Strongly Agreeing" on an overall positive atmosphere. However, with increasing size, there was a discernible shift in tonal expression towards a more negative and competitive climate. Initially, there was a genuine sense of community, with individuals helping each other, even when dealing with highly exclusive and expensive items (Interviewee #2). However, "as the

community expanded in size, moderation became increasingly challenging" (Interviewee #7), a prior host of one of the largest European brand communities remembered. The growing community size led to a surge in low-quality posts, and subsequently, the nature of the community shifted dramatically. The emphasis moved away from being a real community to functioning more as a marketplace. The shift is characterized by a decrease in the collaborative and community-oriented principles, replaced by a more transactional and market-driven focus. This transformation reflects the difficulties in maintaining the original spirit of the community as it scaled up. "Notably, within the German market, discussions related to resale communication garnered substantial criticism within the community forums" (Interviewee #7). Thereof, members were also blamed for actively participating in the aftermarket, not only in selling, but also purchasing desired products. Character traits, such as jealousy and resentment started to dominate the discourse within the brand communities, showcased in the netnography parts, depicted in Appendix A.4.3. This negative, whereas toxic shift in tonality has been recognized broadly within the Supreme brand community, as 35.3% "Agree", and 11.8% "Strongly Agree" with the overall atmosphere to obtain mentioned characteristics. In this perspective, as already outlined in Figure 7, there are two distinct parties within the Supreme community: the "collectors" and the "resellers", obtaining disperse motivation for action. Despite a perceived hostility between these groups, there is a recognition that the existence of collectors is tied to the presence of resellers (Interviewee #5). With eased accessibility of the products, resellers would not perceive the aftermarket as lucrative, and collectors might lose interest for the brand, as the exclusivity and thereof also the hype dilutes. Hence, the scarcity created by resellers contributes to Supreme's desirability for collectors. The brand community employs internal mechanisms for self-regulation to limit the reselling activity, as well as deliberating access, to maintain a collaborative, and healthy community interaction. This leads to a concise mode of interaction. Those countermeasures are further elaborated in Table 3:

Measure #1: Access restriction	*Online communities, particularly those on platforms like Facebook groups, implement restricted access as a strategy to cultivate a sense of exclusivity. Prospective members are required to provide a well-articulated and concise reasoning for their desire to join the group. Additionally, entry often requires a referral from an already trusted member within the community. This multi-step process not only serves as a barrier to entry but also fosters a community environment where individuals are implementing a community base of shared trust.*
Measure #2: Referral-purchase system	*The community acknowledges the risk of fake products, but within platforms like Facebook, individuals mitigate this risk by offering referrals. This referral system is instrumental in providing access and participating in conversations, ensuring that resellers have a verified buy/sell history. Thereof, Facebook groups, such as "Supreme Talk Worldwide", known for its safety measures against scams, has established a widely accepted referral system within the community. It's recognized that the risk of encountering counterfeit products is heightened when purchasing on other platforms outside of this trusted referral system.*

Table 3: *Countermeasures of Supreme online communities to maintain vitality.*

Through mentioned measures of interaction, the notion that being part of the community is a privilege earned through genuine interest, connection, and collaboration, is fostered. This also serves as a countermeasure for toxic behaviour to overtake the community discourse. Thereof, one main target of a self-managed brand community should lie in maintaining and nurturing a healthy and positive community atmosphere. Mentioned aspects underpin the brand purpose to represent an integral part in maintaining a supportive and collaborative group dynamic. While this builds the very basis of a healthy and vital brand community, countermeasures should be set within the brand community operation of Supreme to actively anticipate mentioned misbehaviour and limit unintended access.

Insights: Influence and Advocacy in the Supreme Brand Community

A notable absence of brand advocacy is observed within the community. In situations where the brand faces criticism, most members do not defend the brand - instead, they tend to align with the criticism, symbolically "jumping on the hate train" (Interviewee #4). This indicates a

significant shift in community dynamics, where collective support and advocacy for the brand have diminished in favours of a more critical and disapproving stance. “Supreme directly cannot be criticized, as they are doing the same things for almost 30 years now: driving a strategy, with the same brand DNA [purpose], while maximizing their profits” (Interviewee #1). Indeed, this phenomenon aligns with basic market principles. When a product becomes highly desirable among a large audience, and there is limited availability, it often creates a heightened demand. This scarcity contributes to the product's perceived value, fueling the desirability in the market. On the other hand, the exclusivity of Supreme, which contributes significantly to the brand's hype, can also lead to unintended consequences. While it enhances the allure of the brand, it simultaneously creates opportunities for the wrong target group, individuals who may not align with the brand's original purpose, to access desired products via software-bots (Interviewee #7). Those incorporate algorithms to efficiently purchase as many items of a drop as possible and thereof guarantee success in the resell period. This unintended accessibility has sparked criticism over time (Interviewee #6). The increasing critique has, in turn, contributed to a decline in the brand's hype, primarily influenced by shifts in public perception.

Insights: Brand Loyalty in the Supreme Brand Community

Supreme traditionally fosters a loyal customer base through its well-defined brand purpose, which aligns with reflecting and embracing various subcultures (Supreme, About 2023). As already laid out, the nature of interaction within the brand community has evolved from a once strong interpersonal relationship to a more distant and commercialized interaction with the brand (Interviewee #2). This shift is leading to a notable decrease in loyalty among its passionate collectors. Despite the changes in the brand community and the influx of individuals driven by hype, it can be argued that resellers and those primarily motivated by hype have

moved away from Supreme, as the hype decreased in the past years, paving a way back to the original values and the initial targeted customer group. It showcases, that individuals motivated by hype exhibit significantly lower levels of brand loyalty compared to those who obtain a true passion for the brand. Thereof, the essentiality of authentic and passionate engagement as a key factor in fostering sustained loyalty within the Supreme brand community, is emphasized.

The influence of brand purpose on brand loyalty is a critical factor not only for maintaining an ever-engaged brand community, but also for financial success. 60.8% of respondents "Agree", whereas 11.8% of respondents even "Strongly Agree" in a significant influential effect of the brand purpose on the individual's consumption behavior. To actively anticipate this phenomenon, as cultures evolve and markets shift, the brand's purpose may need to align with these changes. This necessitates a process of adjustment to ensure continued relevance and resonance with the evolving dynamics of both the cultural and market landscapes. This effect should thereof not be underestimated, also from business side, as the influence of the loyal brand community on the overall brand's reputation and success is broadly recognized. The quantitative findings reflect 86.3% of respondents (56.8% "Agree"; 29.4% "Strongly Agree") to align with a business impact of the Supreme brand community. As a hype-driven entity, Supreme's success is rooted in the ever-engaging loyal community surrounding the products. To recognize this potential and thereof align the business activities, accordingly, will be of key-interest for future economic success.

5. Discussion

This section compares the insights derived from the three individual analyses of Pamela Reif, GoPro and Supreme. It aims to highlight similarities and differences between these communities, following the framework laid out in section 3.2.

Central to this analysis is Table 4, which illustrates the impact of a brand's purpose on the six key metrics: engagement, shared values, sense of belonging, support and collaboration, brand advocacy and brand loyalty. The used rating system in the table — "+" for a positive relationship, "++" for a strongly positive one, and "-" and "--" for negative and strongly negative relationships, respectively — helps to quantify the influence of brand purpose on these community attributes.

	Pamela Reif	***GoPro***	***Supreme***
Engagement:	+	++	--
Shared values:	++	+	--
Sense of belonging:	+	+	-
Support and collaboration:	+	++	-
Brand Advocacy:	++	++	-
Brand Loyalty:	++	+	-

Table 4: *Impact of brand purpose on key metrics derived from individual insights*

The analysis of the key metrics reveals how the purpose of a brand resonates within its community, influencing various aspects of member interaction and perception. It underscores the pivotal role of a brand's purpose in the formation of vital and engaged communities and highlights the unique ways it manifests in different brand communities.

Engagement

The key takeaway is that high levels of engagement can be attributed to the alignment of community members' values with the brand's purpose. The presence of a defined and aligned brand purpose appears to be a critical factor in cultivating and maintaining an engaged community. This is evident in the contrasting levels and types of engagement observed in the Pamela Reif, GoPro, and Supreme brand communities.

For Pamela Reif, GoPro and Supreme, a clear correlation exists between a well-defined brand purpose and high levels of community engagement. While Pamela Reif and GoPro managed to successfully align their community's values with their brand purpose over time, leading to stable and increased engagement, Supreme experienced a shift from its original purpose, leading to a decrease in engagement. GoPro's and Pamela Reif's community is driven by a shared passion, which is central to each brands' purpose, and serves as the key driver of member engagement. Community members actively participate by sharing their journeys, using specific hashtags, commenting on posts, and engaging with the products and content. Such engagement is not merely passive but involves active content co-creation and sharing, demonstrating a deep connection with the brand's purpose. Incentives to get featured by the brands' official accounts further stimulate active participation. In contrast, Supreme presents a different scenario, where a shift away from the original brand purpose led to changes in community engagement. Originally characterized by collaboration and high levels of brand enthusiasm, the community has transitioned to a marketplace. This shift indicates a move away from engagement driven by shared values and passion towards more transactional motives.

Shared Values

For a community to be truly engaged, it appears crucial for the brand to have a defined purpose that resonates with and reflects the shared values of its members. This involves consistently communicating the brand's purpose, fostering shared experiences, and aligning common interests with the brand's overarching purpose.

Both Pamela Reif and GoPro demonstrate how cultivating shared values that align with the brand's purpose can lead to robust and vibrant brand communities. In GoPro's and Pamela Reif's community, the alignment of the brand's purpose with the values of the members is

evident. The community is actively engaged due to a shared interest in a certain lifestyle. This alignment not only fosters a deep sense of belonging but also encourages active participation and engagement. These strong similarities among members create a sense of resonance and identification with brand and the community, fostering a robust connection. However, as the usage of GoPro cameras diversifies, there's a risk of alienating core members. This shift underscores the importance of balancing inclusivity with maintaining the brand's essence to keep the community engaged and aligned. Supreme's experience illustrates the consequences of a brand moving away from its original purpose and values. The brand's shift towards luxury and a change in community composition have diluted its original subcultural representation. This transformation has led to a decline in engagement from core members who resonated with the brand's foundational values. The weakening of the sense of identification and alignment with the brand's original purpose has resulted in decreased engagement.

