

**Mediating Influences in Intracommunity Brand Engagement: The Performance of
Brand Faces and Brand Heroes on the Brand Stage**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National
University.

Statement of Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature: _____

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Date: _____

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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship that forms between brand communities and those faces and heroes that represent the brand organisation. Previous research has focused on the direct relationships that individuals form with celebrities in the form of imagined parasocial or pseudo-relationships. The marketing literature has focused on the influence those celebrities external to the organisation have in endorsing brands, considering endorser credibility, attractiveness and meanings. However, for brand communities, the brand faces and heroes are drawn from within the organisation and their importance lies in their contribution to the brand.

In order to explore this mediated relationship, where the brand is the focus of worship between brand communities and brand faces / heroes, two ethnographic studies were conducted. The first study was on the Discworld community, which is a fantasy / comedy book series with a single brand hero: the author, Terry Pratchett. The second was the Brumbies rugby union team based in Canberra Australia, which has multiple brand faces and heroes in the players, coaches and managers. Data collection followed the ethnographic style of researcher embeddedness and data analysis followed the procedures outlined in grounded theory. To triangulate the results of the qualitative studies, quantitative surveys were also conducted in each community.

The findings from these studies suggest three main thematic conclusions. The first is the confirmation of the brand as the mediator in the relationship between brand communities and brand faces / heroes. In this situation, a brand face is only considered heroic when they demonstrate their contribution to the brand and their willingness to uphold the same brand values that are important to the community. The second conclusion lies in the nature of brand hero authenticity, where consumers are active participants in the market system but seek brand value over commercial success. This is a constant tension between brand communities and brand organisations. However, brand heroes are those faces that are willing to forgo commercial concerns in order to advance key brand values. The final conclusion concerns the development of the brand community theatre model, which outlines the various roles that brand faces enact with

the brand community in a constant negotiation of brand values in a performance metaphor.

The first contribution that this thesis makes to marketing theory is the brand face / hero concept, where relationships are formed via a brand proxy. An additional contribution is the confirmation that brand authenticity is based on a perceived distance from the market system. For brand communities, genuine sacredness exists within the brand rather than within the market. Marketers need to be seen to be advancing brand values rather than simply achieving commercial success. Finally, a new model of brand meaning negotiation is developed using a performance metaphor that extends beyond the individual levels outlined in McAlexander et al.'s (2002) model. The model proposed in this thesis includes group level negotiation between organisations and brand communities and allows individuals to become increasingly active in brand value negotiation.

Statement of Publication

Work originating from this thesis has been published in the following articles and conference papers:

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore the relationship between a social network formed to worship a brand (a brand community) and those figures recognised for their involvement in the brand's creation and production (brand faces/heroes). It is the contention of this thesis that interactions between the brand community and the company include the people within the company. In this context companies and marketers are not treated as an intangible entity but as the 'faces' that constitute the people behind the brand. Within this thesis the term brand face refers to any person who is representative of the brand, with the brand hero being a specific type of brand face who is endowed with mythical narratives, which are sacred or magical stories beyond the profane commercial activities surrounding their brand contribution (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry 1989).

The thesis extends the existing understanding of social networks associated with brands and those involved in representing the brand by recognising that a relationship is formed between these two groups. This bridges the gap between the brand community and marketing literature in this area. The brand community literature focuses on the individual's relationship to the community and the brand, while the marketing and management literature focuses on employees' contributions to the brand or their influence in representing the brand to a mass audience. Brand communities are an interesting phenomenon to investigate as they comprise individuals who are highly committed and involved in the brand, and who are more likely to engage in co-creation activities, attend brand related events and seek to interact with representatives of the brand. This close association that both the brand community and brand faces have with the brand means that understanding the relationship will enhance marketer's knowledge of how brand values are formed and negotiated between the two groups. Brand value negotiation is the process where brand communities develop shared understanding, skills and commitment (Schau, Muniz and Arnould 2009).

This chapter will introduce the motivation for this study in greater detail, and present an overview of the contents of the thesis. Firstly, an overview of the key areas of the literature that inform this study is presented and the research questions are summarised. Following this is a review of the methods, results, and contributions to knowledge. Finally, the scope and limitations of this research are discussed and an overview of the thesis structure is presented.

1.2 Motivation for Study

The aim of this research is to understand the relationship between brand communities and brand faces. Brand communities are groups of consumers who are highly involved in the consumption experience of the brand (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). Brand faces are involved in creating, managing or influencing the consumption experience (Eagar 2009). The theoretical motivation of this research is to understand how two groups who are highly invested in a brand interact, relate and negotiate brand meaning and value when each group is driven by differing imperatives. Brand communities are motivated by a re-enchantment of consumption (Firat 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995) where consumers seek social connection (Cova and Cova 2002; Kozinets 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995) and to establish an authentic self (Holt 2002; Kozinets 2001). In contrast, brand faces are based in the market system where the imperative is profit, market share and growth (Firat and Shultz 1997; Kotler et al. 2004).

The existing literature has a limited identification of brand face influence in brand communities. This influence is recognised where particular brand faces have been identified by the community as influential to either the brand's management (Múniz and Schau 2005), or the interpretation of brand meaning (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Hills 2002; Kozinets 2001), or as figures of worship at a distance (Schau and Múniz 2007). The identification of these figures has been treated as a secondary concern in understanding the brand community's relationship to the brand and there has been no systematic investigation of the relationship to the brand face. It should also be noted that the brand faces identified in previous literature have generally been imbued with heroic status through their mythos of contribution to the brand's success (Belk and Tumbat

2005). For marketers, there is benefit in knowing who and why some figures are endowed with these mythical qualities and what influence this has on brand value. This thesis explores these issues.

Marketers have used brand faces in their communication efforts through means such as celebrity CEOs who represent the company to various stakeholders (Gunther and Grandy 2009; Hayward, Rindova, and Pollock 2004), or brand heroes as guests of honour at brand related events such as fan conventions (McAlexander and Schouten 1998; Nygard 1997). The celebrity CEO strategy limits who in the organisation the brand community may see as important to the brand, so this thesis looks not only at these leadership figures, but beyond them as well. The guest of honour technique is popular in certain product categories such as entertainment and sporting brands, and has the potential to be adopted by any brand attempting to communicate with their community of consumers. This thesis will consider the effectiveness of brand faces in forming an ongoing relationship with the brand community and managing the disparate motivations of the company and the community.

1.3 Overview of Literature

1.3.1 Branding

The underlying area of marketing that this thesis is contributing to is the understanding of brands (Aaker and Keller 1990; Keller 2001; Kotler et al. 2004), particularly the perspective that brands are symbols of attachment to identity (Aaker and Fournier 1995; Belk 1988; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Firat 1991). This perspective of brand as symbols of identity includes the idea that these identities include the social networks that consumers form around their consumption practices (Cova and Cova 2002; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Veloutsou 2009). As brands are mediators of social interactions, this thesis focuses on brands as a mediator between the organisation and the brand community, extending previous research which has focused on how brands mediate the relationship between consumers.

1.3.2 Brand Community

The recognition that brands act as symbols of identity and as mediators of social interactions has been acknowledged by a range of authors (Aaker and Fournier 1995; Ahuvia 1992; Belk 1988; Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Ouwersloot and Odekerken-Schröder 2008). This thesis focuses on the particular type of social network referred to as a “brand community”. A brand community is “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand” (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001, p.412). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), in their study of a geographic network of consumers, identify three main aspects of brand community: (1) consciousness of kind, (2) presence of rituals and traditions, and (3) a sense of moral obligation. McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig (2002) extend this with a fourth feature of brand community: being customer-centric.

The brand community concept is placed within a wider literature of branded social networks which includes subcultures of consumption, consumer tribes and fandoms. Subcultures of consumption considers groups of individuals self-selected for their commitment to a product class, brand, or consumption activity (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Consumer tribes refers to an over-arching concept that includes brand communities and subcultures of consumption (Cova and Cova 2002). Consumer tribes use branded objects to actively re-establish and negotiate their attachment to the social world (Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007). Finally, fandom is an alternate conceptualisation that derives from sociology and tends to focus on categorising the types of fan behaviour, while conceptually this is useful these categories are limiting in understanding how consumers negotiate their membership to fan communities (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; Brooker and Brooker 1996; Hills 2002).

These existing perspectives all consider the branded social network to be an individually negotiated experience. That is, that each individual encounters and experiences the brand, community, product and marketer from their own perspective. It is through their experience with these other components that a shared sense of meaning,

values, and rituals are developed (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). This thesis extends this understanding to examine the role of the community in the negotiated experience of all members through a brand theatre metaphor. The theatre metaphor extends traditional western conceptualisations of the theatre that place the consumer as the passive audience and the company as the controlling and focal actor (Grove, Fisk, and Dorsch 1998; Lancaster 1997; Williams and Anderson 2005). Within this metaphor the brand becomes the stage in which brand faces and the brand community engage in a performance to negotiate brand values. As brand communities tend to be more engaged with the brand and brand faces involved in its creation and management, they are assumed to be active participants in the theatrical performance (Lancaster 1997). This active role in the performance is different to the application of theatre metaphors in other marketing areas, especially in services marketing which places the customer as a participant in the service experience but ultimately as passive receivers of that experience (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; Grove et al. 1998; Williams and Anderson 2005). Within this thesis the brand community is an active participant in negotiating and creating brand values and experiences with brand faces.

1.3.3 Commercial Mythology

The theatre metaphor enables the incorporation of narratives that various actors are engaged in to establish brand value. These narratives include the notion of the heroic figure, which is based on an understanding of heroism in mythological narratives. Existing consumer research on brand heroes is limited to the peripheral role they play in the brand community's understanding of brand values, ignoring their influence as actors in establishing brand values. (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schau and Múniz 2007).

The importance of Steve Jobs to the Apple community is one of the most well-known examples of a brand hero, which have been identified by two prior studies (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Múniz and Schau 2005). Belk and Tumbat (2005) identify the heroic narrative of Steve Jobs within the Apple community's cult-like behaviour, however,

rather than as a co-creator of brand value Steve Jobs' heroism is given as evidence of religiosity of the community. Similarly, Múniz and Schau (2005) identify the importance of Steve Jobs as the figure identified by the community with ultimate responsibility for brand decisions. However, this research has not focused on how the power of the brand hero over the brand affects the brand community and the community's relationship with the hero and the brand.

Schau and Múniz (2007) also identify the relationship between a brand community and a brand hero in their study of the Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers community (TPATH). They propose that the community achieves the sacred experience of Tom Petty through a proxy relationship with the brand rather than through proximity. This thesis proposes that the relationship between the brand community and the brand hero is mediated by this proxy relationship with the brand. However, placing the brand as the proxy of the relationship means that brand meaning is constantly being negotiated by the community and the brand hero. Due to the lack of research into how this mediated relationship forms and is negotiated this thesis will focus on exploring this association.

The existence of the sacred in consumption has been a long debated topic (Belk et al. 1989; Boorstin 1964; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schau and Múniz 2007). Traditional mythological research has focused on the narratives surrounding gods and the supernatural (Bascom 1965; Boorstin 1964; Campbell 1986, 1988; Csapo 2005; Davis 2005; Detienne 1981/86). Much of this research places the heroic narrative as an historic or distant figure and it is through these properties that a hero achieves sacred status (Bascom 1965; Davis 2005; Detienne 1981/86). However, a more useful interpretation of the commercially sacred heroic figure is that the hero is considered sacred depending on their centrality to society (Csapo 2005). As the market system is a central foundation of modern western culture those figures who are identified as successful within this system are likely to be considered heroic (Boorstin 1964; Campbell 1949).

The differentiation of ordinary man and the heroic figure has been studied from a sociological and psychological perspective (Boorstin 1964; Campbell 1949; Jung 1964).

The heroic narrative involves the separation of the hero from the normal world, their triumph over adversity and the return of the hero with a “boon” for the world. The commercial nature of the brand hero means that this heroic narrative reflects the market system in which they exist, where the hero leaves the consumer world to become a producer to create / deliver the brand to the brand community.

This commercial narrative is based on Campbell's (1949) monomyth formula of separation – initiation – return. However, there is an argument that a hero is a fundamentally non-commercial being and that any relationship between a hero and the modern market system renders them synthetic and celebrity (Boorstin 1964). This tension between the commercial and profane and the mythic and sacred has resulted in difficulty in defining heroes, celebrities and their mythological narratives (Arnould and Price 1993; Belk et al. 1989; Campbell 1988; Caughey 1978). This thesis distinguishes between brand heroes and celebrities based on the mediated relationship that exists with brand heroes, where the brand acts as a proxy for the brand community's sacred experience (Schau and Múniz 2007). Celebrity, in contrast, is formed by a direct, if imagined, relationship with their audience (Caughey 1984; Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956). This difference will be explored further in the following section.

For brand heroes, their sacred narratives are based on their contribution to the brand and the brand community and their mythology is created around the commercial setting of the market. However, if the modern capitalist system is considered as a valid site for mythical narratives (Belk et al. 1989; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001), then the distinction between heroes as authentic and celebrities as synthetic (Boorstin 1964) becomes less tenable. The nature of the relationship becomes a determining factor between hero and celebrity.

1.3.4 Parasocial Relationships

This thesis differentiates between brand heroes and celebrities on the basis of the relationship formed with the audience. Celebrities are assumed to form unidirectional

direct relationships with their audience based on their personal and professional characteristics as described within the psychology, sociological and marketing research literature (Boon and Lomore 2001; Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956; Kahle and Homer 1985; McCracken 1989; McCutcheon, Lange, and Houran 2002). Brand heroes are assumed to form a relationship with the brand community based on a shared interest in a brand through a relationship of proxy based on the hero's contribution to the brand (Schau and Múniz 2007).

The underlying principle of the imagined relationship with a media figure is known as a parasocial or pseudo-relationship (Caughey 1978, 1984; Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956). Psychological research into parasocial relationships has tended to assume that forming an imagined relationship with a celebrity is detrimental to a person's mental health (McCutcheon et al. 2002; Rubin, Perse, and Powell 1985). Even though studies found that some level of celebrity worship is a normal and wide-spread phenomenon, parasocial research persists in associating celebrity worship with negative psychological outcomes (Eyal and Rubin 2003; Giles and Maltby 2004; Maltby et al. 2004b; Maltby et al. 2006; Maltby et al. 2004a; Maltby et al. 2005; Rubin et al. 1985; Rubin and Step 2000; Sood and Rogers 2000). As the parasocial perspective is derived from a positivistic tradition, it also allows for the measurement of these imagined relationships. However, this focus on measuring the potential negative psychological consequences of extreme celebrity worship has ignored the role of celebrities in normal social relationships (Caughey 1978). There is also no consideration that a celebrity may be admired for what they have produced rather than for their imagined persona, this seems to take the celebrity out of context. This is the key difference assumed in this these between a celebrity and a brand face / hero; a celebrity is worshipped for their individual attributes, whereas a brand face / hero is admired because of their contribution to a brand.

In contrast to the psychological focus on the abnormal psychology of celebrity worship, the sociological perspective of pseudo-relationships assumes that individuals can form different types of relationships in which they can act out various narratives not available through everyday life (Caughey 1978, 1987, 1994). From this perspective forming an imagined social relationship with the brand hero is likely to have positive social

outcomes for the individual and potentially the brand community. However, there is limited ability to measure these types of love, hate, like and mentor pseudo-relationships. The lack of research into these types of relationships limits its potential to develop measurable constructs and relationships. However, it does provide a basis for the assertion that consumers can form a different relationship with a brand face than a brand hero.

The most recent conceptualisation of these relationships is that they are based on an absorption – addiction model of worship (McCutcheon et al. 2002). Within this model, the more absorbed a person becomes in an imagined relationship, the more addictive the behaviours become to support this relationship, and as this cycle of absorption and addiction continues, it results in a greater level of psychological distortion. Scales have been developed from this psychological perspective to differentiate a “normal” level of celebrity worship and more pathological types of behaviours and attitudes (McCutcheon et al. 2002; Perse and Rubin 1989; Rubin and McHugh 1987; Sood and Rogers 2000; Stever 1991; Turner 1993). While it has been speculated that individuals involved in fan communities are likely to display higher level of celebrity worship, this has yet to be tested (Maltby et al. 2004b). The proxy relationship formed with brand heroes may mean that brand worship will mediate the parasocial relationship effects on brand community outcomes.

Related to the parasocial relationships formed with brand heroes is the notion of the authentic hero. The celebrity endorsement literature focuses on drawing celebrities from an external media context to promote a brand or product (McCracken 1989), which has led to concerns about identifying credible, attractive and symbolically similar celebrities (Cronley et al. 1999; Kahle and Homer 1985; Kamins 1990; McCracken 1989; Speck, Schumann, and Thompson 1988). Within the brand community, the effectiveness of the hero is as a representative of the brand, and depends on the relationship with the brand. Only those figures who are seen as having an authentic relationship with the brand will be considered heroes (Holt 2002).

The literature that has been presented in this section forms the basis of the research questions explored in this thesis. The development of these questions will be discussed in the following section.

1.4 Research Question Development

The central area of enquiry for the thesis is the relationship between brand communities and those individuals recognised for their contribution in producing the brand. This is couched in the theatre metaphor extending an existing understanding of these interactions as a continual negotiation of meaning in a dramatic narrative (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; Lancaster 1997; Williams and Anderson 2005). Within the theatre metaphor brand faces and heroes enact the role of brand actors and the brand community composes the audience. However, as the interactions are largely mediated or imagined the relationship between these roles will be explored. Existing brand community research envisions the community as an individually negotiated milieu (Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann 2005; Cova and Pace 2006; Drewett 2008; Füller, Matzler, and Hoppe 2008; McAlexander, Kim, and Roberts 2003; McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schau, Múniz, and Arnold 2009; Schouten, McAlexander, and Koenig 2007b). This thesis takes an alternate perspective where brand value is a socially negotiated drama between the brand community and brand faces. This leads to the central question of this thesis:

The central question:

What influence do brand faces have within brand communities where the interactions between brand actor and audience are limited, imaginary or idealised as part of an ongoing brand performance?

A number of sub-questions are developed from this principal question. As this central question is relatively new and there aren't established theoretical constructs on which to base testable research questions the focus of this thesis is exploratory and the sub research questions reflect this. The first research question is based on the on the interaction between brand communities and brand heroes (Algesheimer et al. 2005; Cova and Pace 2006; Drewett 2008; Füller et al. 2008; McAlexander et al. 2003; McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schau et al. 2009; Schouten et al. 2007b).

Research Question 1

What is the nature of the interaction between a brand hero and the brand community?

Findings for Research Question 1 are presented in Chapter 4.

The second research question is based on the importance of heroic narratives in developing and continuing brand values within the brand community (Bascom 1965; Belk and Tumbat 2005; Belk et al. 1989; Campbell 1986, 1988; Csapo 2005; Davis 2005; Detienne 1981/86).

Research Question 2

What are the brand community narratives about their brand hero and what influence do these have on the community?

Findings for Research Question 2 are presented in Chapter 6.

Research Question 3 explores the tension that exists for brand heroes in the commercial imperatives of the brand and the sacred myths desired by the brand community (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Belk et al. 1989; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schau and Múniz 2007). This extends existing understandings of the sacred and the profane beyond the consumption experience to consumer's relationship with producers.

Research Question 3

How is the brand hero sacred and commercial as opposed to the brand face who is profane and everyday?

Research Question 3 findings are presented in Chapter 7.

Research Question 4 addresses the assumption that heroes and celebrities are different phenomena and as such the relationship between the brand hero and the brand community will be fundamentally different to that formed with a celebrity (Boorstin 1964; Caughey 1978, 1984; Dames 2001; Kozinets 2002b).

Research Question 4

How do brand heroes differ from celebrities? In what ways does this influence the relationship between the brand community and the brand hero?

The findings for Research Question 4 are presented in Chapter 5.

Expanding on the notion that brand heroes are different to celebrities, Research Question 5 explores how the concept of celebrity endorsement, especially endorser credibility and attractiveness, translates to the brand hero situation (Friedman, Termini, and Washington 1976; Kahle and Homer 1985; Langmeyer and Walker 1991; McCracken 1989; Speck et al. 1988; Tripp, Jensen, and Carlson 1994). There is a lack of research into the importance of source credibility in the brand face and hero contexts, this questions aims to explore whether these concepts are appropriate and their incorporation into mythology.

