Brand Communities: Saving the Philippine Seas Through Upscaled Retail Items

Moireen Nicola Antoinette S. Espinosa

De La Salle University Manila

moireen.espinosa@dlsu.edu.ph

Abstract: This study focuses on brand communities in consciousness-raising projects for the environment. This study will tackle upcycling, which will then result to sustainability, particularly in a surfer run social enterprise called Tali Ti Amianan. This study will further examine how brand communities are vis-a-vis in raising awareness regarding oceanic and environmental sustainability issues such as water pollution through producing upcycled items.

Key Words: oceanic and environmental sustainability, retail, upscale, brand communities, social enterprise

1. INTRODUCTION

Tali ti Amianan or Ties that Bind, is a surfing social enterprise in La Union that is centered on being eco-friendly, local and handmade. Their products are based on collected beach trash and other materials such as old, worn out cotton tees or post-consumer canvas cloth. La Union is located 273 kms North of Manila, 57 kms Northwest of Baguio City. It is also 4 hours away from Laoag city. As of 2016, business establishments are comprised of 58% Manufacturing, 37% Trading, and 5% services where there is 91.80% employment rate. Based on 2015 NSO Projection, La Union has a population of 787, 797 with a 1.21% growth rate.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the first level of the triangle is the physiological need. Part of a person's physiological need is water. The concern for determining the basic or minimum water requirement for a person to maintain good health and proper sanitation comes about in the light of the current state of water resources and the growing scarcity against a rapidly rising population. The growing problem of sustainability of current use has become a matter of great importance. (Inocensio, Padilla, & Javier, 1999). According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) - Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2007 - Data 2000, is that in the Philippines, an average person would consume 172.5 liters of water per day. This includes the usage of the toilet and shower (teeth brushing, hand and face washing, face and leg shaving), the kitchen sink (food preparation and washing of dishes), the laundry (hand washing and laundry machine), and maintaining the lawn.

There are other sources of pollutants such as industrial wastewater, agricultural wastewater, and illegal dumping of wastes in or near bodies of water. According to data from the Philippine Environment Monitor (PEM) and the EMB, four regions had unsatisfactory ratings for their water quality criteria. These include the

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National Capital Region (NCR) or Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog Region (Region IV), Central Luzon (Region III), and Central Visayas (Region VII).

Now, the challenge is how brands and consumers alike would work hand in hand towards a more sustainable practice; where there is minimal to no harmful effect on the environment and the communities involved. The environmental benefits of recycling and upcycling are self-evident. Recovering materials reduces the need to produce those materials a second time around. That conserves vital resources. Recycling appears an easy win for companies too. Not only does it help reduce their overall footprint on the planet, but it appeals to business basics too. (Balch, 2012).

Turning waste such as scraps into reusable products started in the mid-2000s. A social enterprise – turned high end brand --- called Rags2Riches has their own way on dealing with the problem of pollution. The company aims not just to pay its workers better but to provide financial, educational and health training.

Moreso, we then relate the concept of brand communities in oceanic and environmental sustainability through social enterprises such as Tali Ti Amianan. A brand community is a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p.412) 7 and it represents a form of association embedded in the consumption context positioned around one product. These communities are composed of its member entities and their relationships and are identified by their commonalities which help people share essential resources, i.e. cognitive, emotional or material in nature. (Laroche, M., Habibi, M. R., Richard, M., & Sankaranarayanan, R. 2012).

2. MAIN CLAIM/S

PURPOSE

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the concept of brand community in surfing, particularly with regard to the behavior in buying local upscaled products such as Tali Ti Amianan. At this stage in the research, a brand community will be generally defined as like-minded consumers who identify with a particular brand and share significant traits. (Kalman, 2009). Tali Ti Amianan is a brand of products such as bracelets made from scrap materials by La Union locals. As with upcycling, it is defined as a process (used goods or waste material) so as to produce something that is often better than the original. (Dictionary.com, 2018).
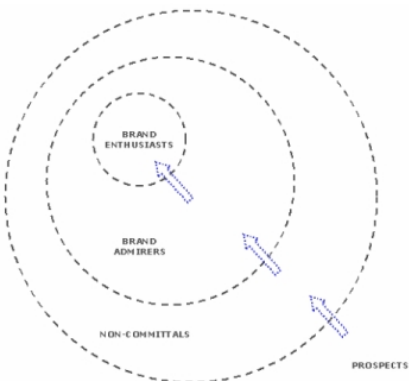
The first model considered in this paper is the brand community model. The brand community model for marketing includes prospects considering a brand choice, non committals who choose out of convenience or habit with no real preference, brand admirers who truly prefer a brand, and brand enthusiasts who both prefer and refer. (Kalman, 2009).

On Relationship Theory
Brands can and do serve as relationship partners, where the relationship (a) is a reciprocal exchange between the consumer and brand, (b) provides meaning to those engaged in the relationship, (c) can take many forms, and (d) may change / adapt over time. (Fournier, 1998).

Purpose Communication Hierarchy

In the same manner, the concept of Brand Archetypes is considered. This allows definition of an overarching personality for the brand, such as Tali Ti Amianan, that can be used to set an identity consumers that can be align with and which can be used to attract and retain such consumers to become loyal brand advocates. (Tribe Marketing, 2017).