Sense of belonging

In general, the sense of belonging within brand communities seems to be closely tied to the alignment of members' values and interests with a brand's purpose. A shared passion contributes to a strong sense of belonging. Nevertheless, challenges arise, when there is a divergence from the brand's original purpose or a switching user base, resulting in less identification and sense of community.

The brand communities of Pamela Reif and GoPro share a strong sense of belonging, rooted in a collective passion for a healthy lifestyle and adventurous pursuits, respectively. For both brands, several sub-groups have emerged, providing spaces for collaboration and mutual support. Members in these communities report strong interpersonal connections, due to shared interests and values. By sharing their experiences, commenting, and using hashtags, members

reinforce the sense of togetherness, enhancing the feeling of being part of a collective journey, all united by a common goal. Furthermore, a strong correlation between member engagement and sense of belonging was identified in the communities of Pamela Reif and GoPro, as highly active members reported stronger feelings of connection. The direct engagement of the official social media accounts with the community further contributes to the overall sense of belonging. However, as stated above, members' diverging values from the brand's original purpose poses a main challenge in aligning evolving user behavior with the brand's core identity. This is exemplified in the GoPro core community about the increasing use of cameras beyond sport-related activities, as well as the commercialization of Supreme items in the aftermarket. Supreme's core members, once deeply connected, experienced polarization and disenchantment, as initial brand enthusiasts cannot identify with monetary motivated resellers entering the brand community, resulting in a weaker sense of belonging.

Support and Collaboration

The observed brand communities illustrate that a clear and positive brand purpose contributes to the creation of supportive and collaborative environments. Communities aligned with a brand's purpose tend to thrive on mutual support, shared goals, and a positive exchange of information. Nevertheless, it became evident, that brands around personal characteristics, like body image or status symbols, are more likely to experience negative sentiment in the communities.

Pamela Reif's community is marked by strong encouragement, particularly within fitness-oriented sub-communities. Members actively support each other to achieve common fitness goals by holding each other accountable, providing motivation, and celebrating each other's successes. Especially long-term members play a pivotal role in the community, consistently

showing high levels of support. Pamela herself supports her community by reposting member-created content, sharing workout videos and challenges, and offering informative content to help them achieve their goals and foster community spirit, resulting in a mutual support system within the community. While the majority perceive the community as positive and supportive, some toxicity is observed, mainly stemming from comparisons related to physical appearance and fitness levels. In the GoPro community, a positive and supportive atmosphere prevails, fostering an exchange of information, tips, and tricks. This collaborative spirit extends to helping fellow members gain visibility and getting featured, creating a vibrant ecosystem where mutual support is a cornerstone. The only negative sentiment arises from members being frustrated about their efforts to get featured by GoPro without achieving the desired visibility. In contrast, Supreme's community once again reflects a more complex scenario. Initially rooted in a supportive manner, helping others acquire sought-after pieces, the dynamics have shifted toward a more toxic environment marked by jealousy. The community's evolution into a marketplace has led to competitive, market-driven dynamics, where profit and personal advantage take precedence over the once collaborative ethos.

Influence and Advocacy

For brand advocacy, it is crucial that the brand and its purpose align with the personal values of community members, covering their perceptions of the brand and its products. This alignment fosters a willingness among members to stand up for and defend the brand or product. When evaluating the advocacy outcomes of the three brands, a broad panorama emerges.

The Pamela Reif's community is characterized by its strong advocacy and influence, rooted in the positive experiences she enables her community to have. As a role model for a healthy and fit lifestyle, Reif serves as a guiding influence for many individuals. The significant impact she

has had on the lives of many, manifested both physical and mental health improvements, fosters a deep personal and emotional connection to her. These aspects turn brand enthusiasts into brand advocates. Similarly, GoPro's advocacy is characterized by members' strong willingness to recommend and defend the brand, especially in moments of other user's dissatisfaction. This loyalty is rooted in the everyday user, aligning with the brand's communicated values woven into the product DNA. Through the involvement of community members in beta testing, GoPro encourages a user-centric approach and reflects a dedication to continuous improvement, showcasing a collaborative relationship with its community and the possibility of members to shape the brand's future. When comparing to the Supreme brand community, a strong delineation stands out, as the advocacy of users has experienced strong dilution over time. Initially, the Supreme brand community strongly aligned with its brand purpose of activating American subcultures in hip-hop and skateboarding. Within this period, the community members actively engaging around Supreme were strongly supporting the brand, not only identifying with its products, but also with the purpose, as well as the lifestyle communicated. However, over time, the purpose experienced a significant shift and thereof moved into background for most users. Creating hype-driven collections, aimed at attracting mainstream audiences, resulted in a significant decrease in credibility among its original customer bases. Consequently, the perceived purpose among the Supreme community has diverged significantly over time. The displayed shift underscores the complex interplay between brand purpose, community engagement, and the impact of strategic decisions on the overall perception and advocacy within a brand community.

Brand Loyalty

Comparing both advocacy and loyalty towards a brand reveals similar patterns and dynamics. In essence, aligning the perceived and stated brand purpose is key for activating a loyal

customer base. By prioritizing authenticity and credibility, a brand can work towards vitalizing the brand community and significantly increase overall engagement.

In the Pamela Reif brand community, loyalty is strongly driven by Pamela's authenticity and personality, which foster a deep sense of connection and serve as key drivers for loyalty. Pamela's credibility and authenticity have been consistently demonstrated from the beginning of the brand's development. This authenticity coupled with a clear and credible brand purpose, fosters loyalty around her content on social media, her own products and product collaborations. Over half of the community frequently buys Pamela's branded products, demonstrating strong loyalty driven by the alignment with her health and fitness-focused brand purpose. Brand loyalty within GoPro's community is deeply rooted in the brand's legacy. GoPro's early market entry established it as the go-to camera for durable and high-performance devices. This legacy not only solidified GoPro's market position but also shaped the perception of other action camera brands, often being referred to as a "GoPro" product, due to its enduring impact. The prevalent credo of "once GoPro – forever GoPro" emphasizes a loyalty that extends beyond product quality, reflecting a commitment to the authentic lifestyle promoted by the brand. This loyalty underscores the importance of a brand's purpose in forming an enduring and genuine brand perception. The insights applied to Supreme reveal that the ongoing decrease in authenticity and credibility contributes to diminishing brand loyalty. When the brand's public perception and community values lack authenticity, passionate brand enthusiasts not only lose their loyalty but also exit the community structure. This distinction is visually represented in Figure 9, depicted in sub-section 4.3.3, illustrating the evolving gap between the intended purpose communicated by the brand, and how it is interpreted or perceived by the community. Understanding and managing this difference is essential for brands, especially in the context of

brand communities, where authenticity and shared values are key factors in building and maintaining a loyal and engaged audience.

6. Managerial Recommendations

Based on the key findings presented in section 5, derived from the comprehensive analysis of the brand (I) Pamela Reif, (II) GoPro, and (III) Supreme, the following managerial recommendations are proposed. These guidelines serve as a roadmap for brands aiming to cultivate and sustain engaged communities. Implementing these strategies not only supports the brand's purpose but also helps brands to thrive in the dynamic landscape of community-driven marketing. By following these guidelines, brands can maintain authenticity, build deeper connections with community members, and foster engagement.

1) ***Encourage active engagement and collaboration:***

To enhance community engagement, companies should diversify their engagement strategies. Firms should implement a variety of approaches, such as challenges, user-generated content initiatives, and lifestyle inspiration and motivation, as exemplified by GoPro and Pamela Reif. These diverse strategies encourage active member participation and involvement in shaping the community, resulting in elevated levels of engagement and interaction.

Further, brands should promote a culture of knowledge exchange. Therefore, the formation of sub-groups within the community should be encouraged, providing dedicated spaces for collaboration and mutual support. Learning from the success of consumer-run groups shows that these spaces offer an intimate environment for like-minded individuals to interact and foster deeper connections. In Pamela Reif's sub-community, members actively support each other and share their experiences, fostering a strong community bond. If groups are not established by

community members, firms should consider creating those themselves. As in the case of GoPro, companies can encourage very active members to contribute to these groups by sharing their expertise and enriching the overall knowledge pool, further fostering a collaborative environment. This can also be seen in Supreme brand communities, where trusted members obtain functions in moderating a community and therefore serve as a catalyst for discourse.

Moreover, companies can incentivize collaboration and user-generated content by recognizing and rewarding members who actively contribute to the community's (supportive) environment. Highlighting these efforts of members, for example through features and reposts, reinforces the values of mutual support, and encourages positive interactions.

2) ***Communicate shared values among community members:***

Effective communication of shared values is pivotal in cultivating a strong brand community. The process involves conveying the brand's core beliefs, goals, and cultural identity to foster a sense of shared purpose among community members. Storytelling is therefore a powerful mechanism to convey brand values in a compelling and relatable way. Brands should craft narratives that resonate with the community, showcasing real-life examples or anecdotes that embody the shared values. This approach humanizes the brand and helps community members emotionally connect with its mission.

To ensure widespread understanding and acceptance of shared values, brands should leverage various communication channels. Social media platforms, community events, newsletters, and other mediums provide opportunities to consistently communicate brand values. This multi-channel approach helps reinforce the shared identity across diverse community segments. Therefore, it is essential to maintain a consistent message across all platforms to reinforce the

brand's identity and ensure that community members receive a unified message, contributing to a shared understanding of the brand's purpose.

3) ***Cultivate a sense of belonging and support**:*

Encouraging sub-communities and fostering a sense of belonging through shared experiences and values can enhance community strength. Pamela Reif's and GoPro's communities benefit from these aspects. Members are willing to share part of their life and personal information in sub-communities. Nevertheless, brands should be aware of community dynamics, ensuring that they remain inclusive and supportive, rather than competitive or toxic. It is evident that brands around personal characteristics, such as status and body appearance are more likely to experience negative sentiment within communities. Supreme item resell has become a truly lucrative business model, exemplifying the immense upside potential in value generation. This leads to broad critique on both sides, scholars, and brand enthusiasts, as the individual pressure on young people increases, due to premium prices, but also limited access to the community itself. This phenomenon should be anticipated and countermeasures for toxicity and unfair behaviour, for example through community guidelines, should be integrated.