Research Question 5

Are credibility and attractiveness important to the brand face and brand hero concepts? How are they incorporated into brand hero mythology?

Findings for Research Question 5 are discussed in Chapter 5.

Research Question 6 explores the dichotomy between the brand hero's mythological self versus their experienced self (Caughey 1984; Horton and Wohl 1956; Schau and Múniz 2007). This is an important area of negotiation where brand communities attempt to keep the narratives of the mythical brand hero congruent with the narratives of members who have met the real person (Schau and Múniz 2007).

Research Question 6

Are the brand hero and brand mythology congruent and what effect does this have on the brand community?

Results for Research Question 6 are presented in Chapter 7.

In continuing the theme that the brand hero is different to a celebrity, Research Question 7 addresses the notion of worship and the differences that exist between the two situations (Eyal and Rubin 2003; Giles and Maltby 2004, 2006; Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956; Maltby et al. 2004b; Maltby et al. 2006; Maltby et al. 2004a; Maltby et al. 2005; Maltby et al. 2002; Perse and Rubin 1989; Rubin and McHugh 1987; Rubin et al. 1985; Rubin and Step 2000; Turner 1993). While the concepts of brand hero and celebrity have been shown to be different in the literature, there may be no difference in the worshipping behaviours around the two types of imagined relationship, that is, entertainment-social, intense-personal and borderline pathological. The following question aims to understand if there are behavioural differences in brand hero and celebrity worship.

Research Question 7

How is brand hero worship different to celebrity worship?

The findings for Research Question 7 are presented in Chapter 7.

The final research question extends Research Question 7 by exploring the impact that brand hero worship has on brand community outcomes (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Belk et al. 1989; Maltby et al. 2002; McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). This question considers brand outcomes of involvement and commitment and social outcomes of social identity salience and future membership intention. While this is a limited number of impacts they represent the core areas of brand community outcomes from previous literature. Brand outcomes represent the ongoing concern for the brand

(involvement) and consumer's affective, cognitive and behavioural attachment to the brand (brand commitment). Social outcomes represent the identity integration of brand community involvement (social identity salience) and a continuing behavioural commitment to the community (future membership intention). These constructs were selected to represent the psychological, identity and behavioural outcomes as identified in previous research.

Research Question 8

What impact does brand hero worship have on the brand community?

Findings for Research Question 8 are presented in Chapter 8. Findings for these questions are summarised and discussed in the concluding chapter where thematic conclusions are drawn and discussed.

1.5 Summary of Method

The thesis applies both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches. Due to the exploratory nature of the central research question, the work is predominantly qualitative, using the ethnographic approach often employed in the study of branded social networks (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Kozinets 2001; McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). The lack of existing theory in this context requires a descriptive perspective to explore the community and cultural context and also the understanding of the process of building and maintaining brand communities. Grounded theory is drawn upon in terms of theoretical sampling and analysis techniques, and it also informs the theory development undertaken in the discussion chapter of this thesis. More specifically, the grounded theory approach is applied for theoretical case selection and analysis techniques (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and ethnography as a basis for embedded participation in a complex social organization in data collection (Goulding 2005). These were considered the most appropriate methods as narratives about the brand were constantly generated, negotiated and perpetuated by the brand community and the

company. Using Nvivo the analysis method applied was to open-code data, build categories and through systematic comparison develop theoretical constructs and relationships.

Two research sites were selected to represent disparate brand community structures – a community focused on a single, consistent central brand hero figure, and a community associated with a consistent branded team structure consisting of different hero and face roles. The first site represents a single brand hero as a central figure in the brand narrative, with Terry Pratchett as the author of the Discworld series. There are multiple brand faces that embody support roles to the hero. The other distinguishing feature of Discworld is that it is a global brand where the marketing effort is disjointed across each country's market. The second site of exploration is the Brumbies rugby union team, which has multiple brand heroes. Some of the players are viewed as central to the Brumbies success while others are considered as support cast. Other roles are fulfilled by back stage faces, such as the coach and management. The Brumbies have coordinated marketing concentrated on the Canberra region in Australia, where the team is based.

The brand communities themselves both represent experiential products. Both sites were chosen for their convenience of entrée and the author's experience with the product category or brand. Both sites demonstrated a strong focus on using brand faces as a communication technique with their respective brand communities. Within these brand communities and producers was a strong sense of community, mythology and potential celebrity. This allowed the exploration of key variables identified in the research questions. While both sites being experiential products may limit the applicability of the theory development to non-experiential products this should be minimised as theory is generalised to the community level rather than the product level.

Data gathering in the Discworld community was conducted over a period of six years and involved an embedded ethnographic study of three online forums, 25 real world interviews, 30 online interviews, interviews with the author, attendance at a three-day convention and three book-signing events, as well as informal community meet-ups in

Australia, the UK, and Germany. Data collection for the Brumbies case was conducted over a five year period and was also ethnographic with attendance at games, meet-the-player events and interviews with marketing staff. This case also used secondary marketing data from the Brumbies, including game guides published for every home game, the season guides and the Brumbies website (www.brumbies.com.au).

Two quantitative surveys were also conducted to further understand the implications of the parasocial relationships identified by the literature and the qualitative findings. A quantitative survey was conducted in both sites to understand the appropriateness of an existing parasocial relationship measure and the impact of this worship behavior on brand community outcomes.

1.6 Ethical Considerations

All research reported in this thesis received ethical clearance from the relevant authority at the Australian National University. When conducting interviews or surveys all respondents were given consent letters that can be viewed in Appendices A-F. See Table 1.1 for a list of approved ethics protocols. These letters outlined the purpose of the research, that the information collected was for academic purposes and would not be used or given to a third party, that respondent information would be kept confidential and secure and gave the researcher's contact information. Ethics protocols were followed in the data collection, analysis, storage, and reporting of research of humans.

One of the major ethical considerations in the data collection for this thesis was in the ethnographic studies where the researcher is required to embed their presence within the social network. Achieving this embeddedness had various difficulties. Within the online ethnographies my first post outlined my research purpose and in the signature section of all of my posts was a link to the consent letter. All face-to-face interviewees were verbally informed of my research purpose and ethical considerations and signed a consent letter. However, in the Brumbies study conducted at the game, where there were upwards of 15,000 people in attendance, informing all potential respondents was not possible. When I engaged in direct conversations with other attendees at the game I

informed them verbally of my research purpose and got verbal agreement from respondents. The data collected has been de-identified and respondent information has been kept confidential.

Table 1.1 Ethics Approval Protocols

Ethics Approval Number	Ethics Title	Appendix
2004/0319	Word of Mouth in Brand Communities - The participant's perspective	A
2004/0294	Word of Mouth in Brand Communities - The author's perspective	B
2006/0206	Fan - Brand Hero relationships in the Discworld Brand Community	C
2007/0058	Celebrity Attitude Scale effects on the behaviours of Discworld fans	D
2006/0075	Fan - Brand Hero relationships in the Brumbies Rugby Club	E
2008/128	Brand hero worship of Brumbies players by the brumbies fan community and the effect on brand and social outcomes	F

1.7 Summary of Findings

This section will provide an overview of the findings for the research questions presented earlier. Each of the sub-questions will be addressed first and then the theoretical findings for the central research question of this thesis will be summarised.

1.7.1 Research Question 1: What is the nature of the interaction between a brand hero and the brand community?

The three key determinates of the interaction between the brand community and their brand hero(es) are that the relationship is indelibly tied to the brand, the brand hero is ultimately judged on their association with the brand, and appraisal of a potential hero's

performance is based on those brand values that are important to the brand community. The results confirm that interaction between the brand hero and the brand community is mediated by the brand. Detailed findings for this question are presented in Chapter 4.

1.7.2 Research Question 2: What are the brand community narratives about their brand hero and what influence do these have on the community?

The mythological narratives suggest a strong link between the hero's contribution to the brand's performance and maintaining brand values in perceptions of heroism. While the hero may be admired for bringing a brand to the market they are attributed truly magical status if they can maintain the brand's values despite commercial pressures. This question was addressed in depth in findings in Chapter 6 where the mythological narratives of Terry Pratchett as a central brand hero figure and the concurrent performance and hero narratives of the Brumbies were explored.

1.7.3 Research Question 3: How is the brand hero sacred and commercial as opposed to the brand face who is profane and everyday?

The proxy worship of the brand hero coincides with a desire for a sense of proximity, and the perceived proximity creates myths of accessibility for the brand hero that has positive impacts on their credibility. Conversely, this proximity can undermine the sacred narratives that surround the heroic figure with the profane reality of the person as a representative of a commercial symbol. This is outlined further in Chapter 7.

1.7.4 Research Question 4: How do brand heroes differ from celebrities? In what ways does this influence the relationship between the brand community and the brand hero?

The brand hero is a reflection of what the community believes about itself and wants to believe about the brand hero. This fundamentally idealised vision of the brand hero, the brand and the brand community can cause tension with reality. Based on the psychological perspective of celebrities individuals form a parasocial relationship with the celebrity (Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956), whereas previous brand community research has identified that people form relationships with a brand which then forms a proxy for their relationship with producers (Schau and Múniz 2007). This finding reinforces the mediated relationship found in the brand community literature and expands it to include the idealised reflection between brand face and brand. It also expands both the psychological and brand community literature to include the reality of the brand face, not just the mythology or imagined relationship. This question is addressed in Chapter 5 where findings have implications for how the brand mediated relationship is formed and reveal that there is a process of image reciprocity between brand heroes and the brand community

1.7.5 Research Question 5: Are credibility and attractiveness important to the brand face and brand hero concepts? How are they incorporated into brand hero mythology?

There are three elements that influence the transition of the brand face to a credible brand hero: (1) legitimacy of their contribution to the brand's performance, (2) integrity in maintaining brand values, and (3) affinity to the brand community. This influences the brand hero mythology through the focus of the narratives on the brand and the community. There is also an emphasis on the non-commercial credibility of the hero rather than on a simple market success narrative. This is outlined further in the findings in Chapter 7.

1.7.6 Research Question 6: Are the brand hero and brand mythology congruent and what effect does this have on the brand community?

There is a tension between this constructed myth and the reality of the brand hero. This tension is most often highlighted through proximity of the brand hero to the brand community where the community is confronted with the reality of the person in juxtaposition to the idealised mythology. The two main tensions that exist between myths about the person are (1) the idealised person versus the flawed reality, and (2) inconsistencies between the non-commercial myth and the commercial reality. This is discussed further in Chapter 7.

1.7.7 Research Question 7: How is brand hero different to celebrity worship?

Entertainment-Social levels of worship were found to be relevant, and no evidence of higher levels of worship was found when compared to celebrity worship behaviour. Post-survey interviews found three possible explanations: (1) brand hero specific items are needed to capture higher levels of worship, (2) brand worship is a mediating factor, and (3) there may be a social norm influence to moderate higher levels of worship displayed by individuals. The findings for this question were based on a quantitative study conducted in the Discworld community presented in Chapter 7.

1.7.8 Research Question 8: What impact does brand hero worship have on the brand community?

Brand worship significantly and positively influences brand community outcomes (Brand: involvement and commitment; Community: social identity salience and future membership intention), but brand hero worship significantly affects brand worship only and has no significant direct effects on brand and community outcomes. This supports previous findings that the brand hero – brand community relationship is mediated by the

brand. This research question was addressed with two quantitative studies of the Discworld and Brumbies communities presented in Chapter 8.

1.8 Contributions to Knowledge

There are three main areas of thematic findings for this thesis that contribute to existing knowledge: (1) the brand-mediated relationship between the brand hero and the brand community, (2) the heroic mythology inside of the (ignored) commercial enterprise, and (3) brand community theatre and socially negotiated brand values. The thematic findings presented in this section address the central research question:

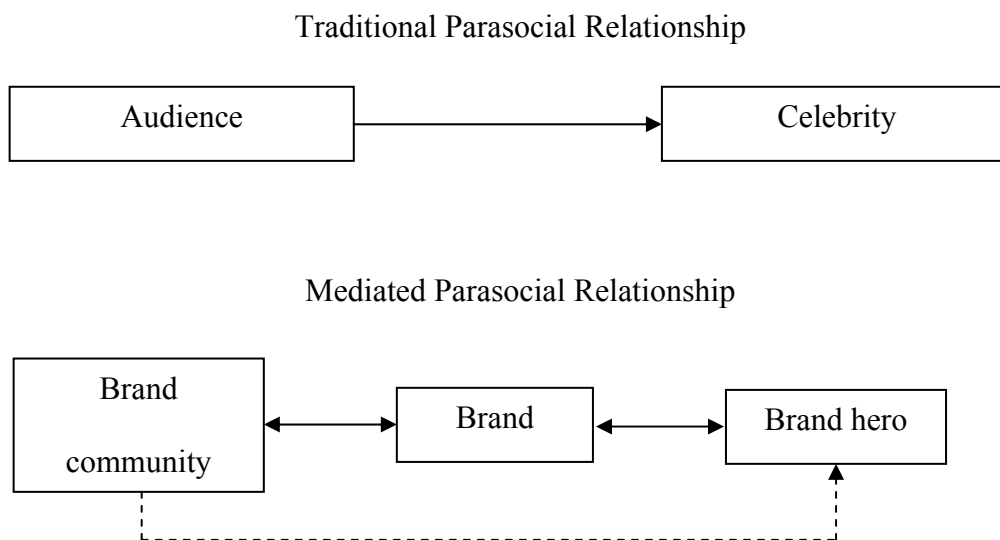
What influence do brand faces have within brand communities where the interactions between brand actor and audience are limited, imaginary or idealised as part of an ongoing brand performance?

1.8.1 Mediated Parasocial Relationships

Existing conceptualisations of the relationships that an audience form with a media figure assume that they are directly formed (Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956; McCutcheon et al. 2002; Perse and Rubin 1989; Turner 1993). The findings of this thesis, through the ethnographic studies and the quantitative confirmation, suggest that brand heroes differ from these media figures or celebrities because the relationship that the brand community forms with them is mediated by the brand. The brand hero's imagined persona is based on their mythology and credibility in contributing to the brand's values and these are perceived through the individual's understanding of the brand. This finding is important as some brand faces may be considered celebrities by a mainstream audience and their individual persona is the basis for this relationship. However, within a brand community they may be considered a brand hero; in this case the relationship is based on their contribution to the brand. For example, Tom Petty may be considered a celebrity to a wider audience but his heroism for the TPATH community is based on his contribution to the brand (Schau and Múniz 2007). For

instance, the TPATH brand values of faith, fidelity and family are reinforced through the community's discussion of Tom Petty, particularly his music and how his life has influenced this. Stories that fall outside these values that may appeal to a wider audience, such as possible drug use or sex with female fans are discouraged within the community, as not conforming to community values or of emphasising a proximity relationship (i.e. Groupies) over the community's proxy relationship with Tom Petty through his music. Communicating celebrity and brand heroism requires a differing emphasis depending on the audience. This is depicted in Figure 1.1, where the one-way arrows represent the imagined relationships, whereas the two-way arrows depict an actual interaction.

Figure 1.1 Celebrity and Brand Hero Parasocial Relationships



The model presented above summarises the theoretical contribution of this thesis, Existing models of imagined relationship emphasise a direct relationship with a celebrity (Boon and Lomore 2001; Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956; Kahle and Homer 1985; McCutcheon, Lange, and Houran 2002). This means that irrespective of the celebrities body of work or for what they are well known for (Boorstin 1964) the audience is interested in and forms a relationship with the imagined persona. Marketing research has established that consumers form long term, psychological and sociologically based relationships with brands (Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000; Aaker and Fournier 1995). As a component of the relationships that consumers form with brands, it has been proposed that this includes the producer

(McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002). While, research into brand communities has identified that producers as faces are important to brand communities (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Múniz and Schau 2005), this research considers how an imagined relationship forms with producers when the lense through which the relationship is formed is the brand. This provides an important contribution to linking consumers and producers in a relationship context rather than as simply exchange partners (Lusch and Vargo 2006).

1.8.2 Authenticity in Brand Heroes

The findings from this thesis also extend existing understandings of the authentic-sacred consumer experience. Holt (2002) conceptualises authenticity in consumption as the brand distancing itself from the market through a number of strategies. This thesis finds that brand faces representing the brand also need to distance themselves from commercial motivations to be viewed as authentic and possibly heroic figures. This is in contrast to Boorstin's (1964) view that all modern media figures are essentially artificial and lack the greatness needed for heroism. This view is based on the nostalgic view that the modern industrial society is unsympathetic to the hero (Campbell 1988; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). This thesis shows that the commercial and the heroic are not mutually exclusive, rather the commercial heroic narrative is couched in the brand values of the community rather than the commercial imperatives of the organisation, which is consistent with current consumer research (Arnould and Price 1993; Belk et al. 1989; Kassarian 1987).

1.8.3 Brand Community Theatre Metaphor

The final theoretical contribution of this thesis is in the development of the brand community theatre metaphor to describe the process of brand value negotiation between the brand community and brand faces. Previous conceptualisations of brand community negotiation have placed the individual consumer as the focus of the community experience (McAlexander et al. 2002). The brand community theatre metaphor developed in this thesis places various actors from the brand community and the

organisation into various roles and they enact the brand narrative by taking protagonist and antagonist positions to the actions of other actors. This extends the theatre metaphor as it has applied to service marketing by placing brand community members as active participants in developing brand value (Lancaster 1997) rather than as more passive participants in a single service encounter (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; Grove et al. 1998; Williams and Anderson 2005). This extends the understanding of the brand community experience by placing it as the essentially social relationship between community members, the brand and the brand faces that represent the brand. Within this context none of these actors has complete control of the narrative to direct the ultimate brand values that emerge.

1.9 Scope and Limitations

The scope of this thesis considers the relationship that forms between a brand community and brand faces that represent the brand. It does not consider the relationship that these brand faces may form with the wider audience of the market. Brand community members are more highly involved and have a greater interest in brand information, events and values (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). The general market is more likely to represent the direct, media represented, parasocial relationships that have already been explored in the literature (Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956; McCutcheon et al. 2002).

This thesis also only considers brand faces and brand heroes as those figures who are internal to the brand and who have contributed to the brand's creation, management, or consumption experience (Eagar 2009). Existing endorsement literature in marketing assumes that the spokesperson is external to the brand, thus their credibility, attractiveness and symbolic meaning is based on their association with other media texts (Friedman et al. 1976; Kahle and Homer 1985; Langmeyer and Walker 1991; McCracken 1989; Speck et al. 1988; Tripp et al. 1994). The assumption of this thesis is that the brand face is internally generated and their effectiveness in communicating with the brand community is based on their association with the brand rather than external sources.

Limitations of this thesis include the number of cases studied. The two cases sampled represent two types of brand community / brand hero scenario; other combinations may exist that would extend our understanding of these relationships. Another limitation is that brand hero mythology and credibility are considered when brand values are considered to be stable. Further research is needed to understand the dynamics of this relationship when values are in flux. The next limitation encountered is the limited applicability of the existing celebrity attitude scale in measuring brand hero worship behaviours. Further research is needed to develop a more complete measure for this relationship. The final limitation is that while this thesis identifies the importance of brand face authenticity in establishing heroism and mythology, this needs further research in terms of strategic implications and manipulations.

1.10 Thesis Structure

Table 1.2 summarises the structure of this thesis. Chapter 2 will review the literature that forms the theoretical basis for the research questions posed in this thesis. Chapter 3 will present the method for data collection and analysis applied to understand the research questions posed. Chapters 4 to 8 will present the findings for the research questions presented. Finally, the concluding chapter will present a summary of findings, and theoretical conclusions are drawn to address the central research question. Lastly, limitations and further research will be identified and discussed.

Table 1.2 Summary of Thesis Structure

Chapter Number	Chapter Heading
Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Literature Review: The mythological life of the brand hero
Chapter 3	Method
Chapter 4	Brand faces – the dramatic roles enacted
Chapter 5	Brand hero celebrity and credibility
Chapter 6	Brand hero mythology and identity reciprocity
Chapter 7	Proxy, proximity and pathology

Chapter 8	The hero and the brand: Worship effects on the brand community
Chapter 9	Conclusion: Heroic windmills and brand community theatre

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

THE MYTHOLOGICAL LIFE OF THE BRAND HERO

2.1 Introduction

Research into brand communities has identified four key components that are negotiated by individuals: the focal consumer, the product, the brand, and the community. The consumer – product – brand - community interaction has been researched extensively but little attention has been given to the company's role in this interaction beyond facilitation of the brand (McAlexander and Schouten 1998; McAlexander et al. 2002; Schau et al. 2009). It is the premise of this thesis that interactions between the brand community and the company include the people within the company, rather than being solely based on strategic implementation of integrated marketing communication techniques. In this context companies and marketers are not treated as an intangible entity but as the 'faces' that constitute the people behind the brand.