DESIGN, METHODOLOGY, and APPROACH

As a qualitative paper, specifically of a phenomenological theme, the methodology consists of in depth interviews and multiple interviews with participants interviews were used in line with the data gathering from related literature.

3. PRESENTATION OF YOUR ARGUMENT

The main question of this research is to find the perceived value by consumers that lead to creation of brand communities. The center of which is on consuming upcycled products. It is important to note that in the value creation process, consumers are viewed as active, co-creators of value. (Goulding, Shankar, and Canniford, 2015).
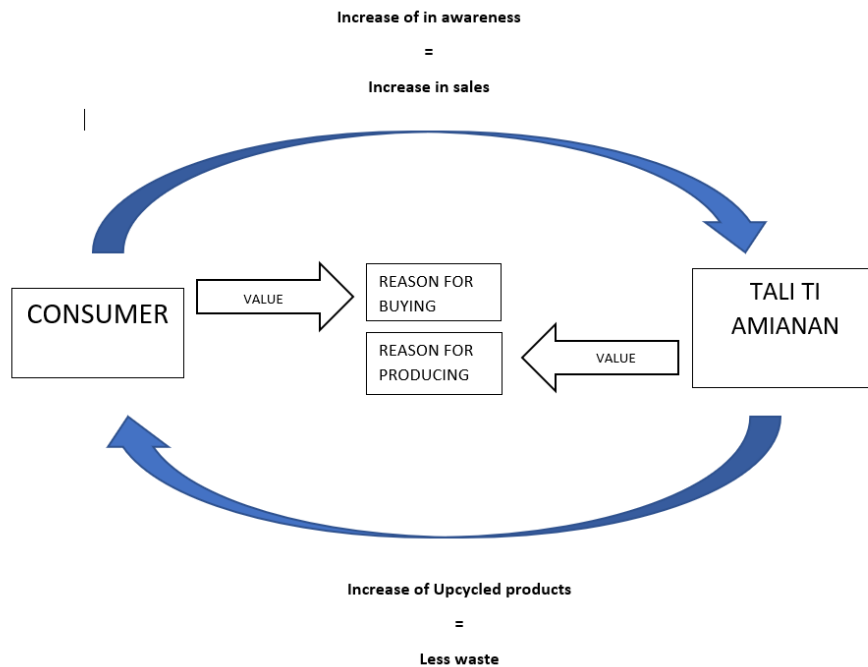
As in brand communities, tribal marketing challenges creative individuals who are prepared to abandon traditional demographic or psychographic means of segmenting and targeting markets to think outside of the box and get closer to the tribe. It is about leading and connecting generation "C", the connected collective with ideas and with each other. (Prankraz, 2009). However, in order to "talk" to the tribe or actively construct a tribe around a brand or experience we argue that it is important to understand the process of becoming a tribal member or how individuals become part of a collective. (Goudling, Shankar, and Canniford, 2013).

4. REPORT OF OPPOSING OR DIFFERING VIEWS

Based on consumer insight through in-depth interviews, the following statements are rated accordingly, with a likert scale from 1 to 7; 1 being the lowest and 7 being the highest. Statements are tallied from different respondents and often have common statements that have high rating. For the purpose of the research question, only the highest rated statements are shown in the tabulation.

Theme	Statement	Rate / Score
Environmentalism	I am concerned about the environment.	6, 7
Environmentalism	The condition of the environment affects the quality of my life.	6

Attitude Toward "Green" Products (Environmental Benefits)	Green products are good for the oceanic environment.	6, 7
Attitude Toward "Green" Products (Environmental Benefits)	Green products cannot help slow the deterioration of the oceanic environment.	6
Attitude Toward "Green" Products (Environmental Benefits)	Green products can effectively reduce water pollution.	6
Attachment to the Brand (Brand-Self Connection)	To what extent is Tali Ti Amianan part of you and who you are?	7
Attachment to the Brand (Brand-Self Connection)	To what extent do you feel emotionally bonded to Tali Ti Amianan?	7
Attachment to the Brand (Brand-Self Connection)	To what extent does Tali Ti Amianan say something to other people about who you are?	7

With these high-rated statements, the relationship theory is proven where 1) there is reciprocal and mutual exchange in the value that the consumer and the brand has. The product provides meaning to both parties; and as such, 2) Value can surpass the usual demographic factors; meaning, value is a common ground to which brands can maximise in order to serve as relationship partners. (Greenhalgh, and LeCrom, 2015). To unlock the full potential of brand communities, marketers must consider ways to add value to the consumer experience, earning the consumer's attention outside the context of the purchase or use of the brand. (Kalman, 2009).

5. CONCLUSION

Brand Communities, through Tribal Marketing, is an effective way to build awareness especially for products that serve a deeper purpose more than the profit-oriented business model. Since people tend to buy from brands with the same value as theirs, it is recommend that in marketing Green Upcycled products, it would be less exaggerated, less misleading and more real when it comes to enticing their market in purchasing their products. In this regard, it is also recommended that further studies dig deeper on sports fan behavior vis-a-vis environmental sustainability. This may include the usage of brand ambassadors in different sports.

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