4) ***Anticipate customer feedback:***

Companies should stay attuned to evolving user behaviors and preferences within the community by regularly gathering feedback to understand how community members engage with the brand and adapt strategies accordingly. As in GoPro's case, companies can involve users in beta testing, thereby valuing user feedback and ensuring that user interests are represented. This user-centric approach not only demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement but also empowers community members, making them feel integral to the brand's success. Moreover, as in the case of Pamela Reif, open, honest, and transparent communication

of feedback helps members to better understand the brand's perspective. It fosters a sense of trust and authenticity within the community and ensures that members are well-informed about the brand's actions and decisions. This transparent approach can lead to stronger relationships and more engaged community members.

5) ***Align the perceived and stated brand purpose:***

The discrepancy laid out in Figure 9, to be found in sub-section 4.3.3, highlights the challenges brands may face in maintaining a consistent alignment between their communicated purpose and the evolving perceptions within their user base. The growing gap between the articulated brand purpose and how it is interpreted by the community members can lead to a sense of disconnect and dissatisfaction. In response to this misalignment, individuals may seek communities that better align with their evolving perceptions and values. This migration can be observed within the Supreme brand community, underscoring the dynamic nature of brand communities and the importance of maintaining a coherent narrative that resonates with the evolving expectations of community members. Addressing this shift and revitalizing the connection to the brand's authentic purpose becomes imperative, not only for Supreme but brands to restore and strengthen its advocacy foundations. This is crucial for brands to reinstate essential credibility and re-engage the community. This can be achieved through a redefinition of values, as well as a concerted effort to bridge the gap between the communicated purpose and the community's evolving expectations. Pamela Reif's case exemplifies how personal authenticity can drive community loyalty and advocacy. Brands should avoid drastic shifts that might be perceived as inauthentic or as a departure from core values. By returning to its foundational roots, a brand can reconnect with its authentic identity and the cultural elements that initially defined its appeal.

Implementing these recommendations should be of key interest, as brands can effectively navigate the complex dynamics of brand communities, fostering engagement and loyalty while staying true to their designated brand purpose.

7. Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of online brand communities, it is essential to acknowledge several limitations. First, the limited time frame of approximately two months for conducting interviews, surveys, and netnography, may have impacted the depth and scope of the data collected. This potentially influences the comprehensiveness of the collected insights. Additionally, for the Supreme brand in particular, the inherent hostility observed within its communities presented challenges in securing a sufficient number of respondents, potentially influencing the depth and breadth of the findings related to this brand. Furthermore, the focus of the research on one specific brand within the lifestyle and health, technology, and fashion industry, may limit the generalization of findings. The unique characteristics and dynamics of these individual brand communities may not be entirely applicable to other brands within the same industry, as community dynamics might differ. Moreover, the insights of this study are based on the perspectives and experiences of voluntary participants, which may introduce a potential bias, as individuals who choose to participate in such studies are often more engaged with the brand or have stronger opinions, which may not accurately represent the views of the broader brand community.

8. Future Research Directions

While this research delves into the exploration of the interconnection of brand purpose and brand communities within different industries such as lifestyle and health, technology, and

fashion, avenues for future research can broaden the scope for a more comprehensive understanding. Future research may not be limited to a particular brand or industry. Through the inclusion of several brands from either different or similar sectors, researchers can identify trends and differences in the dynamics of brand communities. Furthermore, the application of long-term studies can reveal how brand communities evolve over time, particularly in response to changes in brand purpose or market trends. This approach would provide insights into the sustainability and long-term impact of brand purpose on community dynamics. Additionally, it could be investigated how individual consumer behavior within brand communities is influenced by the brand's purpose, particularly focusing on purchasing decisions, loyalty, and word-of-mouth advocacy.

By exploring these areas, future research can significantly contribute to the understanding of brand communities and brand purpose, offering valuable implications for both academic theory and practical brand management.

9. Conclusion

Based on the insights of this study, the proposed questions, laid out in chapter 1 around the impact of brand purpose on engagement, shared interests and identities, perceived authenticity and purchase behaviors within brand communities, can be answered.

- ***How does brand purpose affect the level of engagement within these brand communities?***

  When a brand's purpose aligns with the shared values and interests of its community, engagement tends to be high. This positive alignment reinforces the brand's identity and fosters a sense of belonging among community members. However, shifts in the perceived

or stated brand purpose, or changes in community composition that deviate from original values, can lead to reduced engagement. Therefore, maintaining a balance between inclusivity and preserving the core identity becomes crucial for maintaining a vibrant community.

- ***How does a brand's purpose contribute to the development of shared interests and identities amongst community members?***

A brand's purpose plays a pivotal role in nurturing shared interests and identities among community members. When community members resonate with the brand's purpose, it acts as a unifying force, that strengthens the sense of belonging and enhances shared experiences. This alignment between brand purpose and community values fosters a deep connection, making community members feel like they are part of a collective journey. Yet, changes in a brand's purpose, particularly when not well-received by the community, might weaken the alignment of shared interests and identities. Such shifts and evolving user behavior, that diverge from the brand's essence may present challenges.

- ***How does the existence of a vital brand community affect perceived authenticity and purchasing behavior?***

A vital brand community significantly influences the perceived authenticity of the brand. Positive interactions, collaborations, and support enhance this authenticity. However, challenges may arise, such as toxicity or dissatisfaction, impacting the overall positive atmosphere. Transformations within a community, especially toward commercial motivations, may lead to shifts in authenticity. Changes in dynamics, such as a community turning into a marketplace, can impact purchasing behavior and the overall satisfaction of core members.

Based on the insights and the sub-questions, our central research question can be answered:

- ***Does a well-functioning, engaged, vital brand community require brand purpose?***

  It can be confidently affirmed that a well-functioning, engaged, and vital brand community indeed requires a clear brand purpose. The critical factor lies in the alignment of the brand's purpose with the values of its members. This alignment contributes to higher levels of engagement, a heightened sense of belonging as well as a supportive environment in the community. Conversely, when there is a misalignment or shift in perceived purpose, it negatively impacts the feeling of belonging among community members and drift to a more toxic environment. Further, members, whose values align with the brand's purpose, are more likely to defend the brand against criticism and perceive it as authentic, nurturing brand loyalty.

Figure 10 depicts the impact of aligning the brand's purpose with the brand community values, on the six key metrics of engagement, shared values, sense of belonging, support and collaboration, brand advocacy and brand loyalty. Accordingly, "+" illustrates a positive, "++" a strongly positive, whereas "-" and "--" represent a negative and strongly negative correlation.

	Intersection		***Discrepancy***	
Brand Purpose	**=**	**Brand Community Values**	**≠**	**Brand Purpose**
Engagement:	++		--	
Sense of belonging:	+		-	
Shared values:	++		--	
Support and collaboration:	+		-	
Brand Loyalty:	+		-	
Brand Advocacy:	+		-	

Figure 10: *Break-down of brand purpose impact on key metrics variables, based on Madupu and Cooley (2010)*

In summary, the research question can favorably be answered, showing that the brand purpose plays a pivotal role in shaping engagement, sense of belonging, shared values, support, advocacy, and loyalty within a brand community.

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A.1 Interview Guide – Semi-structured

Part 1:

Hello, my name is [name]. I'm a student at NOVA SBE and as part of my work project I am conducting research about brand communities. This interview will last approximately 45 minutes. I recognized that you are an active member of the [brand] community and I am really interested about getting more insights about you and your participation in the community.

With your permission, I would like to record this interview with the purpose of analyzing it later. All your answers will remain anonymous and will be treated confidentially (no personal information will be shared).

Part 2:

I) Opening Question: *Could you please briefly introduce yourself and your experience with (I) GoPro, (II) Pamela Reif, (III) Supreme?*

II) Topics to be developed

1. ***Level of engagement:***
   a. *Type of social media platforms*
   b. *Level of engagement in the community (like, comment, share, repost…)*
   c. *Frequency of interaction with other community members (chat, meet-ups,..)*
   d. *Utilisation of hashtags related to the brand*
2. ***Influence and Advocacy:*** *support of the brand/ defending the brand/ standing behind the brand*
3. ***Support and Collaboration:*** *Attending brand/ community events/ Meet & Greets*
4. ***Impact on brand loyalty:*** *Consumption of latest products as soon as they are released*
5. ***Sense of belonging:***
   a. *Same values as the other members, connection to the brand community*
   b. *Participation in other brand communities – level of engagement there compared to this brand community*

III) Brand Purpose - If not developed naturally:

1. Do you know the brand's purpose and what it stands for?
2. Do you embrace/ embody the brand's purpose?

IV) Topics to be developed:

1. Brand perception – how does the person see the brand
2. Brand knowledge – what does the person know about the brand and its values, purpose

V) Personal Information

1. ***What is your Gender?*** *Female/Male/Other*
2. ***What is your age?*** _____

A.2 Interview Transcript GoPro

Interview #1

- *Amateur photographer using a DSLR but also has an interest in Videography using Drones and his GoPro's*
- *Only uses Facebook for Social Media and as such, this is the platform he is active in brand communities*
- *Level of engagement within the GoPro brand community: sharing the occasional image or video but mostly, he tries to advise other users on the best GoPro for their needs, how to utilise the GoPro to best suit their needs offering advice and suggestions as necessary. This also includes what accessories may be valuable to a particular result they wish to achieve*
- *He also likes and comments on others' productions and content. Often with praise, sometimes with recommendations for improvement.*
- *He interacts almost daily with other community members, sometimes multiple times daily.*
- *He posts his own content but not as regularly as others as a lot of his content is personal to his family.*
- *He knows that he and some other members do share similar values by way that they try to help less knowledgeable people understand their purchase and to try an get the most out of it. But he doesnt feel that he has a personal connection to them.*
- *He understands the brand purpose for GoPro and everything it stands for.*
- *A GoPro can capture a scene within seconds, it can document a trip, a persons emotions and experiences. It can offer an insight into activities that others may not be able to experience or have yet to experience. It can record memories to be recalled at later dates.*
- *He embraces the brand purpose for his personal and family usage, and some shared publicly usage; but he often uses his GoPro's for purposes that are not ever meant to be kept unless a specific incident occurs that requires the footage to be recalled*
- *But he doesnt feel that he has a personal connection to them.*
- *he tries to advise other users on the best GoPro for their needs, how to utilise the GoPro to best suit their needs offering advice and suggestions as necessary. This also includes what accessories may be valuable to a particular result they wish to achieve*
- *He also likes and comments on others productions and content. Often with praise, sometimes with recommendations for improvement.*
- *He often supports or defends the brand because often frustration among other users is down to lack of understanding, ignorance or they feel that they know the product more than they actually do. This is a very common issue among many brands. Lack of knowledge and understanding will always at some point to the individual(s) blaming the device and not themselves.*
- *He doesn't use hashtags related to GoPro*
- *He has not attended any brand events pertaining to GoPro, but has joined community events involving DJI Drones with other fellow owners.*
- *He doesnt buy the latest version. He currently owns a GoPro 4 Hero Black, a GoPro 8 Hero Black and a GoPro 10 Hero Black. At this time, the GoPro 12 does not offer anything significantly over and above what he needs from the 10 or 8.*
- *He participates in communities pertaining to DJI Drones; his engagement there is as involved and regular as it is for the GoPro communities.*