This chapter is structured into three main sections. The first section addresses the research that concerns brands as the focus for social interactions. The second section reviews the literature of the sacred and mythological aspects of the commercial and branded world. The final section discusses the literature around the worship of celebrities and heroes as representatives of brands.

The theoretical and practical applications for the brand community - brand face negotiation are based on human interactions which resemble a performance. Theatre and performance metaphors have been used to describe service encounters on the assumption that service is a performance between people to enact the consumption experience. These theatrical service encounters have four key components: (1) actors, who are the personnel delivering the service; (2) audience, the service recipients; (3) setting, the physical environment in which the service occurs; and (4) the performance, the enactment of the service (Grove et al. 1998). This framework acknowledges that

consumption is the result of human interaction and that each encounter is unique to the interaction of the actors.

A theatrical perspective is most applicable in services that are face-to-face encounters that occur in organisationally controlled settings (Grove et al. 1998). However, in the context of the brand-community performance encounters with brand faces, these encounters may be media-moderated rather than in person or they may form part of an imagined relationship (Caughey 1978, 1984, 1987, 1994; Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956; Perse and Rubin 1989; Rubin and McHugh 1987; Turner 1993). Other key differences between service theatre and brand community – brand face theatre are the roles of the participants. The assumption is that in this participatory framework the brand is the setting, the faces of the organisation and brand community members negotiate and perform narratives to achieve an overall brand performance or identity.

Grove and Fisk's (1998) framework places the consumer in the passive role of service receiver, as an audience member would receive a performance. Although there is acknowledgement that the consumer is a participant and contributes to the service performance, the assumption is that the control of the script or the narrative is determined by the organisation (Williams and Anderson 2005). However, theatre is a communal experience and while modern theatre has placed the audience in a passive position, postmodern theatre has seen a greater push for audience participation (Bennett 1990; Lancaster 1997). Brand communities as participant theatre with the community members and the organisation being performers in the brand setting will be explored further later in this chapter.

2.1.1 Brand Communities and Brand Faces

The creation and maintenance of company faces can come from within a brand's team of creators, manufacturers or managers. This thesis is an investigation of the performances that these faces enact with members of brand communities. The reason

the term brand faces is used in this thesis rather than the more widely known term of celebrity is because of the way in which these people are identified. “Celebrity” is an identifier that indicates media generated recognition insofar as someone can become a celebrity because they appear in the media and the media reports on that person because they are a celebrity (Boorstin 1964). “Brand faces” are those identified by the company or the brand community as important to a brand’s narrative. For example, Steve Jobs has been found to be an inspirational leader to the Apple community while a task-master to his employees (Belk and Tumbat 2005) and Tom Petty as the lead singer of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (TPATH) is a model of identity for the TPATH fan community (Schau and Múniz 2007). Both of these figures are brand faces as they represent the primary force behind the brand’s creation (Apple), continued existence (TPATH) and success. Therefore, the identification of brand faces is a result of their relationship to the brand rather than just as a result of media exposure, or media selection and reinforcement of a celebrity status.

2.1.2 Brand Communities and Brand Performances

Brand communities are also key contributors to the brand narrative performance. Brand communities are formed between customers in order to celebrate consumption and ownership of a valued brand (Múniz and O’Guinn 2001). The community concept developed out of research into subcultures of consumption (Kozinets 1997, 2001; Schouten, Martin, and McAlexander 2007a; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Thornton 1995; Wheaton 2000), and was then incorporated into an overarching theory of consumer tribes (Cova and Cova 2002; Cova et al. 2007; Kozinets 2007; Nancarrow and Nancarrow 2007; Veloutsou and Moutinho 2009). Brand communities allow community membership, meanings and relationships to be negotiated by the individual over time. This provides a framework for the consideration of the interactions negotiated and performed between brand community members and the brand’s representatives.

Previous research has indicated that a multidimensional relationship between consumer, community, product and brand forms the basis for interaction within a brand community (McAlexander et al. 2002). This thesis extends these components of interaction to

include the faces behind a brand. The importance of these brand faces is in their role as part of the creation or management of the brand and interaction with the community. Through this role they provide a source of brand value and identity, as well as a source of narratives about their brand exploits.

Consumers may encounter the brand faces directly by themselves or indirectly through media. Direct interaction may take place as part of a brandfest where the consumer is a participant in a time and geographically bound brand worship ritual surrounded by other community members (McAlexander and Schouten 1998). Similarly, it may involve direct interaction and interrogation of the brand face through a question and answer session about the branded product. The intermingling of relationships is more representative of brand communities as applied within the consumer tribes literature (Cova et al. 2007).

Interaction between consumer, community and brand faces can also be indirectly based on relationships from interaction which is imaginary, idealised, based on narratives or otherwise virtualised. This extends the service theatre perspective, which traditionally places the company and personnel as active performers in the physical setting who create a performance for passive consumption by the consumer audience. However, the brand community – brand face interactions can occur in a range of settings (Grove et al. 1998). Brand communities assume that relationships between members are non-geographically bound (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001) as brand community performance can take place through many settings such as brandfests that enable face-to-face interactions (McAlexander and Schouten 1998), online forums where members take on roles and enact performances without physical cues to inform actions and reactions (Ballantine and Martin 2005; Kozinets 2002b) or vicarious brand experience where a consumer experiences the brand benefits through the stories of others (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001).

Early research into social interaction as performance also focused on face-to-face communication (Goffman 1959). In face-to-face performance the audience analyses the validity of the performers actions based on verbal and non-verbal cues, and the audience will then adjust their own performance in response. In non-physical interactions, such as

online or media moderated performances, the audience has limited access to non-verbal cues on which to base their response. This lack of non-verbal cues has led to the adaptation of performance and interaction towards an imagined setting (Ballantine and Martin 2005; Caughey 1978, 1984; Horton and Wohl 1956).

In a physical theatre setting individuals take on certain roles within the performance. These roles incorporate the major theatrical components of the director, lead actors, supporting cast, the set, the audience and the script (Williams and Anderson 2005). In dramaturgy there is an assumption that an individual doesn't occupy more than a couple of these roles. However, when the performance is imagined the narrative is negotiated between the organisation (as director and actors) and the community (as director, actors and audience), rather than the organisation taking on the role of script writer the roles that are enacted change (Williams and Anderson 2005). Organisations place brand faces in roles such as director, lead actor and supporting cast in order to have influence over the script and the ultimate brand performance. On the other hand, the community identifies some brand faces as more central to the brand performance than others, and these faces take on important heroic and mythological elements that enhance the religiosity of the entire brand experience (Múniz and Schau 2005). This leads to the central question to be explored in the following chapters:

The central question:

What influence do brand faces have within brand communities where the interactions between brand actor and audience are limited, imaginary or idealised as part of an ongoing brand performance?

The following sections will outline the literature on the social significance of brands, the commercialisation of mythology and heroism and the nature of hero worship. Further analysis will be made of the literature to develop a definition of brand faces to differentiate them from the brand heroes within the context of brand performances. The aspects that differentiate heroes from faces are their higher level of visibility to the brand community and the mythic narratives that the community then develops around them. So, while brand faces can act as a human face for the brand, brand heroes act as

central characters to brand performance narratives. The overriding concern of the following discussion is to understand the nature of brand hero mythology and its impact on brand values.

2.2 The Social Life of Brands

This section will explore the literature surrounding the formation of brand value and how this impacts on the different types of brand-centric social networks. Brands have been explored from their roles as symbols that differentiate products and companies to symbols of attachment to identity. The latter perspective of symbols as representative of consumer identity is an expanding field of research considering the nature of social networks that develop around products, consumption activities and brands (Veloutsou 2009). This section will expand on the people behind brands and their connections to consumer relationship with the brand.

2.2.1 The Value of Brand-Centric Social Relationships

The role of brands in social relationships is an expanding field of study as the importance of brands as symbols of both personal and social identity has been realised (Aaker and Fournier 1995; Ahuvia 1992; Belk 1988; Belk et al. 1989; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Ouwersloot and Odekerken-Schröder 2008). A major shift has occurred from considering brands as product and company symbols to regarding brands as symbols of attachment to identity (Jarman 1998; Kozinets 2001; McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz 1997; Schouten 1991). The importance of brands has traditionally been recognised as a function of product and company differentiation. However, this approach fails to account for why consumers would choose one brand over another, and the growing body of evidence of the value of social networks around brands (Ouwersloot and Odekerken-Schröder 2008). Further research in the consumption of brands examines what brands mean to consumers, and how the brands provide meaning within social networks (Cova and Cova 2002; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Kozinets 2001). This thesis considers brands from the perspective of what they mean to the community and how this meaning is created and shared.

Research considering brands as symbols of identity and affiliation limits the role of the organisation behind the brand in the creation and communication of brand meaning. Ouwersloot and Odekerken-Schröder (2008) consider the motives for individuals in joining brand communities to be reassurance of quality for products, high involvement with the product category, opportunity for joint consumption, and the brand's symbolic function. This thesis proposes an additional motivation: to form relationships with people within the brand's organisation. This extension is supported by previous research which has identified a limited number of these organisational brand faces, such as Steve Jobs for Apple (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Múniz and Schau 2005), Tom Petty for the TPATH community (Schau and Múniz 2007) and David Lynch for the Twin Peaks fan community (Jenkins 1992). These figures are perceived by the community to embody a special relationship with the brand and as such the community seeks a relationship with them to enhance their brand experience.

A traditional definition of brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler 1997, p. 386), with the purpose of the brand as an identifying mark for commercial products and services. This is the producer's perspective of the brand as a managerial tool of differentiation. However, the act of identifying the brand can take on additional value to the seller and to the consumer (Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000; Aaker and Fournier 1995). The end result of this customer orientation in brand meaning is the market co-creation concept that "involves both the marketers and the customer who interact in aspects of the design, production, and consumption of the product or service" (Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma 2000, p.62). This thesis considers the co-creation aspects of the interaction between brand heroes and brand communities as they negotiate the performance of brand narratives.

The brand plays two roles within a brand community setting. The first role of the brand is as a focus of commitment, which is the basis for much of the brand literature. From Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) definition of subcultures of consumption, consumers self-select their membership to the subculture on the basis of their

commitment to a brand. The brand community concept argues the community is developed through relationships between admirers of a brand (McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz and Hamer 2001). It is through this process of developing brand commitment (Dholakia 1997; Geyer, Dotson, and King 1991; Gill, Grossbart, and Laczniak 1988; Redden and Steiner 2000; Traylor 1981; Warrington and Shim 2000) and brand affect (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001) that the brand becomes the focus for the individual and the group, and this commitment motivates social interaction to share with others the value the individual experiences when consuming the brand.

The second operation of the brand is to act as an artefact or symbol of affiliation to the brand and the group of admirers (Kozinets 2001; Leigh, Peters, and Shelton 2006; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Brand extensions may occur in order to facilitate or achieve this form of symbolic expression of affiliation through its product line (Aaker and Keller 1990; Smith and Park 1992). The Harley Davidson brand has been extended beyond motorcycles to include products such as leather jackets, posters, belt buckles and glasses. All of these product extensions are used as a symbolic expression of the individual's commitment and affinity for the brand and the group of Harley Davidson riders (Schouten and McAlexander 1995).

The dual roles played by the brand as a focus of commitment and as a symbol of affiliation, underpin the function of the brand in a social context. High levels of commitment are expected from admirers of the brand, and high use of branded products used to symbolise their affiliation. Thus, the definition of the brand used in this thesis extends Kotler's (1997) definition and views the brand as a symbol of differentiation which is used as a focus of affiliation for individuals and groups (Kozinets 1997, 2001; McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). In addition to the role as symbol of differentiation, the brand acts as the setting where brand faces and the brand community can negotiate the collective brand narratives which create their shared branded identity. This individual and collective negotiation and sharing of brand meaning is in the postmodern tradition of consumption as a process of enchantment (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). The following explores the different perspectives that have been taken to understand these social networks that form around brands.

2.2.2 Brand-Centric Social Networks

This section will explore the different perspectives that have been taken in considering the social networks that consumers form around brands, consumption activities and products. This research is relatively new and there is some overlap between concepts. Subcultures of consumption are not brand based and there is the assumption of outsider or marginalisation from the mainstream; brand communities form around a particular brand and have a sense of consciousness of kind and are ongoing; consumer tribes are temporary collectives around a consumption experience (Goulding et al. 2013) and fandom focuses on communities formed around media objects and texts (Hills 2002). Each of these perspectives will be discussed and the view of brand-focused social networks as applied in this thesis will be outlined.

2.2.2.1 Subcultures of Consumption

Subcultures of consumption were one of the first perspectives developed to explore brand-centric social networks, although this concept is not limited to brands. A subculture of consumption has been defined as “a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity” (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, p.43). Previous research into subcultures of consumption has focused on the socially derived meanings attached to consumption objects within the subculture and of the development of the subculture’s identity. Studies have focused on brands include Harley Davidson (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) and Star Trek (Kozinets 2001); product classes like punk and club music (Fox 1987; Thornton 1995); and consumption activities such as windsurfing and river rafting (Arnould and Price 1993; Wheaton 2000). Much of this research has focused on the nature of relationships within the subculture and how meanings are derived or created within the subculture. Schouten and McAlexander (1995) in their study of the subculture of Harley Davidson found that there was a hierarchical structure negotiated through a shared ethos and symbolic expressions including the idea that within this hierarchy there may exist “hard-core” or cult-like members (Redden and Steiner 2000; Thornton 1995).

Subcultures of consumption are generally viewed to have an “outsider status” that defines members from non-members and also defines the subculture as outside society (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). The tension between the “insider” versus “outsider” status of the subculture of consumption paradigm is highlighted by Kozinets (2001) in his examination of the Star Trek subculture of consumption that found that the expression of identity of the Star Trek group through the wearing of Star Trek uniforms created tension because of the mainstream stereotype of the Star Trek identity as being “nerdy” and fanatical. This tension between the subcultural meaning of objects with that of the meaning given to the same objects by outsiders illustrates that many subcultures are considered oppositional rather than as communities within the mainstream (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). Brand faces may add to this sense of community difference, as they may hold a different importance or image than that held by outsiders, be they the mainstream of society or other brand communities (Múniz and Hamer 2001).

2.2.2.2 Brand Communities

Brand community denotes a brand specific subculture of consumption with key distinguishing features (See McAlexander et al. 2002; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Brand community theory was developed as a counterpoint to the outsider orientation that underpins consumption subcultures, as these were considered an anomaly rather than an essential element to brand-centric social networks (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). The important distinction between subcultures of consumption research and that of brand communities is the brand community has “an active interpretive function, with brand meaning being socially negotiated, rather than delivered unaltered and in toto from context to context, consumer to consumer” (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001, p.414). In contrast, subcultures of consumption assume that the brand meaning is relatively static and delivered for consumption rather than through a co-creation process. Brand communities rely on a continuous interpretive process amongst their various elements as devotees of a particular brand identify their brand faces and negotiate the relationship between the community and brand faces across a range of contexts, including community interaction and brand performance.

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), from their study of a geographic network of consumers, identified three main aspects of brand community: (1) consciousness of kind,; (2) presence of rituals and traditions, and (3) a sense of moral obligation. Consciousness of kind is "the intrinsic connection that members feel toward one another, and the collective sense of difference from others not in the community" (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001, p. 413). This can be demonstrated by the affinity that Apple Newton's users feel towards each other, as devotees of an obsolete brand, and the sense of difference they feel towards those that use more up-to-date personal digital assistants (Múniz and Schau 2005).

Conceptualisation of brand community includes the presence of rituals and traditions, which serve to "perpetuate the community's shared history, culture, and consciousness" (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001, p. 413). Examples of this include Star Trek conventions where the wearing of costumes, greetings of 'Live long and prosper', and the sharing of Star Trek knowledge are ritualistic practices and imbued with meaning by the community (Kozinets 2001).

Sense of moral responsibility "is a felt sense of duty or obligation to the community as a whole, and its individual members" (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 413). Moral responsibility towards the brand and the community can be seen in Apple Newton members' efforts to get the brand re-introduced to the market and providing software solutions to other users so that the community could upgrade their product and not feel abandoned (Múniz and Schau 2005; Schau et al. 2009). It also includes the community monitoring the behaviour of individual members, such as the correcting of unflattering claims about Tom Petty in the TPATH community (Schau and Múniz 2007).

McAlexander et. al. (2002) introduced a fourth feature by conceptualising brand community as being customer-centric. Brand community is negotiated by each individual within the community, building on the dynamic nature of brand community processes. Participants in the Jeep community have been shown to have transcendental experiences at Jeep Jamborees which affect their experience of the brand leading to

greater integration into the community (McAlexander and Schouten 1998). The customer-centric nature of brand communities is the key assumption of this research. There are four components of community that interact to form the customer's experience; these are the brand, the product, the marketer and other customers.

The model presented by McAlexander et al (2002) characterises a customer-centric view of the brand community, where the customer experience is the source of meaningfulness and interpretation rather than the brand. The connection between the focal customer and the brand represents the relationships that individuals form with valued brands (Aaker and Fournier 1995), these relationships are similar to those developed with products classes (Belk 1988; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). Such valued relationships with brands contribute to an individual's self-concept (Reed 2002; Richins 1994), where a brand's values are incorporated into the consumer's identity through the display and consumption of valued objects (Aaker and Fournier 1995; Fournier 1998; Holt 1995; Múniz 1997). The focal customer also experiences relationships with other customers, which build a sense of community (McAlexander and Schouten 1998). Finally, a relationship is expected between the customer and marketing agents and institutions that own and manage the brand (McAlexander et al. 2002). This customer-centric model suggests that understanding the nature of the focal customer and their relationship with the brand's organisation is an important aspect of the brand community process. The following section will investigate the overarching consumer tribes concept that has developed from the consumption communities research.

2.2.2.3 Consumer Tribes

The concept of consumer tribes encompasses both subcultures of consumption and brand communities and represents the overarching perspective on the social networks that consumers form around brands, products and consumption experiences. Cova and Cova (2002) propose that modern consumers are actively re-establishing and negotiating their embeddedness in their community rather than seeking freedom from social constraints, as a result of their studies of the in-line skating tribe of Paris. The

communities of consumption theory extends the marketing concept from the satisfaction of needs and wants to the social glue that ties people together (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Brand meanings and the negotiation of shared value become the social glue that allows the consumption experience to become transcendent (Schouten et al. 2007b). The role of consumption within consumer tribes is the absorption and resistance of value. This creates a space where identities, practices, rituals, meanings, and cultural material are fashioned (Cova et al. 2007). The theatre perspective allows for the incorporation of brand faces into the absorption and resistance process as faces and community negotiate the performance space.

Defining consumer tribes has proved difficult. However there have been some essential characteristics identified by (Cova et al. 2007) in that consumer tribes are seen as activators, double agents, plunderers and entrepreneurs. In their role as activators, consumers are aware of their part in the marketing system and actively engage and play in the commercial process of meanings and identities. This can be seen in the evolution of meanings in the Harley Davidson subculture, where notions of freedom and machismo have developed over time (Schouten et al. 2007a). Double agents are those that both act against the marketing system and enact it (Cova et al. 2007). Nancarrow and Nancarrow (2007) discuss the nature of 'cool' as essentially an anti-marketing identity which marketers seek to identify and adopt for their own. Essentially a double agent identifies themselves in opposition to the market while also being a representative of particular commercial symbols. Tribal plunderers take commercial items as their own, by hijacking and pillaging the brand material of others and making it their own. For example, in the Harry Potter community the extensive hijacking of the commercial brand into fan created text can be considered a form of co-option of the original product (Brown 2007). Consumer tribes can also act as entrepreneurs where they develop their own marketing capabilities and take their plundered objects back to the commercial world, such as Star Trek fans making their own shows and movies and broadcasting them to a wider audience (Kozinets 2007).