Interview #2

- *Uses GoPro mainly for his hobbies, for sports, he is a cave diver, diving in cave systems in Mexico mainly*
- *He does snowboarding, snowmobile riding because he lives in the north of Sweden in the mountains, motorbikes, mountain bikes*
- *He is a member of various GoPro community in Facebook since 12-13 years, pretty much since the first one turned up like when the very first GoPro was released*
- *He never established his own GoPro group himself*
- *Level of engagement: a little bit more opportunistic, but depends on the type of GoPro forum*
- *Instagram: looking for some inspiration, for angles, techniques*
- *Facebook: there are so many GoPro communities and the quality is very different, so mainly he is having those in his feed on Facebook and if he runs into something and if he has the time and energy, he can answer questions and help people, he can post some footage; mostly he doesn't ask for help because he is more of an expert user*
- *The level of technical expertise on GoPros on those problems is not very high*
- *Instagram groups: like 100 groups; the biggest one is gopro's own community; but a lot of people have their own feeds and their own groups; this is the same as on Facebook they can have more specific ones for GoPro 10 and 11 or maybe GoPro in general; there is a lot of communities some are bigger some are smaller; multilingual, country specific*
- *sometimes he just uploads his content for a specific topic, e.g. if he did a low light shooting and people will ask about it, then he will upload some low light shots from riding snowmobiles in the middle of the night or from cave diving because those are very special conditions; if someone asks about examples of footage and settings for underwater shots and some tips on using GoPro in very low temperatures because that deplaces your battery; so people have specific questions*
- *(once you're a member in a few communities, if there is a new community the algorithm will take care of it for you and will present you the new community or friends will recommend a community)*
- *He is more of an expert user, many people in the FB community don't have that level of technical expertise on GoPros*
- *FB groups: a little bit more opportunistic*
- *Attend any brand or community events/ challenges? No, it's just a matter of logistic, he lives in the mountain up in the woods and if he's not there then he travels to Mexico and it's like not really enough time and logistical possibility*
- *GoPro has not really connected him to many people so far, most of his social contacts are through cave diving; but most of those people live in Mexico or United States or in Australia, most of them actually use GoPros; and the same for snowmobiling, it's a way of living and most of the guys he rides with actually use GoPro*
- *He can answer questions and help people, he can post some footage in the groups*
- *sometimes he just uploads his content for a specific topic, e.g. if he did a low light shooting and people will ask about it, then he will upload some low light shots from riding snowmobiles in the middle of the night or from cave diving because those are very special conditions; if someone asks about examples of footage and settings for underwater shots and some tips on using GoPro in very low temperatures because that deplaces your battery; so people have specific questions*
- *If something or someone is obviously wrong and a lot of people base their opinions and what they're right on on just an opinion, if they use products in live environment like for example cave diving, it is an extremely challenging environment because you squeeze to tight passages, you smash the cameras against the walls; he always carries two or three cameras because he cannot switch batteries underwater in the case system; then he can answer and say that this is*

totally wrong because you don't know what you're talking about but he has done it 100 times; but also they can have wrong assumptions about stuff and his experience tells him something else, so he gives them heads up like for example using a GoPro in water without housing, which is a bad idea despite the GoPro claiming that even without housing you can use it down to 10 metres but it does not always work like that

- *He has been using gopro since the very first GoPro (first model)*
- *He has them all, several pieces of GoPro*
- *He buys a new GoPro as soon as a new one comes out, often even two of each because he wants to be able to do longer dives and make more footage without having the opportunity to switch*
- *He informs himself about the new GoPros, even before the official release, as soon as the leaks come out in forums, he informs himself, so he already knows what will come*
- *There are comparable cameras on the market, but it's like using different cameras for different needs/ preferences, for shooting he uses the SLR cameras, some people are Canon people some people are Nikon people and some are Sony people; he is a Canon person and he is a GoPro person, but of course there is DJI for example or Insta360, but there are not so many cameras and brands that can deliver this performance and at this price in the form factor but main competitor would be the DJI*
- *Obviously those guys are really good and this is the way they make a living; they have a very strong design image and design message to the users and they produce a lot of great footage which is basically impossible to make for most people like amateurs, so but they show what is possible, he really likes that style, but DJI is not really far behind*
- *He agrees with go pros brand purpose*
- *Not participating in other brand communities, not for action cams actually there are general communities that are not brand specific so people with DJI cameras and Insta360 angle pros participate in them so it's just like general action camera vlogging stuff regardless of the brand, because at the end of the days it's about like shooting techniques and video crafts, not so much about the camera*
- *There is a GoPro subscription and if you are a serious GoPro user then you will be subscribing to gopro, they have an unlimited cloud storage and stuff like that sort of insurance for a camera, if you want to find out if something new is happening on the technology front then you just log on there and look*

Interview #3

- *2019 family trip to New Zealand, used the Hero 7 for vlogging*
- *Being an active surfer, he utilizes a mouth mount for water activities, finding it convenient despite occasional water ingestion.*
- *He uses the GoPro daily for vlogging, taking photos, and recording videos.*
- *While he shares most content on Instagram, he has also released a few videos on YouTube, with approximately 95% of the footage shot on GoPro.*
- *In terms of receiving messages from other users, he mostly gets them in person, especially during water activities when people ask about his GoPro mounts and shooting techniques.*
- *He follows the official GoPro account on Instagram and interacts with people in the FPV industry who use GoPro gadgets for drone footage.*
- *The interviewee notes that the brand's emphasis on going on adventures with a small camera aligns well with his usage.*
- *He believes that GoPro shares values with its users, emphasizing community alignment with specific content types.*

- *Despite not attending offline GoPro events, he engages with sponsored GoPro users in Q&A sessions for advice on settings and capturing high-quality content.*
- *Personally embracing GoPro's brand purpose*
- *During a recent trip, he met individuals using GoPro and FPV, expressing interest in the FPV industry despite its challenges.*
- *In terms of receiving messages from other users, he mostly gets them in person, especially during water activities when people ask about his GoPro mounts and shooting techniques.*
- *Despite not attending offline GoPro events, he engages with sponsored GoPro users in Q&A sessions for advice on settings and capturing high-quality content.*
- *During a recent trip, he met individuals using GoPro and FPV, expressing interest in the FPV industry despite its challenges.*
- *Personally embracing GoPro's brand purpose, he encourages others to try the product, highlighting its simplicity, versatility, and ability to effortlessly capture memories for beginners and content creators alike.*
- *After showing GoPro content to friends and fellow content creators, they praised the GoPro's quality, considering it one of the best on the market compared to traditional DSLR cameras.*
- *he encourages others to try the product, highlighting its simplicity, versatility, and ability to effortlessly capture memories for beginners and content creators alike.*
- *The interviewee initially bought the first GoPro Hero 3 Plus*
- *He uses the GoPro daily for vlogging, taking photos, and recording videos.*
- *Compared to larger DSLR cameras, he appreciates the GoPro's smaller, more compact size, making it easier to use and more convenient for fitting into pockets or bags*
- *considering it one of the best on the market compared to traditional DSLR cameras.*
- *The majority of his videos on Instagram are taken with the GoPro.*
- *He uses hashtags related to GoPro in the hope of getting featured or noticed by the brand, aspiring to be sponsored by them due to his daily use of their products.*
- *Though he hasn't participated in GoPro challenges yet, he is trying to find a niche and plans to buy the newest GoPro for future challenges once he found the niche*
- *He currently uses a GoPro 11 but plans to upgrade to the GoPro 13 for challenges and content creation once he finds his niche.*
- *The interviewee criticizes competitors like Insta360, asserting GoPro's superiority based on its quality and range of mounts.*

Interview #4

- *I have been playing around with GoPros for the best part of 13 years now, I think I got a camera when I was 15 just to record myself when I was learning to surf, and then just kept filming little bits, taking photos of things and spotting how people were able to take really cool, interesting photos and videos with GoPros. But I could never figure out how they did it, so I spent a lot of time trying to figure out, okay, what exactly do they do to make a GoPro look good?*
- *it became a bit of a puzzle for me to solve because, naturally, a photo out of a camera, at least the first early cameras, it didn't look that great in comparison to what you see on their promotional material. I just ended up using it as much as I could, filming my friends doing silly things like a lot of downhill skateboarding and on the beaches, swimming, like, doing random shit, just having fun and then putting together videos, just music and just enjoying myself. And then I ended up really trying to push the limits of what I could do with a camera because it was a relatively small, not the best camera in the world, per se.*
- *It's nice to hang out with people who do the same thing that you like to do*

- *I go out and take photos because I enjoy the activity of doing it and looking for a great shot, going to a beautiful location.*
- *The actual posting of it doesn't really bother me anymore because I'm accepted that the likes have dropped down. I don't really care that much about the likes anymore. I just don't want to do it more as a showcase of what I can do photography wise and beyond that and not really that fast as well.*
- *They market it as oh it's a camera where whenever you go out and have fun*
- *I think the general overall brand message, at least my point of view, is just a way of capturing the life's best moments in terms of all life's most extreme moments. You're going to be doing a crazy adventure activity or whatever. You take a GoPro with you whenever someone has a motorbike accident or something crazy happens on the seas place or doing a sport. Also, you go surfing and you say you're surfing with dolphins and think, oh shit, did you have a GoPro to film it? People think about GoPro. That's the go to camera to think about. When it comes to capturing content in a more extreme environment.*
- *It's the go to camera people go to for capturing memories and experiences which are in more extreme, dangerous sort of environments.*
- *They are more pushing of building community again to really try and inspire more people to use the camera. And I think they've been doing a lot of big push to say it's not just exchange sports, you can do it with family members, this and that with your kids, give the camera to the kids and they can run around, smash it apart, make funny memories, et cetera. And they really want to push that side of things as well.*
- *There's no brand message about Canon or Sony. They're just known as that's the good camera company. You go to them if you want.*
- *I filmed a lot of content creators from there, just filming videos, all the trips, putting videos together and again, just as I said, for just trying to use the camera as much as I could and using it as a creative outlet.*
- *I started noticing the GoPro community on Instagram, which was growing a lot more in that sort of period of time. So I was making connections and friends through Instagram, meeting people on Instagram and then finally meeting them in real life and sort of collaborating and hanging out and shooting together. And the more I shot, the more I wanted to get more creative with different shots, the more I met more people.*
- *At the event there was this main guy from GoPro and we were chatting and he recognized me from my posts; So he already recognized who I was which was interesting, like, oh shit, you would know of me. That's interesting. And they invited me over to California: if you're going to be coming through California, let us know. You just pop into the office and join us for a surf. I spent the day at the offices meeting the team and chatting to people there. And I think that all that happened because of the sort of chasing and pushing*
- *I think there's something to note which is interesting about the different regions of Europe and the world and what GoPro creators are like in each one. Because in the UK, there wasn't that many creators in the UK who were GoPro focused. You're shooting a variety of content in a variety of styles, both like sports, lifestyle, sort of like traveling landscapes or more action stuff. And most of the time it's just like mountain biking shots.*
- *Because I was posting quite a variety of colorful content and creative shots, I then ended up being the first person to go to whenever they were planning productions for the UK. So I started building relationships with the European team at GoPro who were then wanting me to go on productions for them, always planning productions to go around the UK, shooting videos so we could plan different things.*

- *I don't need to buy a camera again because of this relationship that built up. But this all came from this community. This really drives for me to keep creating and keep pushing to create this sort of content and get to the point where I was shooting stuff which is good enough to be paid was driven by the community of people I met from the GoPro, from Instagram.*
- *They replied to me, they replied, they commented on my post because it was so rare, it became such a big thing for people, and it was a big thing for me. The only time it stopped being a big thing for me is when I talked directly to the guys who were behind GoPro Europe planning and production. And we talked just very candidly about what was going on in terms of the thing were talking about primarily, which was being an official GoPro ambassador and what that meant. When I heard about all the rules about how the pictures were picked, because there's always a competition in game between GoPro community who could get the most photos featured and who could get the awards. There's always that sort of unknown and that mystery of we don't exactly know why who gets picked and why they get picked and how it is to win an award. But so we have to figure out a way of solving that puzzle, which really sort of drove me to try to be creative and try new things. Whereas as soon as I knew the methodology and as soon as I knew the rules behind it, as soon as I realized it was just people behind it the illusion sort of disappeared. And I was like, oh, I mean, I still enjoy doing it. I still love doing it. I'm just not chasing it like a crazy person anymore, because they're real people, they're normal people.*
- *I met a lot of friends through Instagram from the GoPro community. So I used to hang out with a couple of friends in the UK. We didn't know each other before.*
- *I made friends in Australia and we linked up, and I was living in Australia for a little bit of time. I met friends in the US as well, who I met through Instagram, too, all through the greater community*
- *I think nowadays the community has definitely slowed down and it isn't as strong anymore; The strong community is being built just from engaging on social media.*
- *And that's how my exposure and growth into the GoPro community started building there. And the more I got, more I took photos, the more creative they were, the more they were featured, and then the more I met more people and got more followers.*
- *Because I was posting quite a variety of colorful content and creative shots, I then ended up being the first person to go to whenever they were planning productions for the UK. So I started building relationships with the European team at GoPro who were then wanting me to go on productions for them, always planning productions to go around the UK, shooting videos so we could plan different things.*
- *And they invited me to a lot more little challenges here and there. And it's kept growing and growing until eventually it went from them asking to do some shots on Instagram to them then paying me almost €2000 to go out and shoot for the new camera. So it just escalated more and more. The more because I was the main person in the UK.*
- *Well, I'm not personally fanboying anymore. I just see it as like a fun thing to do. I honestly think the mystery is one of the biggest things that keep it so alluring and interesting. I'm like, oh, what could it be? What is the answer? And it makes people sort of hunt for it. But I think also it's definitely killed off a lot of momentum because COVID killed a lot of traveling and it really sort of slowed things down. And I think there's that combined with the change of the algorithm on Instagram where you would sort of see less of a reaction from some I think, funnily enough, considering when I would post before on Instagram, I would have maybe 1000 or 2000 followers less than I have now.*
- *I think almost like the incentive of posting a ton kind of drifted away a little bit because of that. Also with GoPro was planning to do lots of events which was very exciting, really good, keeping*

up the momentum. But then a lot of those events got canceled because they got rid of a lot of employees in the European side of things.

- *I think the brand definitely could come back to greater strength if they really pushed a lot more events, engaged the community a lot and really drove people to keep posting and keep driving and keep doing things. Because the more people post on Instagram, the more the quality shots get put on Instagram, the more they're going to drive, they're going to get people who want to buy the cameras. But yeah, it's a hard game to play.*
- *I think the best way they can really maximize their potential as a company is by making it as easy as humanly possible to shoot content on the camera and get it posted to Instagram almost. Like, I think for them, software is going to be the biggest thing. Their cameras are great, but if they make the software better and make it so easy that you can just like, oh, go on your phone, bam, cool, sort of done. I can post it immediately. I'm ready to go. That makes it super easy and convenient.*
- *I'm a subscriber, yeah. I did it for a while ago. Because you also get coverage as well. So if you lose your camera, it gets broken, you get another one for free. But then that's kind of null and void for me now because I just email someone at the office and tell me okay, come in and get pick up a new camera. I don't really need to worry about that anymore. But it was helpful.*
- *You take on holidays, on adventures, on like, more extreme snowboarding, skiing, surfing. It's that camera. And I think they're lucky if they got in early enough and they weren't that camera for so many years. People just think, oh, GoPro. So I think they're definitely riding their legacy. They're riding their history a lot. And you can see that from looking at other action camera companies around the world. Like, you have, like, DJI, you have Sony. It's not sony. You have DJI, you have Insta 360, and you have a few of the camera companies. They make some cool cameras, but then the M one thinks, oh, is that a GoPro? They always think it's got that sort of brand legacy.*

<u>Interview #5</u>

- *Started with basically playing around with GoPros in 2012 I had a couple of cameras didn't know how to use them so I sold them again*
- *2017 I decided to buy a hero 5; I was doing a course at work called urban search and rescue and wanted to put the GoPro on the helmet and film what we were doing*
- *it started with GoPro, so their main social page, then I branched out from that and I started to get suggestions, these people are using GoPro, it was pushing suggestions towards me about the GoPro users, and I started to follow which then led to more*
- *Followed comment liked their material; also asking specific questions: "I like what you've done with that how did you do it"; so it was a lot of backwards and forwards communication which created that friendship I suppose*
- *Instagram is the first choice, I do use Facebook as well, I have a Twitter account, I have a TikTok account; a threads account; I try to cover all bases where I can just in case, so I have a matching user name, YouTube as well*
- *I think it's been about two or three of my photos and videos have been used by GoPro global where they paid me for them, they call it their awards; so I submitted videos and got paid for it which they use in their advertising and I think that's what really kickstarted here*
- *I sent them an e-mail probably three years ago and basically told them all my thoughts about the brand, where they are heading, what they would need to fix*
- *2017: I found through looking at Instagram there was a community of people with GoPro so you have mainly photos and there was a community of people would seem to be quite a big*

thing it was like a certain genre of GoPro photos that just looked really cool, the angles everything I was like wow

- *some people were what they call GoPro family, it's basically like GoPro has a select few people around the world in different countries that I suppose share the love with you know they'll give them a camera or they'll do certain things and they're part of this family where they receive certain benefits from it*
- *I did it because I love doing it and then I have seen what you could when I started to mix with these other people I notice that there are so many opportunities available so then I pushed a little harder to try and become involved; with GoPro, to become a family member or you know get a free camera*
- *I interact a lot with other people, as I said I met a lot of other people just because I used to go pro through Instagram predominantly, with different people all over the world and the contact means a lot "I love what you do with that, how did you do it?"; that's created a friendship as well;*
- *they've gone from being an action camera which you would you know put on a mountain bike or a motorbike or anything like that, to like people just using it now for every day with their kids or on holiday, that just opened up their whole meaning to sharing life with the GoPro*
- *most of the users know it anyway but you know there are people out there that have these cameras and they've got no idea, just like I used to in the start but I think everyone is pretty committed to them they know basically what GoPro is about*
- *there was a community of people out there that were all into this GoPro thing, and it snowballed from there and I just went crazy*
- *there was also a page of time going here in Australia errand, he called it GoPro mafia and he was like an offshoot of GoPro, it was his own page, he was affiliated with GoPro somehow, and he was sharing everyone's photos, getting them out there; it was really huge on a global scale for him and I actually got to know him in the end and we're great mates now*
- *there was a certain group of us from all over the world*
- *I met probably 4-5 of these GoPro people that were in our legends group, but I have met other people along the way*
- *I most definitely feel a sense of belonging to the brand community*
- *it's funny like you've never met these people face to face but you feel like you know them because you can chat and text whichever*
- *I do feel part of the bigger picture*
- *myself and the other guys believe in the brand, we all bought cameras because we believe in the brand of what it is, I think we create the destiny of the brand and I do believe that they know that as well*
- *more than a family, there is us as well (own video); we can do this too, he is us, this product is just a little thing, has made friendships from all around the world; never met them face to face, can facetime them and they will help*
- *its not just a camera, it's a community of people;*
- *community isn't just the family, but every passionate user out there; some just have the camera, but do nothing special with them and delete the memory when its full; but many want to take unique videos and photos*
- *two types of users: passionate and everyday user*
- *there was also a page of time going here in Australia errand, he called it GoPro mafia and he was like an offshoot of GoPro, it was his own page, he was affiliated with GoPro somehow,*

and he was sharing everyone's photos, getting them out there; it was really huge on a global scale for him and I actually got to know him in the end and we're great mates now