Within these characteristics are some important aspects relevant to the incorporation of brand faces within the tribal process. The above elements of consumer tribes highlight the tension that exists between the community and the organisation. Acts that co-opt the

brand meanings and images that the organisation would like to communicate are resisted, reconfigured and incorporated into the communities brand performance. Previous research has shown that community produced images can co-opt the organisation's desired image of a brand. For example, the community-created outlaw biker image of Harley Davidson has limited the Harley organisations ability to adjust its target and product strategies (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). This thesis proposes that brand faces provide a bridge between organisations and communities where brand meanings can be negotiated in a shared performance space.

The tribal perspective has seen the consideration of mythology and religiosity in stigmatised (Kozinets 2001; Múniz and Schau 2005) and non-stigmatised brand communities (Schau and Múniz 2007). In one of the closest references to brand faces found in the literature, Schau and Muniz (2007) discuss the impact of Tom Petty on the values, myths and rituals enacted by the brand community of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (TPATH). The work focused on the similarities across brand communities and proposed that a brand community did not need to be marginalised or stigmatised for magico-religious myth and ritual to manifest. The TPATH community represent and actively defend the ideas that Tom Petty displays; this identity is built on the values of temperance, family, friends, the environment, anti-commercialism and the USA. These ideals result in the community defending Tom Petty against claims that contradict this persona, such as claims of infidelity and drug use. There is also enforcement of the norms of community behaviour, restricting or reprimanding references to sexually explicit material or drug references besides alcohol and marijuana. This is a clear indication that the idealised version of the brand hero becomes a model of correct behaviour and core to the identity of the brand community.

This research also highlights that different brand faces are held in different levels of regard by the brand community. For example, this study focuses on Tom Petty's influence in the brand community. However, there is no mention of a relationship being formed between the community and other members of the band, the band's management or the support crew. All of these other potential faces are important to the TPATH experience; however, it is the lead singer, Tom Petty, who is the hero of TPATH. In the theatre metaphor these central heroes would be the lead actors of a performance

(Williams and Anderson 2005). This lead role in the performance is traditionally a heroic figure for the audience to engage with as they negotiate the script, the direction, other leads and the supporting cast. The nature of these heroic narratives will be explored later in this chapter; the important aspect for communities is that brand faces are not equal, and some are viewed as heroic while others are supplementary to the brand performance. In this sense, an important distinction between faces and heroes is highlighted: a hero takes centre stage and has the greatest visibility to the community. Associated with this visibility is the influence they have on community narratives about them and the brand's values.

Another key finding from the study of TPATH is the distinction of the relationship between the brand hero as a god by proxy rather than proximity. The authors distinguish between the proxy role, where the brand hero is viewed as a god and as a source of greatness, as it is bestowed through the brand's product versus the proximity role, which seeks greatness through contact. The brand community seeks greatness through camaraderie through the product which is a crucial difference in the motivation of brand community members and celebrity worshippers. For this study, the relationship with the brand face / hero that is sought by the brand community is a mediated one, not just by the media but also by the brand and product. It is the mediated nature of this relationship that differentiates the theatre metaphor of brand community / brand face performance from service encounter performances. The lack of face-to-face interaction means that both the relationship and the performance of the brand narrative are formed via proxy rather than proximity. The following section will discuss the nature of fandom and its influence in understanding brand community relationships with brand faces / heroes.

2.2.2.4 Fandom

The brand community concept can be considered analogous with fan communities and fandom as the focal customer can be described as a fan of a particular brand. These terms are used interchangeably in the thesis to represent the phenomenon of a social network of individuals highly committed to a brand (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). This section will look at the literature surrounding the concept of fan and fandom and analyse

the similarities and differences between these perspectives. The most important difference between a brand community and a fan community is that the brand community considers being a fan a process of interaction and socialisation, whereas the fandom literature views being a fan as an identity or classification issue. These are largely application issues rather than a definitional issue that does not affect the interchangeability of the terms.

The brand community notion of negotiation of identity is in contrast with the perspective of 'fan' taken in media, communication and specific fandom research. These studies have tried to define a 'fan' in terms of the fan identity's characteristics rather than as a process of negotiating an identity (Hills 2002). Earlier studies into the fan phenomenon looked to distinguish the different levels or types of fans. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) define fandom along a continuum from 'fan' to 'cultist' to 'enthusiast'. Where the fan is considered to have an interest but no social organization, the cultists have explicit attachments to the admired objects and the enthusiasts are cultists whose interest is not media derived. Criticism has been levelled at this continuum as the definitions applied are counter to common usage and the distinguishing characteristics between the concepts are themselves difficult to identify and define (Hills 2002).

An alternate continuum of fan definitions was put forth by Tulloch and Jenkins (1995) where they distinguish between 'followers', those who form a passive audience and who claim no social identity of fandom; and 'fans', people who actively socialise and claim a social identity of a fan of a media object. This is similar to the distinction made by Brooker and Brooker (1996) that not all audience members are fans and not all fans are 'cult' fans. This means that there is a distinction between mere media or brand consumers and those that proclaim a social identity of 'fan'. These individuals may be different again to those that claim a social identity of fan but also engage in social behaviour as an expression of their fandom. In an alternate definition, Hills (2002) posits that it is time that distinguishes between a fan and a cult fan. Especially in the case of the discontinuation of the fan object, where the true 'cult fan' will remain loyal and active in the fan community even after the object of fandom is no longer produced.

This scenario is reflected in the Apple Newton brand community for the discontinued product (Múniz and Schau 2005).

All of the definitions discussed above, while to some extent breaking down the types of fan identity and behaviours exhibited fail to enrich our understanding of why or how people become fans. They were created for the purpose of categorising in a post-hoc fashion people who are ‘followers’, ‘fans’, and ‘cult fans’ rather than as a way of understanding the process of developing these identities. The perspective taken in this thesis is that the fan or consumer is engaged in a process of gaining, maintaining and expressing an intense interest in a brand rather than simply being an identity or a series of behaviours exhibited. This leads to the following section where the focus shifts to how a self-identified fan interacts and forms a relationship with a brand face / hero.

2.2.3 Perspective Adopted to Analyse Brand-Centric Social Networks

Consumer tribe concepts provide insight into the brand face / hero phenomenon. One of the key differences that these concepts have identified is that not all members of the brand’s organisation are treated the same by the community: not all brand faces are heroes. This section explores the narratives that are enacted between the organisation and the community to identify the heroic figure. Beyond the central heroic actor, the organisation also provides a supporting cast to support and enhance the exploits of the hero. The following sections will concentrate on mythology and heroism, both concepts based in a tribal tradition.

2.2.4 Heroism in the Brand Community

Firstly, the brand hero will be placed in context before an extensive discussion of mythology and heroism is conducted. Most research to this date has focused on the customer-brand-product relationship (Kozinets 1997, 2001; McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz and O’Guinn 2001; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Wheaton 2000), which provides a customer-centric model of brand community and a

framework to explore the relationships that exist within that community. The tendency has been to suggest that a relationship exists with marketers without exploring the face that marketers give to these interactions and relationships. In the theatre context, the marketer is another player in the narrative that is enacted; however, other members of the organisation have a role in this performance.

A brand hero in this context is a person who is recognised by brand community members for their association in creating, managing or producing the focal brand. They are distinguished from brand faces by their visibility to the community and the narratives that the community has about them. This is an important facet in developing and managing a brand community, as consumers are likely to be less active in seeking out communication with marketers or faces but engage in extensive and voluntary actions to interact with a brand hero. These include the writing of fan letters, attendance at brandfests, conventions and other events that include the brand hero and the development of mythology about the exploits of hero (McAlexander and Schouten 1998).

One of the core questions to be explored in this thesis is to understand what role a brand hero has within the brand community. The fact that there are different types of communities and brand faces / heroes suggests that their role is a heterogeneous construct that is defined by the narratives enacted between the relevant players in the brand performance.

Research Question 1

What is the nature of the interaction between a brand hero and the brand community?

There are a limited number of references to brand faces / heroes in the current brand community and tribal consumer literature. These include the “return-of-the-creator myth” in the Apple Newton brand community (Múniz and Schau 2005, 744) and the

“hero myth” in the Macintosh brand community (Belk and Tumbat 2005), both dealing with Steve Jobs. These studies have focused on the nature of myth and religiosity in the brand community or brand cult setting. The importance of brand heroes within the context of magico-religiosity brand community has been identified as just as important as the myths and narratives that are generated around the brand.

Belk and Tumbat’s (2005) study of Steve Jobs’s role as brand hero was centred around his charisma as a key criterion for consumers and employees identifying him as a heroic figure. Under the proxy-not proximity model, as Apple consumers do not have direct contact with Steve Jobs they formed an idealized fantasy: the “visionary” leader by proxy experience (Belk and Tumbat 2005, 207). This implies that while charisma is important in the understanding of the role of the brand hero in the brand community, the perception of charisma will be mediated by the imagined relationship between the brand hero and the brand community in the absence of direct interaction (Caughey 1978, 1984; Horton and Wohl 1956). The attention given to brand heroes by brand communities means that they are influential in the establishment of community identity, and as a basis for community interaction. The following section explores the nature of myth and its role in the profane world of commercialism.

2.3 The Commercial Life of Myths

From a theatrical perspective, the hero is a central figure to the enactment of narratives. However, heroes are not the only component of the story process. The support cast, director, the setting and the audience all form crucial aspects of the narrative as it is enacted (Grove et al. 1998). The following discussion explores the heroic narratives that exist and the definitions of what makes a heroic figure. However, it should be noted prior to commencing this discussion that the study of heroes has tended to focus only on the role of the hero rather than considering the interaction between heroes and the other components of narratives.

This section will explore the nature and role of mythology in the modern commercial world. Much of the classic study of mythology has considered the secular world of the

market as anathema to magico-religiosity of mythology (Boorstin 1964; Campbell 1949). While modern marketing studies have embraced the enchantment of the commercial there is still a divide in the application of the sacred myth to the profane market (Arnould and Price 1993; Belk et al. 1989; Schouten et al. 2007b). This section will introduce the nature of myth, how myth has been viewed and applied in the modern world and how this has influenced heroes and brand heroes. Finally the attributes of the modern hero will be discussed and the functions performed by the brand hero analysed.

2.3.1 Myths, Legends and Heroes

Firstly, considering the role of heroes in the theatre of brand communities, it is important to think about the nature of mythology and how heroes are made and expressed through oral and written narratives. Within anthropology, psychology and sociology there has been a debate around the nature of mythology and how it differs from legends and folktales (Csapo 2005). These arguments have used a number of different criteria to differentiate between these types of narratives, with all being subject to criticism based on cultural bias, language bias or definitions that fail to aid categorisation (Csapo 2005; Davis 2005). One of the most recognised and widely applied definitions of myth comes from William Bascom (1965), an anthropologist who studied non-literate and traditional societies, who saw myths and legends as verbal narratives, stories passed by word-of-mouth rather than as written works. Bascom defined myths as narratives which “in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past” (1965, p. 4). Besides the assumption of truth of some historic nature, myths often come with the assumption that they are incorporated in to rituals and that they are invariably sacred stories about a god or gods.

Legends on the other hand, do not have the criteria of sacredness and are not usually about gods. Bascom defines legends as “regarded as true by the narrator and his audience, but they are set in a period considered less remote, when the world was much as it is today” (1965, p. 4) He clarifies with:

Legends are often more secular than sacred, and their principal characters are human. They tell of migrations, wars and victories, deeds of past heroes, chiefs, and kings, and the succession in ruling dynasties. (Bascom 1965, p. 4-5 as edited in Csapo 2005)

Legends are situated within the known world with characters that are not gods but human or superhuman and are considered truth in that an elaborate cycle of heroic tales has collected around a figure (Davis 2005).

The legend of King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table and Camelot is an exemplar case of the legend theory. The legend of King Arthur is thought to be based on an actual person, possibly a prehistoric tribal chieftain in Wales around whom a number of heroic and magical narratives have become attached through time as the figure of Arthur was adjusted to reflect the society and the politics of various periods in history. So it is likely that Arthur started as a war-like figure in Celtic or pre-Roman Britain and has been removed from that time and recast in the image of a medieval romantic hero, with the political undercurrents of Christianity and chivalry incorporated into the legend to reflect the times. So while Arthur is not considered a god and is not of this time, his narrative can be adjusted to reflect a modern world and ideas. This ability to adjust, adopt and overhaul a legend is in contrast with myths. Their sacred nature precludes change of the narrative, as this would be violating an inalienable truth about the gods.

Csapo (2005) proposes an alternate method of differentiating myths and legends, based on their importance to society. He argues that sacredness and rituals are not what define these narratives but that these characteristics are indicative of a myth's centrality to a society. So a Christian society will hold sacred the narratives from the bible and will employ rituals to reinforce the importance of these narratives, such as the ritual of the bread and wine given in church to reinforce the narrative of Christ's flesh and blood and the last supper. In contrast, as legends are considered less important to a society or only important to a part of a society, there will be less need for the sacralisation of the narrative through ritual or the inclusion of gods.

As this thesis considers the nature of narratives and heroes within a part of society, these distinctions become murky, as for the brand community these narratives are important and form a central tenet of the community's identity. Due to the importance placed on these narratives and heroes, it can be said that while the hero is not considered a god, the narratives around them are considered myth in their social importance and rituals but legends in the accumulation of heroic tales. This leads to the next research question:

Research Question 2

What are the brand community narratives about their brand hero and what influence do these have on the community?

2.3.2 Heroes in Modern Society

The classic study of heroes in mythology has focused on the long ago or the far way (Campbell 1988) with very little attention paid to how the narratives of the past are reflected in modern discourse and culture. Davis (2005) distinguishes between the legends of Hollywood and the ancient mythologies of heroes and legends and posits that they do not have much in common. He maintains that myths are about divine figures and legends are about historical figures and under these definitions the heroes and notable figures of *now* are not included.

In order for the study of mythology to encompass the current events that are reconstructed into myths and legends around notable individuals the expectation that these stories are always historical and of the gods needs to be relaxed. As Csapo (2005) has argued, these defining elements are a reflection of centrality to society rather than the immutable distinguishing factors of myths and legends. When myths are considered as narratives of importance and centrality to a society's structure then an analysis of the modern heroes and legends becomes possible. If celebrities, be they television, movie or sports stars, can be considered heroes then their centrality to modern society is confirmed rather than artificially excluded based on the fact that they aren't gods or

historical. The centrality of celebrities to modern society has been recognised and is often lamented (Boorstin 1964; Giles and Maltby 2006). This study makes no moral stance on the appropriateness of celebrities as central figures of worship or myth-making. The fact that this is the case needs to be established and highlighted as central to this thesis' premise that the brand hero represents this trend towards celebrity and commercially-generated figures as the heroes of the modern world.

The nature of celebrity and its equivalence to fame rather than 'greatness' has caused much debate (Boorstin 1964). Heroes of the past seem to represent the attainment of recognition through trials and triumph and the innate excellence of an individual, which emphasises the discourse of the 'great' man. The process is slow and fame is only bestowed on those who have shown themselves worthy. This parallels Campbell's (1949) journey of the hero, where the hero is called to action and must depart the known world for the unknown; he must conquer trials and obstacles, win the great boon and return to the world and bestow it on society, which may be resistant to the hero or the boon. So in the nature of mythology as described by Campbell (1949, 1988) and in the lamented past for Boorstin (1961) a hero is created over time, through much effort on the part of the hero and through the triumph of the hero over adversity. According to Boorstin (1961) this gradual development of the 'great' has been replaced with the rapid manufacturing of celebrity. He distinguishes between the artificiality of fame, and argues that because they are synthetic they cannot be bestowed the attributes of God-made heroes or the innate ability of the 'great' and as such the worship of celebrities is fundamentally flawed and different to the worship of heroes. This distinction will be explored further later in this chapter with regard to the literature regarding celebrity worship and its application to brand heroes.

The nature of the modern hero as manufactured and synthetic raises the important consideration of the authenticity of a brand hero. The idea of commercial authenticity assumes a person who is worshipped for their role in a profane enterprise by a brand community can create authentic experiences and relationships. Authenticity in the brand hero context is twofold. First, as active co-creators of the brand performance, authenticity comes from participation in the brand community. Second, the commercialised acts of the brand hero are authentic within the brand community whose

social function is to celebrate their brand's commercial and non-commercial success (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). The relationship between the brand hero and the brand community are tied to the brand, and any action to overcome the adversity of the market for the ultimate triumph of the brand constitutes commercialized authenticity (Holt 2002; Leigh et al. 2006). The importance of the brand in the brand hero and brand community relationship is not only central to the nature of heroism but also to the community, which is explored in the following section.

2.3.3 The Hero and the Brand Hero

The nature of the hero needs to be considered as it has been applied in the myths of the past. The definition of a hero is somewhat fluid but it is a person, either real or fictional “who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.” (Campbell 1988, p.123). The hero narrative generally revolves around a central dramatic figure that either experiences trials and attains a physical deed through performing an act of courage or who has a revelation and through a spiritual deed learns to experience the supernatural. In either heroic narrative heroes sacrifice something of themselves for the benefit of society. The role of these heroic tales is to provide the steps that the ordinary man can take to be “liberated from his personal impotence and misery and be endowed (at least temporarily) with an almost superhuman quality” (Jung 1964, p.79). So the tales of heroes are for the purpose of giving the ordinary human being the hope or the method of becoming more than their current condition. In a sense, the hero is a social archetype of the desired perfect citizen, as the hero embodies or becomes those aspects that a society admires most.

The study of comparative mythology has established a common myth structure for the narratives of heroes. Jung (1964) proposed that the traditional hero myth structure has the following basic story line:

1. The hero has a humble birth
2. Early proof of superhuman strength

3. A rapid rise to prominence or power
4. A triumphant struggle with the forces of evil
5. The hero suffers the fallibility through the sin of pride
6. The hero falls through betrayal or makes a 'heroic' sacrifice in death

The above basic story of the hero encapsulates the role of the hero as more than human; the fundamental role of the hero in ridding society of a negative element, be it evil, monsters or sin; and the ultimate destruction or sacrifice of the hero. In Jung's psychological perspective, the role of these heroic symbols is to strengthen the ego and make a person feel they are or can be more than their current self. Campbell (1949, 1988) takes a similar perspective of the role of hero myths to individual psychology but he expands on the hero myth narrative through what he terms the monomyth (Campbell 1949). The monomyth is the formula of separation – initiation – return, where

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder, fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won, the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (Campbell 1949, p.23)

For the brand hero, this would be encompassed with the monomyth of the hero leaving the non-commercial world of the ordinary man and entering the marketplace and overcoming the competitive forces and the negative aspect of 'the opposition' and either creating the brand to bring forth to the brand community or increasing the brand's success or value which is considered a boon by the community. Based on Campbell's (1949) idea the brand hero monomyth narrative reads:

A brand hero ventures forth from the non-producer world of the consumer into the unknown and inexplicable world of the marketplace where fabulous forces of commerce are encountered and a decisive victory is won over other brands. The brand hero then delivers the brand and its value to the brand community.

This commercialisation of the world in which the hero enters is a reflection of the norms of modern society and as such the attributes that the brand hero embraces are those of market success and is entrenched in the capitalist paradigm of the free market that seeks success over the competition (Csapo 2005).

An alternate view to the synthesis of modern worship as discussed above is the study of the sacred in what would appear to be the profane setting of consumption (Belk et al. 1989). The underlying assumption of this perspective is that consumption has become a secular ritual through which transcendent experience is sought (Belk et al. 1989; Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Múniz and Schau 2005; O'Guinn and Belk 1989; Schouten et al. 2007b; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). This research has indicated that with the rise of individualism and the move away from formal religions in modern society, people are using consumption practices and purchases to attain the sacred and achieve transcendence (Belk et al. 1989; Schouten et al. 2007b). The marketplace has become central to society, so the heroes of the market are as appropriate figures of worship as those from history.

Belk et al. (1989) identify twelve properties of sacredness in consumption. Included is the role of myth in documenting its status through narratives, iterative tales, or speculation about existence. Myths are used to reinforce status through repetition, to socialise participants and to instruct new entrants about the collective definitions of the sacred. They also identify ritual as a property of the sacred, rather than a defining attribute of the myth as has been discussed previously (Csapo 2005).