- *once I got into their page which brought more followers towards me, so I think it was a big part apart from the suggestions, probably the community base of sharing each other's work really made a difference as well*
- *also asking specific questions: "I like what you've done with that how did you do it"; so it was a lot of backwards and forwards communication*
- *previous to that they would always help me out with different things and send me a camera here and there you know they're really supportive in Australia, very community-based*
- *I think it's been about two or three of my photos and videos have been used by GoPro global where they paid me for them, they call it their awards; so I submitted videos and got paid for it which they use in their advertising and I think that's what really kickstarted here*
- *so we have an Instagram chat group and we also have a WhatsApp chat group; in the WhatsApp one which is pretty much all the same as the Instagram one plus it has a person from marketing of GoPro, 2 guys from GoPro training; so when we talk backwards and forwards and say hey this is a great idea or this or that, they're watching and listening and every now and then they will comment so we sort of do have first-hand contact with them and sometimes we say hey what do you think about this*
- *yes quite often, we chat regularly, we have the GoPro legends group (bounce off ideas etc., sharing some stuff); plus direct messages from GoPro users; tend to stay in contact with the AZ guys but also talks to others around the world*
- *I sent them an e-mail probably three years ago and basically told them all my thoughts about the brand, where they are heading, what they would need to fix*
- *they're funny company, they got a great product but they don't seem to be really changing it that much and they got the competitors, like DJI, Insta 360 that are out there on the market, making these massive big changes in this all these innovations on their cameras that people are going well, GoPro must be getting out something big after this and they are not, so its almost the same as in the last years camera; I think they need to do sth big in the next model to really reinvent the company or else I'm not sure what will happen with the brand*
- *started with basically playing around with GoPros in 2012 I had a couple of cameras didn't know how to use them so I sold them again*
- *2017 I decided to buy a hero 5; I was doing a course at work called urban search and rescue and wanted to put the GoPro on the helmet and film what we were doing*
- *so I started to play around with that and then created an Instagram account based wholly and solely on GoPro and just started to put material out, got a bit of a following, then started to associate with different GoPro users and found that it was a community*
- *I think it's been about two or three of my photos and videos have been used by GoPro global where they paid me for them, they call it their awards; so I submitted videos and got paid for it which they use in their advertising and I think that's what really kickstarted here*
- *I did it because I love doing it and then I have seen what you could when I started to mix with these other people I notice that there are so many opportunities available so then I pushed a little harder to try and become involved; with GoPro, to become a family member or you know get a free camera*
- *Yep I do, things has changed a lot, the GoPro scene has become a little quieter, there's more companies out there now that do similar products, so I think some people are jumping ship and going to these other brands, so the communities changed a little but there is still the hardcore user out there, like myself I'd never change to another brand*

- *I like the product, they have been very good to me, they've given me a lot of opportunities, it's not just necessarily a camera or anything like that from doing this with GoPro, I now work with companies like G shock and other companies in America and adventure companies here in Australia; and it all started because of the GoPro and it really open doors for me, companies approach me from seeing my work*
- *it's the everyday user that creates the popularity or demand of the brand, so they give tonnes of cameras out to athletes, celebrities and all these big people that show it; it's great but do they have anything behind them, any values to the brand or is it just because " hey they give me some stuff", whereas myself and the other guys believe in the brand, we all bought cameras because we believe in the brand of what it is, I think we create the destiny of the brand and I do believe that they know that as well*
- *does it need the purpose: I think it would be successful anyway, everyone knows the brand, everyone knows what it can do, I think by changing up the image a little, it can reinvigorate the brand; I believe they sell themselves for what they are and what people see*
- *I sent them an e-mail probably three years ago and basically told them all my thoughts about the brand, where they are heading, what they would need to fix and I put it all together, information from a lot of different people I spoke and it got quite an impact, it went all the way to the head office San Diego and Carlsbad in the USA and I think it sort of opened their eyes a bit; it's like I said to you it's the user the everyday user I think that keeps this company running and keeps their advertising flying because we are submitting all this work, pictures, videos that they use in their advertising and at the time they were going through a bit of a phase where they just weren't focused on the user, it was more focused on the celebrity and so I just sort of helped out a bit*

<u>Interview #6</u>

- *I started that Facebook group GoPro Pros maybe eightish years ago*
- *I'm a video producer, so I use GoPros quite often in my work mainly for time lapses and getting into places that you can't normally easily fit into with a regular size camera*
- *I don't post too often anymore, I used to post more I think but it's just been so busy the last couple years and then the group is still there, people still ask questions and I still approve posts a couple times a week, but you know people ask random questions and I happen to have random knowledge of that question and so I'll try and chime in; if I know something that I know that most other people might not know and I'll try and chime in; but if I think that somebody else can answer then I'll let somebody else*
- *we just accept real members, but we're pretty stringent on who gets in you know not anyone can just enter; and that way we can tell if they are serious about joining or not and it's not like it's a serious group we just want to try to sit down, those who care and have actual questions or are interested in the product and those who are not*
- *yeah I think they find the product to be interesting in the same ways they try to connect with each other through sharing the things that they capture; I think there's kind of two main categories with GoPro, there's the hardware technological side where people are fascinated with what the camera can do and then there's the other side where there's the people that are actually trying to capture content using the camera and I think this where the barrier is; there's people that love the technology and there's people that love to capture things with the GoPro; its not that the technological people don't want to capture it is sometimes they don't know how; I think that's kind of one of the difficulties with the GoPro or with any camera really is just learning how to use the camera properly*

- *yeah I think it would be quite interesting to test to film something cool enough that would be considered worth, get some exposure*
- *I started it for a couple of reasons first 'cause I liked go pros and cameras second I did want to connect with other GoPro users that and share different settings and secrets and tips and tricks and that kind of thing*
- *I love to get other people involved and I used to have some admins but they weren't very active so I removed; it just didn't really go anywhere; there is not a lot of active people in the group*
- *I never met any other community member from the GoPro Pro group*
- *I think it's important to let people talk freely about it you know there's at least one actual GoPro pro in my GoPro pros group, a famous GoPro youtuber, he is deaf so he does sign language but always reviews GoPro products and he's got you know hundreds of thousands of subscribers; he joined my group couple of years ago as I think you know being able to speak really you know the company will eventually kind of see those thoughts and feelings on their product; I think its important to express your actual thoughts on the product*
- *the GoPro community got definitely more diverse through social media and there ar e many people from different countries and with different backgrounds, but our same interest unites us, despite not having seen the other person in real life before*
- *it's almost all positive, I think most of the negativity comes from the older GoPro products, they have small glitches and trying to connect to your phone, Wi-Fi and things like that and they are just older products, so they don't have this kind of good software*
- *their product matches what their overall goal is*
- *I started that FB group GoPro Pros maybe eight years ago*
- *I owned the hero 3, three plus, the four, the six, the eight and the 10 and seven*
- *GoPro has been a big help to me and I think they are a lot of fun to play with too; that's kind of what inspired me to start the group in the first place, its just unique capabilities and the wide field of view that they offer that wide angle*
- *I started it for a couple of reasons first 'cause I liked go pros and cameras second I did want to connect with other GoPro users that and share different settings and secrets and tips and tricks and that kind of thing but I was also at the time I had become an Amazon affiliate, hoping to share some links in the group and make some money and do that kind of thing and I actually had companies reach out to me over the past several years offering me GoPro product's you know they say we will give you a product if you post in your group about it; I say sure you know I get some kind of GoPro contraction in the mail and trying to play with and so that's kind of been a fun perk of having the group*
- *I have turned in for like the GoPro million dollar challenge; I had a specific video shoot planned this year; so we're going to take our horses out to the beach and ride them in a nice formation and get some GoPro shots for the challenge*
- *yeah I think it would be quite interesting to test to film something cool enough that would be considered worth, get some exposure*
- *I think for the most it's been the same I don't know that a whole lot has changed other than their product's getting better and better*
- *yes, I would like to upgrade to the newest one, get the max. lense*
- *yes, they are very impactful on the community that they have created by enabling creators to do more in more unique ways;*

Interview #7

- *I don't post my content that much, I haven't been editing videos, but I have a lot of videos and I have a YouTube channel, but haven't used it that much; I post on FB and Instagram*
- *Good with YouTube: keeps quality*
- *I follow GoPro on YouTube*
- *The FB group is not an official GoPro group, but it might be someone from GoPro, but there is no official group for technical support from GoPro; we just reply to some people that post questions*
- *I think I joined the FB group 2 or 3 years ago*
- *I don't really ask questions in the FB group, if I want to know something I google it*
- *Sometimes I answer questions*
- *I am an active member*
- *I don't chat with other community members*
- *On YouTube, I just watch and like videos*
- *Event: no way, they invite you, you cannot just go to any event, if you are really famous, you get invited*
- *I never turned in any video or photo to GoPro and took part in any challenges because I don't do crazy stuff like some people do, I just do basic stuff, like going to the beach and riding my bicycle*
- *Yes, I mainly do it for myself or some of my friends watch my videos and I sometimes watch their videos too*
- *now a lot of people are trying to use the GoPro as a webcam or for blogging and it doesn't work, you gotta use it for sports, that's when GoPro works better; right now GoPro is like segmented*
- *Yes the purpose impacts the community, especially in the beginning when it was launched, there were no action cameras, so if you like to do sports, you got a GoPro*
- *It's a very nice way to record videos and share it with your friends*
- *The FB group is not an official GoPro group, but it might be someone from GoPro, but there is no official group for technical support from GoPro; we just reply to some people that post questions*
- *Sometimes they ask stupid questions and ask the same; but sometimes it's valid questions*
- *I don't really ask questions in the FB group, if I want to know something I google it*
- *Sometimes I defend the brand when someone criticizes, because sometimes they just keep asking and it's never ending*
- *And now people complain because they say it overheats, but GoPro is not for blogging, it is for sports*
- *It's a very nice way to record videos and share it with your friends*
- *And GoPro is definitely better, I watched some videos, and what they say is that the quality of the GoPro is much better than that of the DJI*
- *purpose is important, that's what the CEO wanted; and also why he invented the GoPro and it builds on that*

Interview #8

- *I jumped on the GoPro bandwagon around 2014*
- *First it was all about capturing my rock climbing adventures, but now it's an everyday companion, when I'm hiking, biking, or just exploring*

- *I'm also a content creator, so GoPro has become an integral part of my work, helping me document the thrill of various outdoor activities*
- *Mostly active on Instagram, active member*
- *Great space for sharing the moments and see how other push their limits*
- *I'm pretty engaged, I check Instagram several times a day and like and comment on other people's posts (often related to GoPro)*
- *I post almost every 2-3 days, mostly taken with GoPro*
- *I take my time to answer questions and keep my community running and engaged*
- *I also answer DMs and chat with other members*
- *I have many friends who also use the GoPro*
- *I sometimes go out and shoot content with some other friends and we collaborate together*
- *I made some good friends through my sports and using my GoPro and therefore sharing our adventures and passion together*
- *We often sit down and go through the content together to see the results, it's a lot of fun and we can talk about what we could do next and which techniques or angles to use etc.*
- *I also use the GoPro hashtags as I'm a content creator for them and I want to be found and get more likes of course*
- *If someone criticizes the brand its often because they don't understand the product or are just not using it right; I try to help where I can and I understand the frustration but you there are so many tips and tricks in the internet, so I think everyone can make use of that if they are just a bit patient and want to get better*
- *I didn't attend any brand events yet, but it's definitely on my bucket list*
- *I do feel a connection to other GoPro members, especially the more active and passionate ones, I think we're all a tribe of thrill-seekers and adventurer*
- *We push boundaries and go beyond the limit, we like the thrill and rush and more extreme sports but also the creative side of taking good shots and really putting in effort to get good results, so yes I think we're somehow similar and connected on that level*
- *I'm definitely a GoPro person, but some prefer DJI; I started with GoPro and I'm going to stay with it; I'm happy with the products and results and the passion and creativity in the community are unmatched*
- *I'm familiar with GoPro's brand purpose, I love sharing these exciting moments of life and for me this is what makes life more meaningful and fun, definitely agree to that*

Interview #9

- *I got my first GoPro in around 2015*
- *At first I used it mainly for my mountain bike trips with the mount for the helmet, but it quickly became my everyday camera to capture all kind of moments, from travel to everyday life*
- *Instagram and YouTube are my main platforms, but I also started to use TikTok a bit more often*
- *I'm very active and engaged, I love to check out other's content and what trips and adventures they go onto and get inspiration from there*
- *I love to show my appreciation and love to others because I know how hard it is to produce all that content and how much effort you put in there and you are happy to get something back and have people like what you do, that's motivating to keep going*
- *I do use GoPro related hashtags for more visibility*

- *I really believe in the product and if someone questions it or has concerns I'm always happy to help them out; GoPro's a great tiny machine and you just have to explore its potential*
- *I'm always taking my time to answer other people's questions and messages or comments, we're a community and help each other out, easy like that*
- *Sometimes I also have questions, so I'm also happy to get information from more expert users and its just a giving and taking kind of thing*
- *Yes I do think that we share the same values, I mean we are all somehow in this creativity, exploration kind of mix and having fun capturing our adventures and memories and of course also sharing them with others and being a source of mutual inspiration*
- *Some of my best friends are also GoPro users, but I already knew them before, of course there are some GoPro athletes which I would love to meet someday and do some crazy things together, that would be great*
- *I always send my pictures and videos to take part in the GoPro awards and I even got featured twice on the official GoPro account, so that's great and increases visibility and motivates to keep going*

Interview #10

- *The interviewee, is a young adventurer and content creator, has been using GoPro cameras for the past three years.*
- *Engages in a variety of outdoor activities, including hiking, mountain biking, and water sports.*
- *Active on social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube.*
- *Relies on GoPro Hero 9 for its improved stabilization and higher resolution.*
- *Regularly contributes to GoPro challenges, finding them as a creative outlet for showcasing outdoor experiences, but never got featured*
- *Emphasizes the role of GoPro in capturing unique angles and perspectives during adventures.*
- *Actively participates in the GoPro community on Instagram, following other creators and engaging in discussions.*
- *Credits GoPro for fostering a sense of camaraderie among users who share a passion for adventure and storytelling.*
- *Expresses excitement about being featured on GoPro's official Instagram account multiple times.*
- *Describes GoPro as a catalyst for personal growth, pushing boundaries and exploring new activities for the sake of content creation.*
- *Acknowledges the learning curve of mastering GoPro settings and editing techniques but finds joy in the continuous improvement process.*
- *Offers positive feedback on the simplicity and durability of GoPro cameras.*
- *Suggests improvements in the mobile app interface for smoother editing and sharing experiences.*
- *Expresses interest in more virtual events or webinars to connect with other GoPro enthusiasts.*
- *Highlights the role of GoPro in shaping their identity as an adventurer and content creator.*
- *Expresses loyalty to the brand, seeing GoPro as superior to other action cameras*
- *Anticipates the release of future GoPro models, expressing curiosity about potential features and innovations.*

A.3 Brand Survey GoPro

Welcome to the GoPro Community Study!
Dear Community Member,
We are eager to hear your insights!
We are conducting a 5 Minute study to explore the interrelationship between GoPro's brand community and its purpose, believing that sharing and reliving our experiences makes life more meaningful and fun. Our research project aims to understand the relationship between the brand and the vibrant community that has formed around it.
Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous, protecting your privacy.

Thank you for being a part of this study!
Theresa and the Nova Research Team

Section 1: Social Media and Content Engagement

1. *Do you actively follow GoPro (one of the official GoPro accounts) on any social media platform?*
   - *Yes*
   - *No*
2. *If yes, please specify on which social media platforms you follow the (official) GoPro accounts*
   - *Instagram*
   - *Facebook*
   - *YouTube*
   - *TikTok*
   - *Newsletter*
   - *Others…*
3. *How long have you been following GoPro (official brand account) on any social media platform?*
   - *Less than 1 year*
   - *1-2 years*
   - *2-4 years*
   - *4-6 years*
   - *6-8 years*
   - *More than 8 years*
4. *Do you follow any GoPro-related brand communities (e.g. dedicated to GoPro products/ information) on any social media platform?*
   - *Yes*
   - *No*
5. *If yes, please specify which social media platforms you utilize most*
   - *Instagram*
   - *Facebook*
   - *YouTube*
   - *TikTok*
   - *Newsletter*

- *Others…*

6. *How long have you been part of GoPro online brand communities?*
   - *Less than 1 year*
   - *1-2 years*
   - *2-4 years*
   - *4-6 years*
   - *6-8 years*
   - *More than 8 years*
7. *If you are part of any GoPro online brand communities, what is your main reason for that?*
   - *To get some information about the products*
   - *To get some inspiration from others (techniques etc.)*
   - *To help others and answer their questions*
   - *Other: ___*
8. *Do you follow any GoPro ambassadors or athletes?*
   - *Yes*
   - *No*

Section 2: Brand Community Engagement

9. *How often do you comment or post within the brand community?*
   - *Every day*
   - *Every 2 days*
   - *Weekly*
   - *Monthly*
   - *Yearly*
   - *Not at all*
10. *How often do you like posts and stories within the brand community?*
   - *Every day*
   - *Every 2 days*
   - *Weekly*
   - *Monthly*
   - *Yearly*
   - *Not at all*
11. *How often do you chat/ interact with other community members within the brand community?*
   - *Every day*
   - *Every 2 days*
   - *Weekly*
   - *Monthly*
   - *Yearly*
   - *Not at all*
12. *If you post content, created with the GoPro, do you use GoPro-related hashtags? If yes, what motivates you to use these hashtags?*
13. *Did you make friends through being part of the GoPro community?*
   - *Yes, I even met some people in person that I met through the online community*
   - *Yes, but I never met any community member in person*

- *No*

14. *How often do you interact with other GoPro brand community members in OFFLINE environments?*
    - *Every day*
    - *Every 2 days*
    - *Weekly*
    - *Monthly*
    - *Yearly*
    - *Not at all*
15. *Did you ever take part in one of GoPro's challenges?*
    - *Yes*
    - *No*
16. *Did you ever get featured on one of GoPro's accounts?*
    - *Yes*
    - *No*
17. *Do you consider it as a personal goal to get featured on one of GoPro's accounts?*
    - *Yes*
    - *No*
18. *How many GoPro's do you own? __*
19. *Have you ever bought your GoPro from other community members, e.g. via Facebook groups or Marketplace?*
    - *Yes*
    - *No*
20. *Have you ever sold your old or used GoPro to other community members, e.g. via Facebook groups or Marketplace?*
    - *Yes*
    - *No*

Section 3: Perceptions of Brand Community

21. *Do you feel a sense of belonging to the GoPro brand community?*
    - *Strongly agree*
    - *Agree*
    - *Neutral*
    - *Disagree*
    - *Strongly disagree*
22. *Do you feel a sense of shared values within the GoPro brand community?*
    - *Strongly agree*
    - *Agree*
    - *Neutral*
    - *Disagree*
    - *Strongly disagree*
23. *Do you feel that the GoPro brand community has helped you achieve personal or professional goals?*
    - *Strongly agree*
    - *Agree*

- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly disagree*

24. *Do you perceive the overall atmosphere within GoPro brand communities as rather positive, supportive?*

- *Strongly agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly disagree*

25. *Do you perceive the overall atmosphere within GoPro brand communities as rather negative, toxic?*

- *Strongly agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly disagree*

Section 4: Brand and Community Impact

26. *In your opinion, does the GoPro community impact the brand's reputation and success?*

- *Strongly agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly disagree*

27. *In your opinion, do you think the GoPro brand community has ever changed in the past years?*

- *Yes*
- *No*

28. *If so. Please elaborate what you think has changed….*

Section 5: Brand Familiarity and Values

29. *Are you familiar with GoPro's stated purpose ("we believe that sharing and reliving our experiences makes life more meaningful and fun")?*

- *Yes*
- *No*

30. *In your opinion, is this brand purpose ("we believe that sharing and reliving our experiences makes life more meaningful and fun") suitable for GoPro?*

- *Strongly agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly disagree*

31. *Do you believe GoPro's brand purpose aligns with your personal values and interests?*

- *Strongly agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly disagree*

32. *How well do you think is GoPro's brand purpose communitcated to its customers?*

- *Very well*
- *Well*
- *Neutral*
- *Poorly*
- *Very poorly*

Section 6: Brand Purpose and Influence

33. *In your opinion, do you think GoPro's brand purpose ever influenced your decision to purchase and use the products?*

- *Strongly agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly disagree*

34. *In your opinion, do you think GoPro's brand purpose contributes to the sense of community within the brand community?*

- *Strongly agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly disagree*

Section 7: Open-Ended Question (Optional)

35. *Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with GoPro's brand purpose and its brand community?*