Ritual in the context of the sacred is the prescribed behaviours of how man should behave in the presence of the sacred or sacred objects (Durkheim 1965 [1915]). Rituals are designed to reinforce the sacredness of the object and protect it from contamination by evil or the profane (Belk et al. 1989). The properties of myth and ritual aid in the removal of the person from their normal social roles and indoctrinate them into the *communitas* where they experience status equality and transcendent camaraderie. The notion of *communitas* is similar to that experienced in brand communities, where the community acts to separate the person from their normal social roles and status, and

remove them to a shared ritual experience in a brand performance narrative (Múniz and Schau 2005). The nature of brand communities as an appropriate setting for the existence of the sacred has been demonstrated in previous studies (Arnould and Price 1993; Belk and Tumbat 2005; Belk et al. 1989; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schouten et al. 2007b). The role of the brand hero in brand community myth and ritual has received only limited attention (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schau and Múniz 2007). The following section explores other research perspectives that enhance our understanding of the brand hero concept.

Research Question 3

How is the brand hero sacred and commercial as opposed to profane and everyday?

2.3.4 Alternative Perspectives to the Brand Hero Concept

The research to date on brand heroes has focused on the nature of mythology in the creation of a cult brand or religiosity (Belk and Tumbat 2005). Alternative perspectives that encompass aspects of the brand hero concept include celebrity and charismatic or spiritual leadership. This section looks at the distinction between the brand hero and these alternative perspectives and the problems faced when applying these perspectives to the brand hero context.

The celebrity endorsement literature incorporates the ideas of credibility, attention and meaning transfer, which have some relevance to the brand hero context. However, previous research has focused on celebrities external to the brand which limits its generalisability to the brand hero situation. The brand hero context is derived from perceived or actual interaction between the brand hero, the brand and the target audience, rather than the one way communication of idealisation and aspiration of the celebrity's endorsement of the brand (McCracken 1989).

The charismatic leadership concept is based on an employee – manager relationship which has limited applicability in this research as the brand hero is admired but is not a leader of the community. The charisma of a brand hero is idealised through community perception or imagination (Belk and Tumbat 2005). The brand hero is perceived through a lens of media or brandfests (McAlexander and Schouten 1998), and as such the brand hero persona is influenced by the mythology that the brand community generates about them. From this perspective the brand hero is a persona built by marketers to influence the brand community.

2.3.3.1 Brand Heroes versus Celebrities

Celebrity is often lamented as a negative aspect of society, in terms of celebrity worship (Boon and Lomore 2001; McCutcheon et al. 2002), fanaticism (Caughey 1978) and a general over-exposure to media in modern society (Boorstin 1964). Marketers, on the other hand, have held a much more positive view of celebrity. For marketers, celebrity is a potential tool for gaining and holding the attention of potential customers, mainly through a focus on celebrities as endorsers of a product or brand (Speck et al. 1988). In theatre, the celebrity is often the actor that plays a lead role in a drama; however, the celebrity is not the part they play in the narrative.

A brand hero is a person internal to the organisation that has input into the management or the creation of the brand and acts as a face who interacts with a brand community. This is in contrast with the notion of celebrity endorsement, where a person who is well-known for some achievement external to the brand is selected to communicate meaning to the target market. This is the same as a celebrity who is famous for achievements external to a role in a particular performance. The key differentiating features are the relationship to the brand and that brand heroes communicate with, not to, the audience. In a sense, the brand hero is in a constant dialogue with the brand and the community as a focal person and the meaning and identity of all involved can be negotiated. Despite the differences between heroes and celebrities, previous research does provide useful insight into the influence of heroes.

2.3.3.2 Defining Celebrity

Celebrity it is often defined by what it is not as much as it is defined by distinctive frameworks. The definition that is most widely used states that “celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness” (Boorstin 1964, p.57). The concept of celebrity is embedded in the understanding that there are levels of society and ‘well-knownness’ and is often dictated by social strata and groups (Dames 2001). Dames (2001) differentiates between ‘notables’ who are well-known within a particular group or social circle, and ‘celebrities’ who are figures who are well-known across social realms. Dames (2001, p.32-33) describes celebrities as “figures meant to be observed, brushed up against, talked about, and above all *recognized*”. Based on this definition of celebrity it can be seen that the brand hero concept is not the same, as the purpose of the brand hero is not *just* to be recognised but to also contribute to the creation or success of the brand in some way. The concept of a brand notable is more accurate as a brand hero may not necessarily enjoy widespread recognition, but merely be well-known within the brand and brand community social spheres. However, to date no research has considered the idea of ‘notable’ figures in branding, so the celebrity literature forms the closest available parallel to the brand hero concept. The following section considers the contribution that the celebrity literature makes to our understanding of the brand hero concept.

2.3.3.3 Brand Heroes as Celebrities

Boorstin’s (1964) definition of celebrity presented earlier, where celebrity is characterised by a person’s well-knownness, is based on his reaction to the apparent synthesis and commoditisation of greatness. Boorstin (1964) saw the modern celebrity as essentially fake and someone who had not achieved their fame through great deeds, endeavours or actions. Boorstin’s notion of celebrity is a manufactured process of the lionisation of the mediocre or the ordinary (Dames 2001). There is recognition that celebrities can be brands and form their own fan communities, although this scenario falls outside the purview of this study as it represents a directly formed parasocial relationship (Thomson 2006).

The brand hero is well-known for their actions in creating or maintaining a brand's success, which creates two distinctive archetypes. The Creator refers to the inventor or the primary source of the brand's existence, such as Terry Pratchett as the author of the Discworld series or Richard Branson who founded Virgin Records. The Maintainer refers to those who influence the consumption experience of the brand, such as the actors in Star Trek (Kozinets 2001) or the players in a football team (Caughey 1987). The Maintainer may also be a Creator that is best known as the brand hero responsible for the brand's continued existence, such as Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple and Apple Newton and Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft (Múniz and Schau 2005). These are general types that delineate brand heroes from other celebrities. The specific functions these celebrities play within the community will be explored in the research phase of this thesis.

Research Question 4

How do brand heroes differ from celebrities? In what ways does this influence the relationship between the brand community and the brand hero?

2.3.3.4 Brand Heroes as Endorsers

There has been extensive research into the area of using celebrities to endorse a brand or product in marketing communications, specifically in advertising. McCracken (1989, p.310) defines a celebrity endorser as “any individual who enjoys public recognition and uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good appearing with it in an advertisement”. This definition of celebrity endorsement does not limit itself to individuals who are well known through their association with a brand. However, it is usually applied to people who are well-known for other reasons, who then become associated with a brand.

A basic assumption of this definition is that a celebrity's public recognition is developed separately from the brand and this recognition is then used to endorse a brand. Celebrity endorsement research has focused on finding appropriate celebrities and presenting

them in symbolically representative communications with the brand. However, this precludes internally generated celebrities whose public recognition is tied to their role within the brand; thus issues of appropriateness and symbolic congruence are not relevant. When the transference of meaning is not being drawn externally from the brand, issues arise around the interaction between the hero, the brand and the audience, which form a complex inter-relationship of meanings and narratives. While, this interaction has yet to be explored in the celebrity literature, it has considered a number of roles the endorser can perform.

Several endorsement roles that a celebrity can fulfil have been identified: the expert, long-term associate of the manufacturer; or someone with no special knowledge, or association with, the product in question (Friedman et al. 1976; McCracken 1989). The roles of an expert celebrity endorser can be applied to the brand hero. The brand hero derives perceived expertise from their involvement in the creation, production and maintenance of the brand. Celebrity endorsement tends to use examples of experts external to the brand, such as a racing car driver endorsing motor oil (McCracken 1989) where their perceived expertise is derived from the view that their profession would impart knowledge about specific products. Similarly, the celebrity endorser role of association with the manufacturer in a long-term capacity can also be applied to the brand hero concept. Elle McPherson has a long-term relationship with lingerie maker Bendor, designing a range of Elle McPherson Intimates branded lingerie, which gives her involvement as both creator and endorser. Consequently, where the brand is the sole creation of that celebrity then the association between the celebrity and the manufacturer is indelibly linked.

Brand faces do not require long-term relationships with the brand. For example, a director may have only worked on one Star Trek movie to be considered a brand face for the Star Trek brand community (Eagar 2005). However, they may not be considered heroic as their contribution to the brand is limited and may not be sufficient to generate heroic narratives. This role within celebrity endorsement literature also tends to include celebrities well-known from external sources, which does not fit within the brand face or hero concept (McCracken 1989). Examples of this include Christina Aguilera and LL Cool J, both singers, appearing in television commercials for Virgin Mobile. Neither

celebrity has a special association with the brand through expertise or through a long-term association, as these were one-off appearances. This final role has no equivalent to the concept of brand face / hero, where the core assumption is some special association to the brand in a capacity internal to the creation or production of the brand.

2.3.3.5 Brand Hero Credibility, Attractiveness and Symbolic Meaning

There have been two approaches to celebrity endorsement: the first focuses on the selection and effectiveness of celebrity endorsers' source credibility / attractiveness and the second concentrates on the symbolic transference between the brand and the celebrity. The first concerns the degree to which celebrity endorsers are a credible and attractive source of brand information which helps in selection of the most effective endorser to communicate with a specific target market (Cronley et al. 1999; Friedman et al. 1976; Speck et al. 1988). This research has two main streams, source credibility and source attractiveness (McCracken 1989). In source credibility, the celebrity is viewed as a credible source when it is perceived that celebrity has the ability to make valid assertions (expertness) and willingness to make valid assertions (trustworthiness) (McCracken 1989). When the celebrity is perceived to be both expert and trustworthy they will be a credible and effective endorser of a product. In terms of a brand face / hero, the special association that they have to the brand means that they are likely to have perceived credibility. A brand hero's narrative would be based on their expertness in the brand as they are involved in its creation or management. For the brand hero, it is less a matter of proving credibility and more of establishing their shared commitment to the brand and the brand community.

The second stream of celebrity endorsement is source attractiveness, which relies on familiarity, likeability and similarity of the source for effective endorsement (Kahle and Homer 1985; McCracken 1989; McGuire 1985). Source attractiveness relies on the celebrity being perceived as recognisable, arousing affection or perceived as resembling the receiver in order to effectively communicate to a target market. This model of celebrity endorsement effectiveness suffers from a similar problem to that of source

credibility, in that as long as the celebrity fulfils all criteria then that celebrity should be able to endorse any product or brand (McCracken 1989). This approach is limited in its applicability in the brand face / hero sense because the celebrity isn't being chosen from a range of external options to endorse a brand, they are developed internally and the credibility and attractiveness they exhibit are a function of the interaction between the brand face / hero, the brand and the community. As these approaches to the selection of a celebrity endorser do not provide narrow enough criteria for the choice of a specific celebrity, alternative celebrity endorsement approaches were sought.

Research Question 5

Does brand face and hero credibility and attractiveness matter? How are they incorporated into brand hero mythology?

An alternate approach to celebrity endorsement was developed that aims to match the image of celebrities to the brand's image, with the intent of transferring the image of the celebrity to the brand (Langmeyer and Walker 1991; McCracken 1989; Tripp et al. 1994). This was developed as a reaction to the apparent problems with the source credibility and attractiveness models of celebrity endorsement effectiveness, which seemed to state that as long as a celebrity is perceived as credible or attractive then any celebrity can be used to endorse any product, which in practice has proved to be an unsustainable position (McCracken 1989; Speck et al. 1988). This approach has sought to identify the symbolic meanings of celebrities and match them to the image of brands in order to create a fit in the meanings being presented and thus provide message consistency and effectiveness (Tripp et al. 1994). The assumption in this approach is that through the representation of consistent meaning the marketing communication will be more effective. With the brand face / hero situation it is proposed that because the brand and the face / hero are indelibly linked that meaning movement is not an issue but rather the concern may be the consistency of the mythology between the brand and the brand hero. When the mythologies are congruent, a stronger image of the brand is built and this is important to maintaining a brand community.

While celebrity endorsers aren't necessarily brand heroes, the research focus has generally been on the use of celebrities external to the brand. For example, William Shatner's endorsement of Kellogg's All Bran in the UK would be considered celebrity endorsement. William Shatner appearing at a convention for Star Trek would not be considered endorsement because of his role in the creation of the brand, this would be termed brand hero. The difference is subtle yet important when considering the role of the celebrity. Credibility becomes less significant when considered in the brand hero context, as the role of the celebrity in the production of the brand creates most of the credibility needed when seeking the attention of consumers. Similarly, where the image of the celebrity is indelibly tied to the image of the brand they helped create, this reduces the relevance of the image matching framework. Celebrity does not fully encompass the brand hero concept, as the special association the brand hero has with the brand means that other factors beyond mere recognition are present.

2.3.3.6 Brand Heroes versus Charismatic / Transformational Leadership

Management studies have recognised the importance of mythology both in creating successful business and in organisational change (Buckler and Zien 1996; Zien and Buckler 1997). Buckler and Zien (1996) found that when considering their company's innovativeness, employees nearly always portrayed them as narratives about successes, failures, or failures that became successes. These narratives are littered with references to heroes and heroines from the company's past, who were immortalised in corporate myths and legends and which were used to build a formal company mythology of innovative heroes. This landscape of corporate myth gave rise to an increased attention on the importance of these company heroes. Much of this research has focused on charismatic or transformational leaders, who through some indefinable personal attributes are able to motivate employees and induce change or create success. The key contribution of this literature is to highlight that members of an organisation can build mythology within an organisation that may be possible to reproduce external to the organisation.

Charismatic leadership refers to “the ability of the leader to exercise diffuse and intense influence over the beliefs, values, behaviour, and performance of others through his or her own behaviour” (House, Spangler, and Woycke 1991, p.366). In the context of brand heroes, this describes people within an organization who are able to influence the beliefs, values, behaviours and performance of brand community members. There has been a divergent view of what constitutes a charismatic leader in the literature (Paul et al. 2002).

The first view identifies actual qualities of a leader that differentiate them as charismatic. House and Howell (1992) found that charismatic leaders exhibit the qualities of supportive, sensitive, nurturing, and considerate leadership. This stream of research has less relevance to brand heroes as there is usually no or very limited direct interaction between them and brand community members. This means that there is limited opportunity for brand community members to gauge the actual personal qualities of the brand hero; rather the charisma of the brand hero is attributed based on second-hand information, through media sources or other channels and through the narrative that is enacted through brand performance.

The importance of charisma to the brand hero concept was identified by Belk and Tumbat (2005), where the charisma of Steve Jobs was established as a key criteria for Macintosh users and employees views of him as a hero. This view of Steve Jobs was not consistent, even though both users and employees were loyal to the Apple brand and Steve Jobs. The brand hero for employees is characterised as “being charming and being horrible” (Belk and Tumbat 2005, p.207) with the employees seeing both the charisma and vision of their ‘leader’ but also being the subject of “frequent explosive rebukes” (Belk and Tumbat 2005, p.207). This is in contrast with the fantasy of Apple consumers’ who do not have any direct contact with Steve Jobs and as such do not experience the negative side to the Steve Jobs character. They have formed an idealised fantasy of Steve Jobs as a “visionary” leader (Belk and Tumbat 2005, p.207). This implies that while charisma is important in the understanding of the role of the brand hero in the brand community, the perception of charisma will be mediated by the narrative that is enacted. This point should also be emphasised as it affects the limited

applicability of charismatic leadership theory as these have been largely developed for employee-manager relationships

On the other hand, transformational leadership “promotes alignment by providing fair extrinsic rewards and appealing to the intrinsic motivation of the collaborators” (Cardona 2000, p.202). So rather than the type of influence that is exerted the transformational leader is a matter of the type of relationship between them and the follower. Steve Jobs of Apple created a vision of the Macintosh and challenged his employees to meet nearly impossible goals; by rewarding his employees with a challenging and creative workplace he was able to motivate them to achieve (Bryant 2003). Transformational leadership is about the style of leadership rather than the style of leader, or as Sankar (2003) puts it, the character not the charisma of the leader is the critical factor in leadership success. The brand hero would be a transformational leader if able to overtly reward brand community members through intrinsic motivation to achieve a defined goal.

The TPATH community offers an example where a brand hero was able to provide intrinsic motivation through the idealised values of Tom Petty, but Tom Petty himself did not provide overt rewards for the community’s adherence to these values. Rather, values attributed to Tom Petty’s brand formed the community’s models of behaviour and social norms were enacted to punish transgressions. Again, the lack of overt and direct relationship between the brand hero and the community limits the applicability of the transformational leader literature.

The brand hero is not a leader of the brand community, where leadership is “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (Rost 1991, p.102). The brand hero is a representative of the organisation in the brand performance; however, the community has an equal role in this narrative. No one side has enough control of the performance to claim the sole leadership position. While a charismatic or transformational leader’s purpose may be to increase the success of the brand, the purpose of the brand community is the celebration of brand ownership. This celebration revolves around certain tightly held values and

rituals to which the leader within the company may be unaware (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). This tension between the company's and its leader's goals and the goals of the brand community can be the cause of brand performance contention (McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). This lack of a mutual purpose between the company's leadership and the brand community means that the brand hero does not fulfil a leadership role; so while they may be admired for their leadership of the brand, the brand hero is not a brand community leader.

Research Question 6

Are the brand hero and brand mythology congruent and what effect does this have on the brand community?

2.3.4 Defining the Brand Face / Hero Concept

From the discussion of the alternative perspectives related to the brand hero concept, it is necessary to derive one overarching perspective through which to study the sacredness of the brand hero in the commercial world. While the brand hero may represent aspects of celebrity and charismatic leadership, in essence he transcends these commercial and profane roles in society and an organisation to embody an ideal. Brand heroes are not just figures to be copied, coveted or followed but rather held as lead actors in the brand performance that bridges the backstage of the organisation with the front of stage performance that is enacted with the brand community (Mangold and Babakus 1991). The brand hero monomyth and the centrality of the market to modern society reinforce the influence that a brand hero may have.

The difference between a brand hero and a brand face is in the centrality to the brand performance and the narrative that is enacted. A brand face has a limited role in the performance or influence over the narrative. So while the brand face may be visible to the audience, they are not considered central players. In consequence, as the performance unfolds, the community does not develop mythological narratives around brand faces. This is analogous to the lack of narratives around the other members of

TPATH: the management and the support crew within the TPATH community (Schau and Múniz 2007). For this community, Tom Petty is the brand hero and as such takes centre stage in the band's performances and in the formation of community values. The following section will explore the nature of brand hero worship and how the brand community builds a relationship with the mythic figure of the hero.

2.4 The Community Life of Worship

"The hero is today running up against a hard world that is no way responsive to his spiritual need" (Campbell 1988, p.130)

The study of mythology and heroes has concentrated on the psychological basis for myths and the role of heroes. These studies have recognised that heroes are worshipped as representations of the possibility of our own perfection and strength (Campbell 1949). This section explores the nature of hero worship and its impact on the brand hero concept and community.

2.4.1 Brand Hero Worship

For Campbell (1949), the modern hero is one that can re-enchant the world of contemporary society, which has lost its spirituality through advances and reliance on science and the decreased importance of religion. The brand hero is worshipped for seemingly re-enchanting the consumption experience through the mythology of brand creation and management (Firat 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). While worship has been recognized as a part of the mythologising process through rituals, the psychological impact of worship has generally been considered negative. Campbell (1988) describes the worship of sports stars as surrogate achievement, where the watcher relegates themselves to spectator of others achievements and success, using them as substitutes for spiritual transformation. He refers to such passive fandom as indications of impotence, ennui and alienation from society where people turn to heroes to express our longing for spiritual meaning. This apparent paradox between the

purpose of mythology in creating the worship of perfection and the negative psychological consequences of this worship are reflected in much of the research into the impact of worship on individuals and society. This thesis does not see the audience as engaging in a passive worship experience, but rather as an actively negotiating within the brand performance between the hero and the community to enact the narrative (Lancaster 1997).

The literature has largely focused on celebrity worship, and while a brand hero is not a celebrity, as the previous section discusses, it does form the most complete basis for analysing brand hero worship. To date only one study has explored the distinctions between heroes and celebrities, which found that individuals responses to heroes were based on emotional attachment, drive for affiliation, and ordinariness, whereas for celebrities it was affiliation, disdain and ordinariness (North, Bland, and Ellis 2005). So while being great and being famous are not the same and the worship behaviours are different, the dearth of research into the worship of the great rather than the famous means that the following section will focus on celebrity worship and this is used as a proxy for brand hero worship behaviours.