Section 8: Participant Information

36. *Age:*

- *Under 18*
- *18-24*
- *25-34*
- *35-44*
- *45-54*
- *55-64*
- *65 or over*

37. *Gender:*

- *Male*

- *Female*
- *Non-binary*
- *Prefer not to say*
- *Other (please specify)*

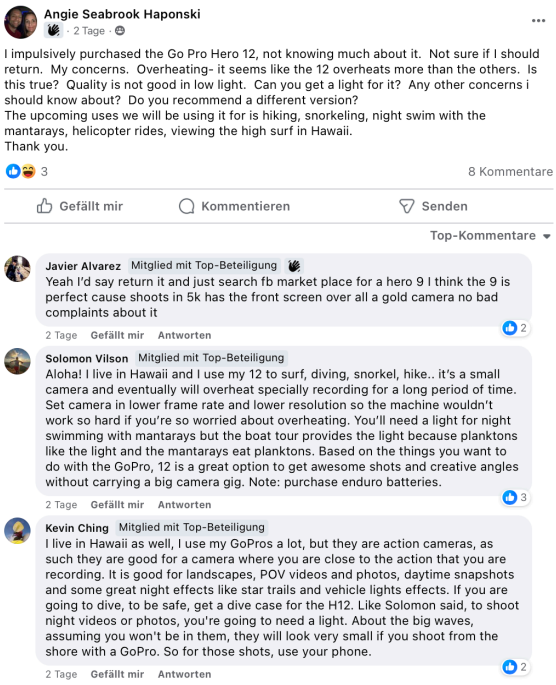
38. *Location: Country/Region*

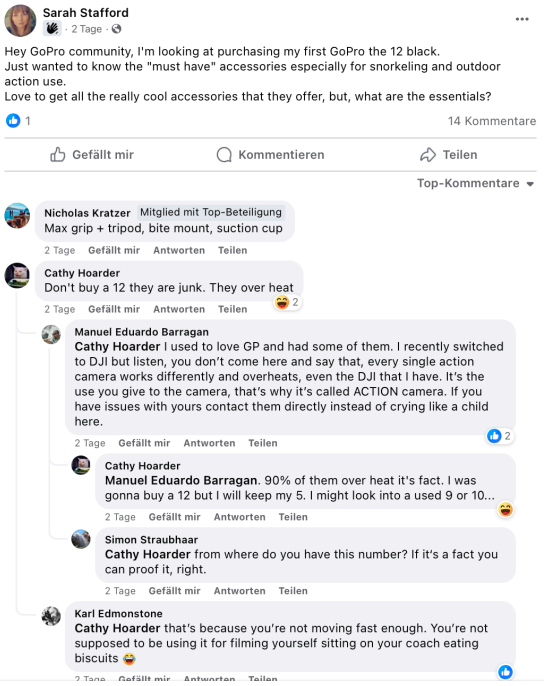
39. *Education:*

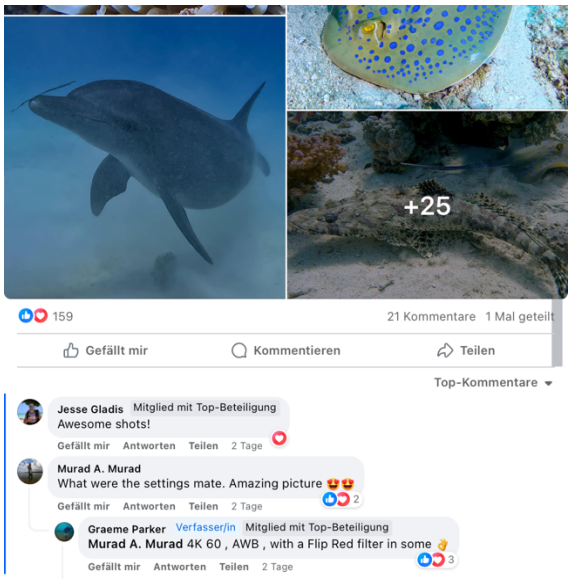
- *High School*
- *College*
- *Bachelor's Degree*
- *Master's Degree*
- *Doctorate or higher*

A.4 Netnography GoPro

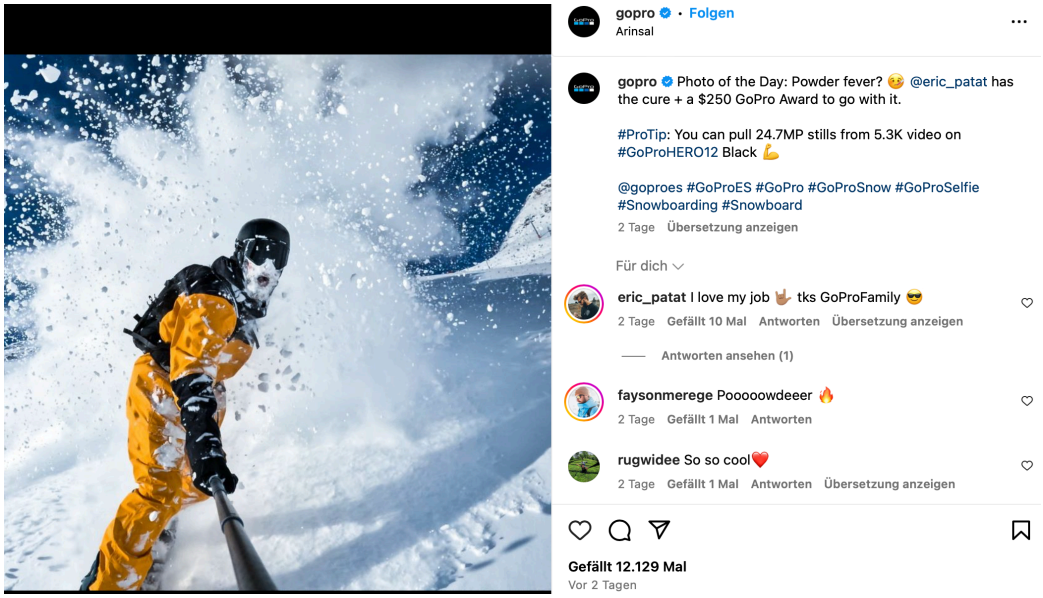
1) <u>Support and collaboration; Brand Advocacy</u>

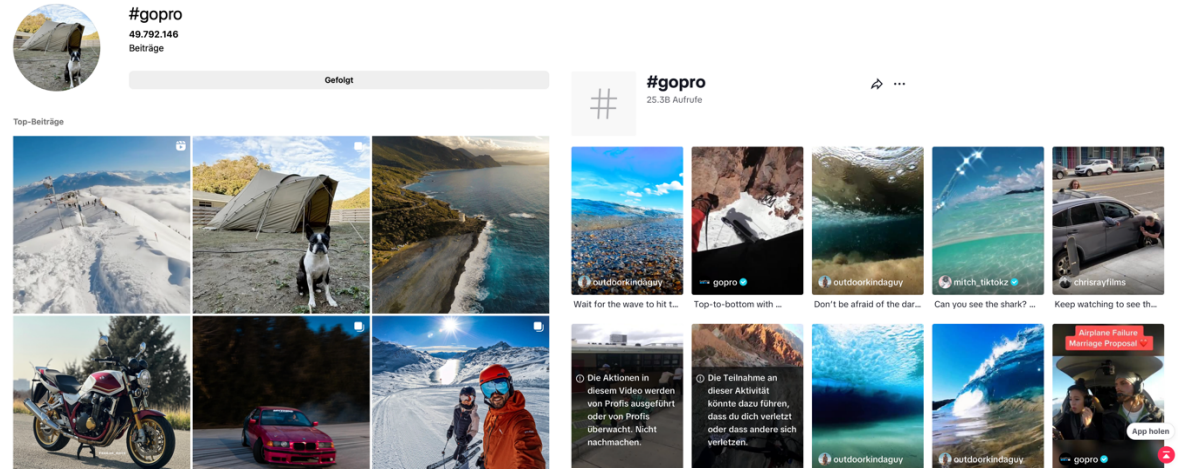






2) Brand Loyalty





A.5 Comparison of key insights from the individual analysis

	Pamela Reif	**GoPro**	**Supreme**
Engagement	*Level of activeness varies within "consuming", "active" and "connected" members. Focus on engagement with Pamela Reif, instead of other members.*	*Mainly 3 types of members: Observing (like), Active (comment, post, take part in challenges, meet), GoPro "Family" (highly active, collaborations, sponsored); many are part of sub-groups (user-generated)*	*Overall engagement metrics reflect the ever-ongoing decrease in activity within Supreme brand community*
Shared values / identity	*Strong sense of shared values, embodiment of her purpose of living a healthy and fit lifestyle, and inspiration to work for one's dreams.*	*Strong sense of shared values and understanding of the brand's purpose; focus on adventures, fun, creativity; "newer" community: vlogging, webcam*	*Values strongly diverge into polarized parties of "collectors" and "resellers"*
Sense of belonging	*Strong sense of belonging within the community, despite the lack of direct interaction with other members (only in smaller sub-communities). Her brand purpose, reposted content and the feeling of a "shared journey" foster this.*	*Strong sense of belonging, further amplified through the brand's purpose; global network of users that form connections beyond the camera*	*Weakened sense of belonging with dilution of the brand's perceived purpose, individuals increasingly disconnect from the brand, as well as the comprising community*
Support and collaboration	*Strong mutual support for reaching common fitness goals within the sub-community. Pamela Reif plays a central role in her community, strong desire to meet her in person.*	*Positive, supportive atmosphere; Active collaboration and support through facilitation of exchange of information, tips, and inspiration, especially in dedicated groups or through Family members*	*Collaboration and supportive activities within community increasingly replaced through market-driven dynamics and toxic tonality*
Influence and advocacy	*Enthusiastic advocates of Pamela Reif products: Physical changes from workouts and healthier lifestyle improved mental health and overall well-being. E-Wom/Wom*	*High willingness to defend and recommend the brand; The everyday user has the most influence on the brand; GoPro Family members serve as ambassadors*	*Decreasing purpose-identification of community members leads to diminishing advocacy, leading individuals to "jump on the hate train"*
Brand loyalty	*Pamela's authenticity and personality are*	*Brand loyalty especially present due to GoPro's*	*Initial loyalty replaced through increased*

	identified as major loyalty drivers, fostering a very strong, loyal, and active brand community	*legacy; GoPro users see the brand as superior compared to other action cameras; large majority sees it as a personal goal to get featured on GoPro pages*	*migration of members into other brands more embodying brand's purpose*

Table 5: *Comparison of key insights from the individual cases categorized by six key metrics based on Madupu and Cooley (2010)*