2.4.2 The Relationships that Individuals Form with Brand Heroes

The underlying theories that inform the worship of brand heroes is that of imaginary social relationships or pseudo-relationships developed by Caughey (1978, 1984, 1987, 1994) and parasocial relationships from psychological research (Cohen 2004; Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956; Perse and Rubin 1989; Rubin and McHugh 1987; Rubin et al. 1985; Sood and Rogers 2000; Turner 1993). These concepts are quite similar in their definition but are applied in very different ways. Pseudo-relationships assume the spirit relationships that are significant in undeveloped cultures are transformed in Western cultures to include media figures, imaginary figures and the imaginary replicas of real figures (Caughey 1978, 1984). These figures form a network of relationships which may be of great significance to a person, “but with whom he does not engage in face-to-face relations” (Caughey 1984, p.21) including “all those beings known to the individual via television, radio, movies, books, magazines, and

newspapers” (Caughey 1978, p.71). Caughey (1984, p.50) links these pseudo-relationships to the role of fan in the following way:

The basis of most fan relationships is not an esthetic appreciation but a social relationship. Fans have attachments to un-met media figures that are analogous to and in many ways directly parallel to actual social relationships with real ‘fathers’, ‘sisters’, ‘friends’, and ‘lovers’.

These pseudo-relationships form an important basis of this study as the relationship between the brand hero and the brand community is unlikely to include *actual* interactions or relationships but there is an important bond formed through imagination and mythological representation of the brand hero in the brand performance. From these portrayals, the community is likely to develop a pseudo-relationship with the imagined persona of the brand hero, such as the Apple community’s imagined perception of Steve jobs as visionary (Belk and Tumbat 2005).

There are a number of different kinds of pseudo-relationships identified in the literature but three key types seem to represent the majority of relationships. Caughey (1984) identifies these as love, antagonistic and intense admiration relationships with various un-met figures. The first type of relationship, the love relationship, constitutes “fantasies about meeting, dating and marrying” the focus of the relationship (Caughey 1984, p.54). These fantasies are often considered abnormal worshipping of a media figure with negative psychological outcomes for the celebrity worshipper which are discussed later in this chapter (Boon and Lomore 2001). One of the central themes in love relationships is that “in some ways fantasy relations are often *better* than real love relationships” (Caughey 1984, p.58). That the object of affection is a mentally created figure means that the admirer only sees the positive in the admired figure and the relationship runs a course of the admirers choosing. This assists in creating self-worth and avoids the disappointments often attached to relationships with *real* people.

The second type of pseudo-relationship is that of the antagonistic relationship, which represents media figures that people “despise” and engenders feelings of “hatred, anger and distrust” (Caughey 1984, p.60). The fantasies attached to these relationships often involve imaginary arguments, which sometimes can include violence toward the object of antagonism. This could possibly be represented in the Apple computer brand community’s relationship with Bill Gates of Microsoft, the supposed destroyer of the Apple Newton (Múniz and Schau 2005). Therefore, these relationships are likely to be experienced by brand community members with figures considered external threats to the brand or brand community.

The final type of pseudo-relationship is considered by Caughey (1984) to be the most common and significant, which is that of the intense admiration relationship. These relationships are the most similar to the stereotypical fan relationship but the admired figure becomes “some combination of idol, hero, alter ego, mentor, and role model” (Caughey 1984, p.61). There are a number of fantasies surrounding the intense admiration relationship: the admirer becomes a close relative of the object of admiration; the admirer becomes someone *like* the admired figure; and the most intense, where the admirer abandons the self and *becomes* the admired figure (Caughey 1984). The intense admiration relationship may be most applicable to the brand hero situation, where the creator is admired for their involvement in the production of an admired brand and the adoption of the perceived values of the brand hero by the community. An example of this is Tom Petty’s role in creating, performing and recording the music of TPATH and the community’s adoption of the perceived values of temperance and family (Schau and Múniz 2007).

While there has been little research to compare how brand or fan communities establish their relationships with the brand hero as a whole, some research has indicated that there is a pseudo-relationship between the community and their brand hero(es). Jenkins (1992), in his research into the use of media produced texts in fandom, considered the community’s appeal to authorship within the *Twin Peaks* fan community. While the community members appealed to David Lynch, the creator of the television series, in their understanding, interpretation and prediction of the text, evidence of a pseudo-relationship can be found. The members use such words as “devious”, “perversity and

unpredictability” (Jenkins 1992, p.111) to describe David Lynch indicating that the community has a fantasy or imaginary figure, which was created and sustained by the group and had little basis on the *real* David Lynch. Jenkins (1992, p.113) details that “Lynch became the source of all meaning within *Twin Peaks*, the focal point for the group’s attempt to unravel its syntagmatic complexities, and to evaluate its aesthetic merits”. While Lynch seems to represent a very powerful role within this community’s imagination, it is important to realise that the relationship is imaginary and not based on actual interaction between Lynch and the community members. However, he still remains a central figure in the brand performance.

The development of a pseudo-relationship between a brand community and its admired figures forms the basis of the hero persona. The focus is less on the actual characteristics of the brand hero, and more on the ‘imagined’ and ‘idealised’ character that the community perceives to be a hero. However, a similar conceptualisation of these types of relationships exists. While conceptually similar, the concept of parasocial relationships differs to pseudo-relationships in its application, where quantitative methods are used to classify fans into different levels or types of worship behaviours (McCutcheon et al. 2002; Stever 1991). The next section will explore parasocial relationships in terms of those developed between a brand hero and brand community members.

2.4.3 Parasocial Relationships and Brand Heroes

Associated with the forming of relationships with a brand hero is the psychological perspective of celebrity worship, which psychology researchers refer to as parasocial relationships. These are relationships where the interaction is one-way but the individual feels as if they know the media figure as a friend or colleague (Giles and Maltby 2004; Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956). The initial conceptualisation of parasocial relationships was applied specifically to television media figures (Horton and Wohl 1956) rather than celebrities in general and it has yet to be used to analyse the brand hero context.

The application of parasocial relationships has tended to focus on respondents self-selecting their favourite celebrities with the positive relationship biases that this entails (Giles and Maltby 2004, 2006; Maltby et al. 2004b; Sheridan, Maltby, and Gillett 2006; Turner 1993) and it has not considered the antagonistic relationship identified by Caughey (1987). The assumption of a positive relationship is the most appropriate for understanding brand heroes as the brand community identifies their own celebrities from within the company who they see as positive for the brand. There may be the identification of brand villains who are seen as negative for the brand or the brand community, such as Bill Gates to the Apple community (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Múniz and Schau 2005), but this is outside of the scope of this thesis.

Early research on parasocial relationships assumed that such relationships were rare and were indicative of psychological illness. However, in studies conducted by Rubin and McHugh (1987) and Rubin et al. (1985) it was found that parasocial relationships are a normal component of an individual's repertoire of social relationships rather than being psychologically unusual and problematic. Rubin et al. (1985) found no relationship between parasocial relationships and loneliness, indicating that parasocial relationships are not used to replace actual relationships but form an extension to a person's social network. From these early studies that showed no link between parasocial relationships and psychological disorder, recent research in the field has concentrated on distinguishing normal parasocial relationships from problematic pathological relationships that have outcomes such as celebrity stalking, low self-esteem and body image issues (Maltby et al. 2005), and the developmental effects on teenagers (Giles and Maltby 2004). This research has generally found that the more intense and personal the parasocial relationship experienced by an individual, the more likely they are to have low body image, particularly in females (Maltby et al. 2005). Also it has been found that celebrity relationships replace parental relationships during adolescence for teenagers who experience decreasing levels of parental attachment and increasing levels of autonomy (Giles and Maltby 2004). This thesis is not concerned with these apparently negative psychological and social consequences of celebrity worship and focuses on testing whether parasocial relationships with the brand hero affect the outcomes of the brand (involvement and commitment) and the brand community (social identity salience and future membership intention).

Research Question 7

How is brand hero worship different to celebrity worship?

Parasocial relationships have been conceptualised as a quantitative construct, where parasocial relationships reflect attitudinal and behavioural components of celebrity worship (Boon and Lomore 2001; Maltby et al. 2004b; Maltby et al. 2006; Maltby et al. 2004a; McCutcheon et al. 2002; Sheridan et al. 2006). The most relevant of these studies was conducted by McCutcheon et al. (2002), who developed a conceptualisation of parasocial relationships based on an absorption-addiction model. This model states that “a compromised identity structure in some individuals facilitates psychological absorption with a celebrity in an attempt to establish an identity and a sense of fulfilment. The dynamics of the motivational forces driving this absorption might in turn take on an addictive component, leading to more extreme (and perhaps delusional) behaviours to sustain the individual’s satisfaction with the parasocial relationship” (Maltby et al. 2004a, p.1476).

Research based on this model suggests that there are increasingly more extreme attitudes and behaviours associated with each type of relationship (Giles and Maltby 2004; Maltby et al. 2005; Maltby et al. 2002; McCutcheon et al. 2002). This model has been used to analyse the relationship between cognitive flexibility, a person’s ability to recognise alternatives in a situation; social complexity, the desire to build and maintain relationships in diverse groups (Maltby et al. 2004a); fantasy proneness, the time a person spends fantasising; disassociation, the lack of integration of experiences, feelings and thoughts into consciousness and memory (Maltby et al. 2006; Sheridan et al. 2006); and parasocial relationships within the general population. The benefit of this conceptualisation is that it is not situation specific, in that any kind of celebrity can engender this behaviour. In contrast, other studies into parasocial relationships were celebrity-type specific, such as television or news presenters (Rubin et al. 1985). This method of conceptualising parasocial relationships means that it can be applied to brand heroes as they can be viewed as celebrities of a brand community. However, as has been previously discussed the celebrity concept does not fully encompass the role of the brand hero.

The absorption – addiction model posits that there are three factors that make up the celebrity attitude scale proposed under the absorption-addiction model are (1) Entertainment-Social, where the celebrity is perceived to be entertaining and able to capture the individual's attention; (2) Intense-Personal, referring to intensive and compulsive feelings towards the celebrity; (3) Borderline-Pathological, reflecting the social pathological attitudes and behaviours as a result of worshipping a celebrity (Giles and Maltby 2004; Maltby et al. 2006; Maltby et al. 2004a; Maltby et al. 2005; Maltby et al. 2002; McCutcheon et al. 2002; Sheridan et al. 2006). These factors represent an increasing absorption in the individual's relationship with a celebrity. These are also not exclusive behaviours, as the attitudes and behaviours of the first factor build into the intense parasocial relationship displayed in the second and third factor (McCutcheon et al. 2002).

While it has been shown that this three-factor model of parasocial relationships represents the type of attitudes and behaviours held by the general population towards their favourite celebrity, it has been postulated that it also represents the relationships experienced within a brand community (Maltby et al. 2002). These previous studies suggest that the more organised the fan behaviour and the more religiosity displayed by these groups, the more pathological the parasocial relationship is likely to be. However, this relationship has yet to be tested in the brand community context. Giles and Maltby (2004) refer to the parasocial relationships experienced by the religiously devoted Star Trek fan community and they postulated that these fans were likely to experience a more intense, even pathological, relationship with Star Trek celebrities. The hypothesised relationships between the celebrity attitude scale and community outcomes will be presented in Chapter 7 where the quantitative findings are discussed.

2.4.4 The Impact of Worship on Brand Communities

In order to understand the role of the brand hero in the brand community, the relationships that brand community member's form with the brand hero need to be understood. The concept of parasocial relationships are from the social psychology

discipline and are based on a research tradition of studying the psychological and social outcomes of celebrity worship. This concept is used in this thesis to explore the types of parasocial relationships that members form towards a brand hero. As this has a quantitative scale it will be used to measure the effect that brand hero worship has on brand and social outcomes for the community. The following chapter will expand on the methods used to understand the central question of this thesis, which is the role that a brand hero plays in a brand community through the formation of relationships with brand community members.

Research Question 8

What impact does brand hero worship have on the brand community?

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature that pertains to the importance of the mythological brand hero to the commercial world of the brand community. Initially, it was shown that the nature of brands has transformed from its original conceptualisation of differentiating producers, to transferring value and finally to providing identity to consumers. These views of the brand are expanded to see the brand as a performance between the producer and the consumer. This brand performance enacts and negotiates brand identity and actors' roles, and ultimately results in a brand narrative that forms the core of brand value. It is within this change of perspective on the function of brands that the consideration of the social value of brands has been developed. Brands now form the focus of social networks of consumers for the express purpose of celebrating brand ownership and display. Although the previous literature has considered the religious and mythological aspects of this celebration, the role of brand faces and heroes has been largely ignored. This thesis focuses on this overlooked issue and places it within the context of performance narratives that drive the brand hero and brand community relationship. To this end, a number of research questions were proposed and the following chapter will outline the method used to answer these questions.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will cover the different methodologies used in the thesis in terms of their theoretical perspectives, justifications for their use and how they were applied in this research. The nature of the research question and the focus on the discovery of inter-relationships between consumers, brand heroes and marketers is best suited to examination through exploratory qualitative approach. The use of qualitative research in the study of consumer behaviour has received greater attention in recent decades as the focus has moved from predicting consumer behaviour to understanding consumer value (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994; Firat 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Firat (1991) and Firat and Venkatesh (1995) posit that the modernist viewpoint of consumption was in the destruction of value created in the production process of goods and services. They argue that a post-modernist perspective that considers value generated in the production process as transferable to the consumer in the consumption process more accurately reflects the transformation of value in co-creation through symbolic, experiential and utilitarian value. Qualitative research is positioned to play a greater role in the post-modernist perspective of consumer behaviour in the context of value co-creation through consumption of symbolic and experiential outcomes.

One of the most influential qualitative studies to emerge in the consumer research field was the Consumer Behaviour Odyssey undertaken by a team of academics in the United States of America in the summer of 1986 (Belk et al. 1989; Kassarian 1987). This project saw the researchers travel across the country and document consumers in a naturalistic environment; in places such as department stores, concerts and flea markets. These encounters were documented through videotape, still photography, audiotapes and impressionistic journals. The scale and the ambitiousness of the project as well as the extensive outcomes produced in terms of understanding consumer value and behaviour saw a greater emphasis on qualitative methods in all areas of consumer research (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Belk et al. 1989).

Applications of qualitative methods to understanding consumer problems are highlighted by the use of ethnographies to understand consumption subcultures and communities (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Kates 2000; Kozinets 2001; McAlexander and Schouten 1998; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Thornton 1995; Wheaton 2000), as well as to understanding what the consumption process means to individual consumers (Aaker and Fournier 1995; Belk 1988; Belk et al. 1989; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Fournier 1998; Fournier and Yao 1997; Holbrook 1986; Kates 2002; Múniz 1997; Richins 1994; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). From this background of using qualitative methods to understand consumer value, this chapter will elaborate on the use of these methods in understanding the value of the relationship between consumers, the brand face / hero and marketing.

The research in this thesis addresses the question of the influence of the brand face / hero within a brand community. This requires an understanding of the role of the brand face or hero from a descriptive perspective, to explore the community and cultural context, whilst also requiring an understanding of the process of building and maintaining brand communities. The research is based on an ethnographic grounded theory approach, supported by a subsequent quantitative assessment of brand face interaction within the brand community. The grounded theory approach informs the analysis of the qualitative data collected using an ethnographic approach. The ethnographic method allows for a deep understanding of culturally based patterns of behaviours (Goulding 2005), while grounded theory enables the development of theory from this rich data (Fernandez 2004). The subsequent quantitative studies were conducted to further explore aspects of the brand face's relationship with the brand community which arose from the ground theory section of the study.

3.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was developed to provide a systematic study of the relationship of the individual's experience of society and history (Goulding 1998). Grounded theory has been described by Robrecht (1995, p.170) as

a process that articulated the discovery of theory from qualitative data. Grounded theory is a method of constant comparative analysis based in the thesis that social science theory can be built from data systematically obtained in a social setting. Grounded theory method offers a rigorous, orderly guide to the development in which data collection and theory generation are seen as two parts of the same process.

This systematised approach of building theory from data was developed in order for social researchers to create new understandings from situations “where little is already known, or to provide a fresh slant on existing knowledge” (Goulding 1998, p.51). These criteria for the application of grounded theory are more than relevant to the current study where no existing theory or concepts encapsulate the role of brand faces or heroes and existing theories are derived from settings not commensurate with that of a brand community – brand face relationship.

Grounded theory is based in the interpretivist mode of enquiry and has developed out of a tradition of symbolic interactionism (Annells 1996; Goulding 1998). Symbolic interactionism emphasises that the meaning of self and things is defined by “social roles, expectations, and perspectives cast on self by society and by those within society” (Annells 1996, p.381-2), where this meaning is derived through social interactions. Grounded theory relies on the logic of positivism where it assumes that there is an external reality that researchers can discover and record and that “reality is independent of the observer and the methods used to produce it” (Charmaz 2000, p.513). The positivistic stance of traditional grounded theory is problematic when dealing with the meaning of a brand hero to the brand community as the meanings of each are socially constructed requiring a more interpretive perspective. This problem is discussed further and an alternative perspective on grounded theory is presented in the section on representation in section 3.3.1 later in this chapter.

An important contribution of grounded theory to this study is the theoretical sampling of cases and the systematic method of analysis. Theoretical sampling emphasises the selection of cases that represent differences in case attributes in order to compare and contrast the theory that emerges from the data (Eisenhardt 1989; Eisenhardt and

Graebner 2007; Glaser and Strauss 1967). Two cases were selected for analysis in this thesis based on the number of heroes, number of faces and the coordination of the marketing effort. Table 3.1 shows the case selection criteria and the cases sites sampled for this study.

Table 3.1 Case Selection Criteria and Case Sites Selected

Discworld	The Brumbies
Single brand hero	Multiple brand heroes
Multiple brand faces	Multiple brand faces
Limited coordinated marketing effort	Concentrated marketing effort

The first site, Discworld, presents a single brand hero as a central figure in the brand narrative, with Terry Pratchett as the author of the Discworld books, and there are multiple brand faces that embody a backstage role in support of the hero. The other distinguishing feature of Discworld is that it is a global brand where the marketing effort is disjointed across each country's market.

The second site, Brumbies rugby union team, uses multiple brand heroes and faces including some players who are viewed as central to the team's success and others who are considered support cast. Other roles are fulfilled by backstage faces, such as the coach and management. The Brumbies also has a coordinated marketing effort concentrated on the Canberra region. These sites will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter in terms of the data collection technique and analysis method.

3.2.1 Grounded Theory and Ethnography

While the basis for grounded theory lies in symbolic interactionism and the building of theories from rigorous sampling and analysis techniques, there has been some discussion of the ‘marriage’ between grounded theory and ethnography in order to reach a deeper understanding of consumer experiences (Pettigrew 2000). There has been criticism of grounded theory, as its application results in context specific or a “substantive level” of theory development and a muddling of methods (Goulding 2005). For this thesis, ethnography is used to gather data that will inform a larger grounded theory approach to produce theory development that has greater generalisability.

3.2.2 Overview of Ethnographic Method

Ethnography is derived from anthropology and provides a framework for the consideration of the lifeways of people (Caughey 1982). However, it does not provide systematic consideration for the way in which the researcher interprets and analyses data (Pettigrew 2000). Goulding (2005, p.300) describes the process of ethnography as involving “the search for patterns, and ideas that will help explain the existence of these patterns, taking into consideration emic and etic interpretations” and while this is similar to the outcomes sought in grounded theory, the process of analysis has less structure. Analysis of ethnographic data is less prescribed, with common approaches including content analysis and the categorisation of field notes and their aggregation into thematic headings. Findings are often presented as “thick description” rather than as theoretical development (Goulding 2005).

The drawing of descriptive conclusions on the brand performance enacted between brand faces and the brand community is the initial step in the process of analysis. Theory is then developed to understand of the social process underlying the imagined and real relationships that are enacted in the brand performance. In order to go beyond the ethnographic tendency to produce this context specific thick description, this study will combine ethnographic development of deep insight with grounded theory’s strength in developing deep theoretical development. This combination has been described by

Pettigrew (2000, p.259) based on her dissertation study of Australian beer consumption (Pettigrew 1999) in the following way.

[E]thnographic methods were employed in the data collection phase in the form of interviews, observations, and participant observations conducted in drinking situations. The data obtained were then analysed according to the principles of the grounded theory method. The results were two-fold. In the first instance, a thick description of beer consumption in Australian culture was produced. This represented the ethnographic component of the study, and was represented in terms of five myths that were found to accompany beer consumption in Australia. A theoretical account of this form of consumption was then generated in the form of the primary category and properties that were found to apply to beer consumption.

Combining methods has been criticised as violating the principles of grounded theory by Locke (1996). Locke's criticisms are based on purposive differences (grounded theory as theory building and ethnography as description) and methodological differences (theoretical sampling as opposed to sampling social networks). Skodal-Wilson and Ambler-Hutchinson (1996) have argued that with appropriate justification and objectives, grounded theory can be used alongside other approaches. Ethnography is used in this study to develop an understanding of the brand community and the brand face's role within this context, while grounded theory is used for theoretical sampling and to analyse data to produce substantive and general theories. Ethnography is used to structure data collection through embedded association with the community and the development of in-depth insight into the social structures and relationships.

In order to generate a more substantive general theory to explain the influence of brand faces, a sample of different brand communities was needed. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.54) the desire for a formal theory will lead the researcher to "definitely select dissimilar cases, substantive groups from the larger class, while increasing his [her] theory's scope". Based on this principle of developing formal theory, very dissimilar groups were selected. The literature suggests that the characteristics of the

individual and the group influence the types of pseudo-relationship experienced, for instance the younger the fan community the more likely the relationship will be one of hero worship (Boon and Lomore 2001) and the more brand faces within the community the more likely different types and intensity of relationships (Caughey 1987). These possible differences require that different types of groups be studied.

The following section will detail the ethnographic procedures undertaken in the ethnography of the Discworld and Brumbies brand communities. Following this, the theoretical sampling justifications, method and procedures will be discussed.

3.3 Ethnography and Brand Communities: The Method and the Context

Ethnography has been used increasingly in consumer research studies, especially those focusing on the lived experience of consumption (Belk et al. 1989; Kates 2000; Kozinets 2001, 2002b; O'Guinn and Belk 1989). There has been a call for marketers to understand the macro-level consumption behaviour of individuals and groups in order to build knowledge of this area (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Ethnography encompasses a comparatively fluid concept and method of qualitative research, which includes not only the collection of data but also its analysis and representation as a system of inquiry (Flick 2002; Tedlock 2000). An overview of ethnographic enquiry will be conducted and a justification of the choice of this method for the study of a brand community within a larger grounded theory study will be presented.

3.3.1 Ethnography: Embeddedness, Reflexivity and Representation

Ethnography is the most appropriate method for the analysis of meanings as these meanings exist within, and are created by, a group. The nature of ethnographic study has evolved from its roots in anthropology to a dynamic and varied exploration of

human behaviour in a number of different contexts.¹ Tedlock (2000, p.470) describes the basis for ethnography:

a key assumption has been that by entering into firsthand interaction with people in their everyday lives, ethnographers can reach a better understanding of the beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of their subjects than they can by using any other method.

The specifics of what constitutes ethnographic enquiry are difficult to express as absolutes. From the literature about ethnographic method three key factors seem to define this method: (1) the embeddedness of the researcher in the context of study, (2) the reflexivity of the researcher in their self-awareness as participant and researcher and (3) the representation of their research design, description, and interpretation (Caughey 1982; Flick 2002; Marshall and Rossman 2006; Silverman 2005; Tedlock 2000). These attributes of ethnographic study will be discussed further with reference to their application for this study.

The underlying purpose of ethnography is to study human systems and relationships from an insider's perspective (Caughey 1982; Silverman 2005). A key difference between ethnography and other methods is the process of developing this insider's perspective. Whilst a number of other data collection techniques, such as interviews, participant observation and focus groups, can be used to measure the 'other', the ethnographic researcher is trying to become the 'other' (Silverman 2005; Tedlock 2000). This allows the researcher to understand meaning from the position of the participant.

In achieving an insider status, the aim of the researcher is to develop an understanding of this social world, based on an insider's understanding of meaning while being able to

¹ For a full overview of the history of ethnographic theory and practice see Caughey, John L. (1982), "The Ethnography of Everyday Life: Theories and Methods for American Cultural Studies," *American Quarterly*, 34 (3), 222-43, Tedlock, Barbara (2000), "Ethnography and Ethnographic Representation," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. NK Denzin and YS Lincoln, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 455-86.

express this in terms comprehensible to an audience that is nearly always comprised of outsiders (Marshall and Rossman 2006; Silverman 2005). This creates a representational conflict, with the aim to represent a comprehensible analysis from an insider's perspective for an outside reader. This conflict has caused controversy in the nature of qualitative research (Schwandt 2000), but one approach to resolve some of this discord is the use of reflexivity in data collection, interpretation and presentation (Caughey 1982). The ethnographic elements of embeddedness, reflexivity and representation and how they were applied to the two cases sampled in this study will be discussed in more detail.

3.3.2 The Role of the Researcher: Embeddedness

The nature of the role played as a researcher within the brand community is important to the data collected, analysis of this data and how the data is reported to others outside of the community under study. One of the key contentions in qualitative ethnographic research is the role that the researcher plays in the social world under study. This has arisen from the purpose of qualitative research, namely the study of human systems, whether it be cultural systems of meanings (Caughey 1984) or power relations between people and groups (Foucault 1980). The nature of most qualitative research requires the researcher to interact with those being researched. This provides methodological and ethical considerations as to how the researcher engages in these interactions with individuals and groups under study (Marshall and Rossman 2006; Silverman 2005). This section will discuss the methodological considerations of the researcher in choosing and engaging in the role of embedded researcher in the field and also the ethical considerations of implementation.

Ethnographic study of groups has moved from studying non-western societies to understanding the life-ways of various groups within everyday life (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Caughey 1982). The role of the researcher and the drive to maintain a theoretical objectivity has been brought into question when the researcher is studying and acting as an active participant within a group in their own culture (Marshall and Rossman 2006; Silverman 2005; Tedlock 2000). The role of the researcher within the research context is under greater scrutiny with the move from secondary ethnographic

sources to first-hand participant observation methods. Once the researcher enters the field, the researcher becomes part of the context and thus forms an indelible part of the research outcome. This can be taken to the extreme where the researcher is the field, such as Holbrook's analysis of his personal obsession with jazz music and its consumption (1986). Such self-research and analysis is comparatively rare, and usually the researcher is merely one of many participants in a field of study.

3.3.3 Being a Fan and Being a Researcher: Reflexivity

The process of capturing and articulating the role of the researcher within the research context has yet to be fully resolved, yet the practice of reflexivity in data collection, analysis and reporting is widely accepted (Silverman 2005). Reflexivity still has to be critically analysed to balance between a narcissistic reporting of events and a view where the researcher is absent (Tedlock 2000). This issue will be discussed below so as to provide insight and justification for the reporting of results of the analysis.

The dilemma of ethnographic research lies in the extent to which the researcher takes on the perspective of the studied (Tedlock 2000). Reflexivity is the ethnographer's representation of self in the research process. It forms the acknowledgement that in the act of participating in the social environment of interest the researcher is essentially changing that environment. It also provides a basis by which the researcher can track conversion from outside observer to inside participant of, with the associated cultural knowledge to participate in, the cultural milieu (Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Silverman 2005).

Self-representation in the research is largely disregarded in many scientific methodologies, with the apparent perception that for academics "publishing personal materials could damage their credibility as scientists" (Tedlock 2000, p.460). The predicament for the ethnographic researcher is to represent themselves, their subjects and their findings without subsuming the purely objective with the purely subjective experience. This following discussion is an acknowledgement of the preconceptions and

biases of the researcher in the ethnographic experience and an examination of the process of becoming a brand community member.

3.3.3.1 Reflexivity in Discworld

The above discussion on the change in perspectives of the researcher gives rise to what role, I, as the researcher play in an ethnographic account of a fan community. The first reflexive admission I need to make is my status as a fan of Discworld, the first fan community under study in this thesis. Prior to the commencement of this thesis I had been a reader of Discworld novels and had read a substantial number of the books available to this date. I had never been involved in any formal fan activities; my fan activities had been confined to informal, social encounters with other fans and occasionally making a concerted effort to obtain new books as they became available. I did not attend or participate in any book signings or formal Discworld fan communities, such as online forums or Discworld reader groups.

This background as a Discworld fan had the advantages of providing me with an extensive knowledge of the Discworld brand and the language of the community that was based in Discworld.² This knowledge made the entry into the Discworld community relatively smooth and I was able to skip the steps outlined by Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) entry into the Harley Davidson community where they previously did not ride any motorcycle and had to learn the background to the product and the brand, as well as the community. This allowed me to focus on understanding the community. While Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) study aimed to understand the new phenomenon of subcultures of consumption and brand communities, which would benefit from the ground up approach to all aspects of the research setting, my research is focusing on a specific aspect within the framework they have already developed, and as such, there is less need to be a complete novice. For my study I had the background in the product and the brand, and as such was able to concentrate my energies on understanding the community.

² It should be highlighted that while some of the language of the Discworld community is founded in the Discworld books, i.e. "troll" means a person not following correct community etiquette or who is being annoying, some of the language of the fan community is derived specifically from the community, such as when to use a member's real name and not their screen name.

This background knowledge did give me some prior assumptions that need to be identified and acknowledged. For instance, there was a tendency to think of the other Discworld members as ‘just like me’: they like the same series of books, we obviously enjoyed some of the political, social and ethical questions raised in them, so therefore we must have a similar outlook on life and to some extent a similar outlook on the topic of study. As my interaction in the Discworld community progressed it became obvious that this was not the case and much of the excitement and tension within the community arose out of discussions that split the opinions of members, and sometimes this was evident in the opinions expressed by members when I asked them questions derived from my research. The responses often diverged greatly from the theory and from conclusions I had drawn from the data. Cross or back checking findings with respondents proved to be very fruitful in identifying the assumptions I was making and in enriching my conclusions.

The process of becoming a member was more complex than registering with an online forum. Merely having a screen name and avatar does not constitute ‘membership’ within a brand community. This has been demonstrated in similar previous studies, such as Schouten and McAlexander’s (1995) ethnography of Harley Davidson riders. Their study was conducted over a two to three year period and when they found that borrowing a bike wasn’t enough to gain membership, they purchased bikes. Even owning the bike was not enough to be considered a full member and the researchers were required to take on the full member persona and demonstrate their commitment to the Harley Davidson community through riding their Harleys as the primary mode of transport and their participation in community events, such as HOG rallies. This study found that one of the key aspects of these groups is that a social hierarchy exists and that this must be negotiated and understood by the researcher for them to truly understand the community. I encountered a similar experience where participation on the forum was required almost daily to establish an acknowledged member status. However, in the Discworld community not only was online participation required but by participating in real world events I was able to gain a truer insider status. Table 3.2 illustrates this transition of membership status and the major events within my negotiation of the Discworld community hierarchy.

Table 3.2: Time Line of Discworld Research

Time Line	2004		2005				
	Oct	Nov	April	Jun/Jul	Aug	Aug	Sep
Research Events	Initiated membership in online Discworld (DW) community	Finalised thesis topic	Commenced interviews with social network	Participant observation and interviews with DW online members – UK and Germany Falling out between two core community members sees a number of members leave to a different board	Terry Pratchett criticises JK Rowling incident Spammer attacks on official board	Online DW community builds and moves to new forum site	Old online DW forum is appointed a moderator by publisher. There is no activity for many months as community has left.
Researcher Status	Outsider: “Newbie” with brand knowledge			Neophyte: Accepted but not esteemed			
Stage of Involvement	Personal Interest: No research agenda		Participant Observation	Full-Time Ethnography			
Researcher emotions	Apprehension of lack of acceptance Anticipation Eagerness to participate Self-conscious		Excitement Fun Frustration at lack of inclusion	Some frustration with distance and inability to attend real world events			

Time Line	2006	2007	2008	2009
	Feb	Early	Dec	Mid-late
Research Events	Invited to join msn conversations with DW board members	First references to Terry Pratchett being ill Some disgruntlement at cancelled book signings and only 1 book published a year 1 st Australian DW convention held. Conducted videography and survey	Announcement that Terry Pratchett is suffering from early-onset Alzheimer's Discussion focuses on what will happen to Discworld	Write-up of results Continuing membership to confirm my interpretations with community Continued write-up and confirmation of findings
Researcher Status	Growing Insider Status		Insider	
Stage of Involvement	Full-Time Ethnography			Re-iterative process of analysis, writing and confirmation
Researcher emotions	Comfortable Fun Insider jokes and inclusion			Feeling drained and a loss of enthusiasm for the project Becoming increasingly stingy with time outside of PhD

Table 3.3 Timeline of Brumbies Research

Time Line	2006	2007	2008	2009
	Feb - April	Feb - April	Feb - April	Feb-April
Research Events	First season attended. End of season: Matt Giteau leaves for the Western Force	Second season. End of season: Gregan and Larkham retire.	Third season Team in rebuilding phase with lots of young players Last game of season conduct survey End of season: Coach is sacked. Andy Friend is announced as new coach	Fourth season Death of player mid-season in South Africa. Community concern for how the team will perform after this event. End of season: announced that Matt Giteau will return.
Researcher Status	Initiate	Neophyte	Neophyte	Growing acceptance
Stage of Involvement		Participant Observation		Re-iterative process of analysis, writing and confirmation
Researcher emotions	Apprehension Slow process of meeting people Self-conscious		Comfortable Fun Insider jokes and inclusion Realisation that as a non male, full inclusion was impossible	Feeling drained and a loss of enthusiasm for the project Hope for the 2010 season that Brumbies will finally make the finals

3.3.3.2 Reflexivity in the Brumbies

The second case I was embedded in is the Brumbies fan community. Prior to the commencement of this study I was not a follower of the Brumbies. My history with the sport of rugby union was also limited. My father was a player and I would watch his games and any other games that would be shown on television. Specific knowledge of the Brumbies was through the media as a resident of the Brumbies home town, Canberra. The Brumbies provided a contrast in the ability of the researcher to attain an embedded position in the community. Rugby is a male dominated sport; however, the community is a mixture of family groups and individual males. As a female without a family I maintained a greater outsider status within this community than in the Discworld community. This allowed for a greater sense of confirmation or disconfirmation of findings from the Discworld analysis as the greater the insider status the more likely interpretations are to be affected. Table 3.3 shows the transition of membership within the Brumbies community.

Within the Brumbies study, the starting position as a complete outsider to the community provided a contrast in researcher perspective. Whereas in the Discworld study there was the assumption of 'just like me', in the Brumbies case I started with the belief that the community was 'nothing like me'. As I progressed with my research I came to realise that while I am not the same as the core of the community I was able to be accepted on the periphery. This is reflective of the diversity in the make-up of the entire Brumbies community, encouraged by the Brumbies management; there is a perception of inclusiveness. However, the hard-core members are nearly all males with a history of playing rugby. As a female who has never played I was unable to be included in this group. However, the hard-core group did acknowledge and accept my membership in the wider community. This was shown through hard-core members asking my opinion on the play and exchanging pleasantries during events. This greater level of outsider status meant that the Brumbies case provided an opportunity to compare findings from the Discworld study where I was an insider with a community where I was an outsider. This produced results that were shown to be consistent across community situations providing greater rigour to theoretical findings.

While reflexivity is important to the acknowledgement of self in the research process, from participant observation, analysis and finally reporting, being aware of the self is not enough. Beyond the reflexivity of the research there is the representation of the self in reporting. While this is based on the awareness of self it goes to the heart of how the researcher represents their biases, epistemological stance and the decisions made in interpreting data. The link between reflexivity and representation needs to be recognised for the following discussion.

3.3.4 Expressing the Fan and the Research: Representation

Representation is the recognition in the writing that the researcher is a critical part of the research process. It is through the representation of the insider meanings as interpreted by the researcher that the outside audience gains insight into the research setting (Denzin 1997). According to Tedloch (2000, p.464) the aim of the ethnographer should be to “present both self and other together within a single narrative frame that focuses on the process and character of the ethnographic dialogue”. The decisions about the categorisation of important constructs were informed by respondents through a dialogue with the community that sought alternative opinions and confirmation of accurate representation. This formed a co-constructed, rather than researcher determined, process (Ponterotto 2005). The following section will discuss the data collection methods used for both cases.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The ethnographic part of this thesis, as has been mentioned earlier, is one source of data for the overall grounded theory study. Other methods and groups were sampled and alternative methods of data collection were used in order to fully explore and triangulate the brand hero phenomenon in the brand community context. This section will identify the different cases sampled and the data collection methods employed, and the justifications for them will be discussed. Table 3.4 displays a summarised version of the data collection techniques used in this thesis.

Table 3.4 Types of Data Collected

	Discworld	Brumbies
Online participant observation	✓	
Real world participant observation	✓	✓
Face-to-face in-depth interviews		
Brand Community Members	✓	✓
Brand Hero / Brand Face	✓	
Brand Marketers		✓
Online in-depth interviews	✓	
Interpretive non participant observation (online)	✓	✓
Quantitative Survey	✓	✓

The procedure followed for this online ethnography was outlined by Kozinets (2002b) in his description of netnographies. This method of conducting online ethnographic field work covers entrée, the selection and accessing of online sites, data collection and analysis, the recording and analysis of online members posts and the researchers own field notes, and providing a trustworthy interpretation, the following of conventional collection, analysis and representation procedures to provide a reasonable, trustworthy or valid account of the research setting (Belk et al. 1989; Lincoln and Guba 1985).

3.4.1. The Ethnography of Discworld

The first site of the ethnographic component of this thesis was in an online Discworld forum. This provided the opportunity to experience the fan community in an unobtrusive and naturalistic way, where the community is ongoing and can be accessed at any point in time (Kozinets 2002b). The benefits of this are in contrast to the time critical and location specific nature of real world fan events, such as marketer created brandfests like Jeep Jamborees (McAlexander and Schouten 1998; McAlexander et al. 2002), or fan created events, like clubs or fanfiction groups (Hills 2002; Jenkins 1992;

Schouten and McAlexander 1995). While the real world offers limited but intense interaction with fan communities, the online forum allowed for continual interaction, the building of trust, rapport and a depth of insight that may not have been possible otherwise.

3.4.1.1. Entree

The Discworld site was accessed by becoming a member of the publisher-run fan forum website. As part of becoming a member I disclosed my research interests to the forum but set out to become an accepted member rather than as a peripheral observer. This issue of seeking accepted membership by the group and the additional burden on the researcher to manage this relationship is especially crucial in the online environment (Kates 2002). As a researcher, I found that being an accepted member of the community was crucial in gaining responses from other community members to my research questions and concerns. Without the trust built through constant interaction on a number of topics, or the community members' acceptance of the purity of my motives and the perception that my membership was genuine, it would have been virtually impossible to gather the extent and depth of data required for the thesis.

3.4.1.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The types of data collected from this site included the participant observation transcripts of naturalistic posting by community members. These posts covered a wide variety of topics from politics, religion, jokes, personal information, and arguments to Discworld and Terry Pratchett related discussions. One advantage of the Internet forum was that postings were automatically recorded with posts and threads stored in the system permanently, which meant that I was able to access the forum at a convenient time for me and view all previous postings on a topic. The system also allowed me to search and access old threads, which at the time did not seem useful, whose value became apparent with further research.

Beyond participant observation in the online Discworld community, I also undertook online interviews via instant messaging (a tool on the website forum that allows the exchange of private messages between members of the forum, similar to email but with real-time messages) or through email. In these interviews, I looked for deeper understanding of specific topics and personal views rather than an opinion that may be influenced by the social pressure of the group forum (Kozinets 1997). With increasing membership status within the Discworld forum, I was able to do participant observation and interviews with forum members in a real world setting. This added additional insight, as well as confirming the identities of many of the online participants (Kozinets 2002b).

To provide a counterpoint to the views and meanings expressed by online Discworld fans in a formalised community setting, I looked to understand the views expressed by Discworld fans who were not engaged in formal fan activities (Hills 2002; Jenkins 1992). If meanings can be socially generated then the question arose whether the meaning of Terry Pratchett's role in the brand community was different for those only nominally associated with the community (Bar-Tal 1998; Postmes, Spears, and Lea 1999; Stets and Burke 2000; Turner 1999).

To explore this aspect of less involved or passive fans (Hills 2002; Jenkins 1992; Tulloch and Jenkins 1995) I used a snowballing technique from two Discworld fans I met at a Terry Pratchett book signing event I attended in November 2004. These respondents were asked similar questions to the online fans about their brand community involvement and their relationship to Terry Pratchett. Respondents were asked to nominate people they knew who also read Discworld; those nominated were contacted by the respondent to request permission to be contacted by me. Only those that had consented to be contacted were asked to participate in interviews. From this series of interviews, 19 people in a loose social network of relationships were interviewed.

Data from an online community of opposition was also accessed to determine the role of the oppositional brand hero, (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Múniz and Schau 2005).

From the Discworld community perspective, Pratchett represents a brand hero, whereas in other communities, he was the representation of the antithesis of the hero for the community of opposition represented by a Harry Potter community (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Caughey 1984, 1987; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Múniz and Schau 2005). Communities of opposition are those brand communities who take on the role of adversary to an opposition brand or brand community. Within the Discworld case, an incident occurred to create communities of opposition. The incident was precipitated by the publication of a letter to the editor written by Terry Pratchett apparently criticizing the reporting of fantasy literature and implying that comments made by J.K. Rowling in a previously published article were disingenuous (Anon 2005; Grossman 2005). These comments sparked outrage in the Harry Potter community, and saw a flurry of online community activity.

In order to research this phenomenon I engaged in non-participant observation of other online Discworld forums and Harry Potter fan forums to gather data and analyse the relationship between hero, villain and adversary between these brand communities. Approximately 1500 pages of web postings were gathered from four different fan forums: two Discworld and two Harry Potter forums. The representation of the analysis of all the data collected in this ethnographic study is discussed further in the following section.

3.4.1.3. Providing a Trustworthy Interpretation

A constructivist grounded theory approach has been undertaken to provide a trustworthy interpretation of my research. The procedures of analysis included simultaneous collection and analysis of data, where respondents were engaged in a dialogue as part of the interpretation of findings. There was also a two-step coding process, memo writing to highlight important concepts, theoretical sampling and integration of data and analysis into a theoretical framework (Charmaz 2000; Eisenhardt 1989; Fernandez 2004; Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Further to the methods outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the constructionist grounded theory approach also involves taking the codes generated from the analysis and returning to the field and assessing whether the initial respondents personal meanings correspond with the researcher generated meanings (Charmaz 2000). Verifying my analysis with the meanings of respondents has the additional benefit of ensuring a trustworthy interpretation of the data, as it is not simply the application of the grounded theory process to generate verifiable results but also the validation of respondents in confirming or disconfirming results.

Additional discussion was generated by respondents confirming results, which added depth to the data available and further enhancing the analysis. For example, the idea that Terry Pratchett could be described as a celebrity was not consistent within the community or across individuals, which disconfirmed results and indicated that the use of this meaning was inherently problematic, thus requiring other concepts to describe the phenomenon. This led to the notion of the brand hero, which was a more consistently accepted categorisation of the meaning of Terry Pratchett to the community. The ability to take researcher-generated categories and verify them against informant's own meanings enabled a more rigorous and trustworthy representation of the community, the data and the meanings found.

The grounded theory analysis of the Discworld ethnographic study indicated that the role of the marketer was not a strong influence in the Discworld brand community. The data indicated that the worldwide nature of the Discworld distribution network combined with the publishing industry structure that results in different marketing in different countries by different publishing companies reduced the marketer's role in the brand community as conceptualised in the customer-centric model portrayed in Figure 2.2 of Chapter 2. This means that while the members of the online Discworld community were drawn from all over the world, they were receiving different marketing communication for their particular geographic market. Details of the results of the study are outlined in Chapter 4, 5, 6 and 7.

3.4.2. The Case Study of the Brumbies Rugby Union Club

A second case study was sought that showed overt marketer influence in the function of the brand community. Caughey's (1987) work on the imaginary relationships of sports fans with sporting brand heroes identified a strong marketer influence within and towards brand communities. The Brumbies rugby union team, based in Canberra, Australia is a member of the Super Rugby Competition. This competition is composed of teams from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and has a large and loyal fan base. The Brumbies has a co-ordinated marketing effort with a specific focus on relationship development between fans and the players and coaches of the club. This presents an optimum counterpoint to the geographically dispersed Discworld brand community (Brumbies Marketing Manager, 2006, Interview).

To gain this perspective I became a member of the Brumbies rugby union club. This allowed me to engage in participant observation at Brumbies events, including the home games of the Super Rugby competition and the family fun day, a marketer created event where members could meet the team, get merchandise signed and interact with other fans (McAlexander and Schouten 1998). In addition to this, as a member I received a weekly Brumbies newsletter via email, which included player profiles, news and special member offers. These newsletters were analysed for their marketer-generated content in developing relationships between the fan community and the team. Another source of data was the game program sold at every home game. This data provided evidence of the marketer's active attempts to create brand heroes. The participant observation data indicated that the community is simultaneously engaged in their own process of identifying heroes. The Brumbies is a rich setting for the contended space of the brand narrative in the performance metaphor. The results of this case study were interpreted using the same grounded theory approach, and understandings of the role of the marketer in the brand community are integrated with the other data collected and are represented within the thematic categories generated from the analysis. Details and results of the qualitative study are outlined in Chapters 4 to 7.

3.5 Quantitative Data Collection: Parasocial Relationships between Brand Community Members and Their Brand Hero

The literature review revealed the concept of parasocial relationships as an important consideration in the understanding of the relationship that brand community members form with their brand hero. However, the parasocial relationship concept has focused solely on celebrities and individual's relationships with them rather than a group's relationship with a hero. In order to test the applicability of the existing concept, two quantitative studies were undertaken in the Discworld and the Brumbies contexts. These quantitative studies provide triangulation of qualitative findings of the relationship between the brand hero, the brand and the brand community. The first study focused on testing an existing parasocial instrument for its applicability to the brand community context and to test the research question of what impact brand hero worship has on brand community outcomes. Specific hypotheses about this question will be presented in Chapter 7. Based on the findings of the first study and on the qualitative research, a more specific measure was tested in the second study in order to understand parasocial relationships in the brand hero context more fully. Details of the quantitative method, analysis and results are outlined in Chapters 7 and 8.

3.6 Conclusion

The nature of the problem of understanding the mediated role of brand heroes to brand communities resulted in the adoption of a constructivist grounded theory approach. Within this framework, the major source of data was an in-depth netnography of a Discworld community, which sourced data online and in the real world from members and non-members to build a complete picture and understanding of the meaning of Terry Pratchett to the brand community. In addition to this, another case explored the role of the marketer in the brand community and in creating a relationship between fans and brand heroes, by analysing the marketer generated events and materials of the Brumbies rugby union club. The following chapter will present an overview of roles that people from the organisation enact in the brand performance and the narratives that each community negotiates.

CHAPTER 4: BRAND FACES – THE DRAMATIC ROLES ENACTED

4.1 Introduction

The review of the literature emphasised the importance of brand values in understanding brand communities as these define the boundaries for the community's sense of self (McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schau et al. 2009). This chapter provides an overview of the two brand communities and their core values that emerged from the ethnographic study. These values influence the notion of what constitutes a brand hero in each situation and thus the first research question of the nature of this relationship is addressed. Following this, the different types of brand heroes are identified by their centrality to the brand's performance. These roles are based on their perceived level of influence over the brand narrative and their visibility to the community. The following section will provide an introduction to each of the brand communities studied and their core brand values.

4.2 Discworld as Community

This section will provide a description of the different Discworld communities accessed within the Discworld tribe. The initial community studied was the official publisher's Discworld forum; however, due to a lack of moderation of the forum and a number of events, the fan community built and moved to its own online forum which became the focus of the online study. A second community was accessed for a series of 19 in-depth interviews located within a personal social network of Discworld readers in the Canberra. The final community accessed was the Australian Discworld Convention (AusDWCon) which is an event based community.

The composition of the Discworld community is quite diverse. Unusually for a fantasy brand, it is more commonly read by females in their 20s (Terry Pratchett, ANU Public Lecture 2004). The online community was largely younger, reflecting the online social networking trends, and although there were some older members in their 50s and 60s,

the majority were in their late teens to thirties. The respondents of the Canberra social network were in their mid twenties to mid thirties and equally split between males and females. In contrast, the AusDWCon had a wide range of participants from children aged about 10 to people in their 70s and again an equal split in genders. While each community's composition and membership was unique (one member from the online community attended AusDWCon) their attitudes to social norms, the brand and the brand hero were quite similar.

4.2.1 Discworld Community Social Norms and Identity

All three communities had the expectation of honesty in personal presentation. This was particularly evident in the online forum where the community had self-enforced norms about open and honest presentation. This was likely a result of the nature of the internet where the social relationship is formed with words and avatars (the picture people use to represent themselves against their posts). The community policed new members for infractions like posting in character; this was seen as inauthentic with recommendations that a role playing forum would be more appropriate. Another infraction that was seen as more serious was posters who were inconsistent in the information that they provided. Misrepresentation of self online was considered a major violation of the community norm. The community's identity was of a group of people who joined to share their love of Discworld but formed real and long-term friendships / relationships with the online community. Inconsistency in representation was a signal that a poster did not conform to this value.

Within all of the communities the acceptance of new people was based on their demonstration of brand knowledge and conforming to community norms. As a researcher I had to demonstrate that I knew the brand and respected the norms. For example, with the online community I did not ask them a direct question about my research for a number of weeks as this time was needed to demonstrate my commitment to the community and that I was not an interloper. The importance of commitment to the brand was established in a new member's first post where the "Introduce yourself

here” thread had a set list of questions for posters to answer that included “How did you discover Discworld?”

The most central tenet of the Discworld community’s identity is that they are “the ones that ‘get it’”. This is tied to the core value of the Discworld brand, “the joke”, which will be discussed in the following section. For community members, being one of those that understand the value of Discworld means that they are, in a sense, more educated, smarter, and have a more sophisticated sense of humour than those that do not read Discworld. This is a way of differentiating fans from non-fans but it also relates to how fans see themselves as somehow similar to the brand hero.

What’s a normal fan of Pratchett? I don’t ... I know most of my family and a whole range of people. I think the only thing you can say about a Terry Pratchett fan is that most of them have above average IQ’s, it’s about the only thing I can think of to say about Terry Pratchett fans. (David, Social Network, Personal Interview)

David saw others that would ‘get it’ as being of above average intelligence. His friend Chris described David as an ‘intellectual snob’ for this statement but others have expressed a similar view of Discworld fans. Two interviewees described Discworld fans this way:

“We are intelligent, literate and social people.” (Sharon, AusDWCon attendee, Personal Interview)

“People in the queue? Very much like the people I was hanging around with at the time the nerdy geeky uni type.” (Judy, Social Network, Personal Interview).

As can be seen from these quotes, there are clear indicators that the community perceive themselves to be ‘intelligent’ and ‘literate’. Those people interviewed that had attended real-life Discworld events such as book signings, public lectures or conventions, stated that they thought that the other people in attendance were like themselves, depicted in the quote from Judy. The social identity that exists within the Discworld community

influences their relationship with the brand; this will be explored in the following section.

4.2.2 Discworld Community and the Brand

This section presents the findings for the core brand value of Discworld community that was influential in forming the basis of judging brand face / hero contribution to the brand. The core value that the community identified with the Discworld brand was “the joke”. This is associated with the nature of the Discworld story. Discworld is predominantly a satire in a fantasy setting; there are many references to real world ancient and modern history, as well as puns, word plays and the twisting of the everyday or expected language forms. These many references to the real world as a basis for “the joke” mean that the reader has to be aware of the real world reference in order to get the Discworld joke.

“You can read it on so many levels depending on what you actually know about the world, its history and things like that. You actually understand different stuff. So, you can read a different book that you haven’t read for years and get different things in it because over that time you’ve grown yourself. And it makes fun of the world. It makes fun of everything of things that people think are so important and sort of puts it in perspective. I like the fact that it makes fun of everyone. At the same time there’s a note of seriousness in it too.

“He took things that really happened in history, like to the witches and things like that, there’s stuff about witchcraft except the witch trials instead of burning witches at the stake its actually this fantastic time when they all [witches] got together and had fun and compared spells and stuff.” (Alison, Personal interview, Canberra Social Network)

This understanding of the real world that is used to create “the joke” forms an important aspect of the interpretive function of the community, with the source of references discussed and debated and why they are funny being explained to those who are unaware. For example, in the book *Night Watch* the method of torture the “ginger beer trick” was mentioned which was unfamiliar with some members of the community.

Posted by: WhiteCrowUK

What is the type of torture using "ginger beer" hinted at in *Night Watch*???

I cannot wonder if its a dig into the torture Mussolini used to inflict with castor oil ...

http://www.straightdope.com/classics/a4_028.html

Posted by: sleepy_sarge

a quick google reveals.....

There has been much confusion on alt.fan.pratchett concerning what exactly constitutes the 'ginger beer trick', and which bodily orifices are involved. Terry says:

"To save debate running wild: I've heard this attributed to the Mexican police as a cheap way of getting a suspect to talk and which, happily, does not leave a mark. The carbonated beverage of choice was Coca-Cola. Hint: expanding bubbles, and the sensitivity of the sinuses."

These posts in the thread “What is the ginger beer trick?” show the interpretive function of the community in understanding “the joke”. WhiteCrowUK is unaware of the real world reference and turns to the community for help as “the joke” is not complete without this information. While this thread began with discussions of the source of the ginger beer trick it moved on to humorous stories of others experiences of snorting / having carbonated beverages in the sinuses. This was part of the function that the community provided through both entertainment, and education of users to preserve the insider status of “the joke”.

In understanding the influence of brand faces and brand heroes by the brand community the brand value of “the joke” and the social identity of “those that get it” is pervasive. These values form the basis for judging the contribution of brand face / hero to the brand and the community. These values will be referred to throughout the specific findings of the relationship between the Discworld community and their brand faces and hero.

4.3 Brumbies as Community

This section introduces the Brumbies brand and the community. As the Brumbies exists within a larger sporting culture of consumption (Kozinets 2001) a sporting model is used to couch the complexities of the relationship between the team and the wider sport milieu (Hardy 1990). This overview of the Brumbies community focuses on the team in the general structure of the Australian sporting culture. The overriding values that emerge for the community are that rugby union is in an oppositional relationship with rugby league and that the community admires the competition over the victory.

4.3.1 The Brumbies in the General Structure

The Brumbies form a professional sporting team within a larger rugby union structure. There is an important interplay between the fans of rugby union and fans of the Brumbies, highlighting the negotiation of identity between the brand community and the larger union subculture. The sportgeist model posits a series of interrelated contexts that are constantly negotiated by the players, the fans and society (Hardy 1990). This model forms the basis for the analysis of the brand community as it negotiates the contexts of the spirit of the sport, the sport structure and the general structure of society. The concept of sportgeist represents a series of dialectic choices along the dimensions of competition, physicality, creativity and achievement. While these dimensions are relevant to the Brumbies case the following analysis will discuss the missing dimension

of beautiful play. The community negotiates a sportgeist 'norm' that emphasises particular dimensions and becomes the spirit of the game.

4.3.2 Brumbies as Gentleman Warriors

The first consideration is the place of the Brumbies within the wider sphere of the product category of rugby union and also rugby union's place within Australian sport. The importance of where rugby sits in the Australian sporting landscape is in the oppositional elements that exist between it and other football codes, especially rugby league. The professional sports market is very crowded with a number of different sports vying for television rights and fans attention. Rugby union is in the crowded winter months, where it competes against rugby league and Australian Rules football (AFL). Rugby league is strongest in New South Wales and Queensland, where it has a strong fan and media following. Australian Rules football is predominantly played in Victoria and South Australia, although currently it has the most successful push to nationalise of all of the codes.

Despite the geographic-based nature of football support in Australia, Canberra is in a unique position as it supports all of the codes. Canberra's population is quite transient and many people have located there for work purposes. With the population drawn largely from other states, the support for the various football codes has also transferred. Besides the Brumbies in the professional rugby union competition, there is also a professional rugby league team, the Raiders. While there is no team based in Canberra for the AFL, two games are played each year in Canberra. This means that there is a lot of competition for football supporters in the market and the Brumbies engage in a focused and extensive marketing campaign to maintain their position.

Against this crowded footballing landscape rugby union forms a smaller code, mainly played in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. As the Australian Capital Territory falls within the borders of New South Wales the ACT Brumbies have strong ties to and draws players from across the border and has its greatest rivalry with the NSW Waratahs. Rugby union professionalised later than the other codes with the

creation of the Super 12 competition in 1996. This competition drew teams from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa based on exclusive television rights with Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. The impetus for the professionalisation of rugby and the Super 12 competition was in reaction to rugby league. At the time league was seeking to create a SuperLeague competition with the existing professional competition: the NRL. This competition would have meant better pay for players and the similarities between the codes meant that union players could switch to league. The SuperLeague failed; however, transfer of players from league to union was reversed with the creation of the Super 12 competition. League players such as Lote Tuqiri and Wendell Sailor, who have both represented Australia as league players, switched to union.

The league and union codes have similar structure in style of play, with differences in scoring and rules. The key rule difference is that in league each team can only play the ball for six tackles, while in union the play continues regardless of a tackle being laid. The main differences in the codes are in the style of play, the perceptions of who plays each code and how this is reflected in the fan community. League is considered a lower class or working class sport, with players and fans both tending to come from working class roots. Conversely, union in Australia is the preferred sport of elite boys schools, especially prior to the professionalization of the sport. Former Australian team players were doctors, lawyers and accountants, reflecting the white collar and somewhat elitist origins of union players and fans. These are generalisations and are reflective of positions each code takes in the market rather than absolute social divides.

The socio-economic differences between the codes are highlighted in how union fans view league players. League has seen many controversies, with players charged with gang rape, rape, drugs and drug trafficking, drink driving and numerous other crimes and scandals. This has been lamented in the media as undermining league's appeal to the market, especially families and female fans. In contrast, the most serious crime a current Brumbies player was convicted of during the study period was speeding. The tolerance for player indiscretion appears to be lower in union, where both of the former league players previously mentioned who had switched to union were both dismissed from their respective union teams. Wendell Sailor was banned from rugby for two years following positive tests for cocaine and Lote Tuqiri was dismissed after breaking team

rules. Both players returned to league. This harshness against indiscretion is not universal and the fans seem to hold the ex-league players to a higher standard than union players. For example, Justin Harrison (Googey) was banned from union for one year following cocaine use in the English competition. He returned to Australia to play for the Brumbies, when I asked a long-term Brumbies supporter about this the reply was quite dismissive:

“Googey? Oh he’s OK. At least he’s a local lad.” (Robbo, male 40s, member since 1996)

This suggests that a union player may be more easily forgiven than an ex-league player. However, there is an overall expectation that union players will be well-educated, and it is still normal for players to have attended elite boys schools, and be well behaved. In this difference the fan community asserts their values in opposition to league, where union players ‘aren’t like those leagueys’. This oppositional element against rugby league is important in the identification of Brumbies heroes as they embody union and reject the apparent negative behaviour of league players. The socio-economic and oppositional elements form important elements in the judging of brand faces and heroes within the Brumbies community and will be referred to throughout this discussion.

4. 4 The Relationship between the Brand Community and Brand Heroes

This section addresses the first research question, which focuses on the interaction between brand heroes and the brand community. The first case, the Discworld community, considers the single hero situation of creator Terry Pratchett as the central heroic figure. In the Brumbies case, the role of hero is much more fluid and figures move between brand face and heroic figures depending on their attributes and behaviours. The final finding for this question was in the different roles that the various heroes move through in the brand narratives.

Research Question 1

What is the nature of interaction between a brand hero and the brand community?

4.4.1 Terry Pratchett as Central Hero to the Discworld Community

The Discworld community has a number of brand faces, although they have only the one central heroic figure. The creator, Terry Pratchett, is this heroic figure and the majority of narratives about the brand and the brand faces revolved around Pratchett's role in the brand's creation and management. Others were identified as important but they were considered as supportive to Pratchett rather than central in their own right. Terry Pratchett as the central hero performed a number of functions within the Discworld community. These will be explored further in Chapter 6, but it is important to first outline the attitudes that the community has towards him. The references that the community makes towards him are both inclusive of the brand and distancing of the person. For example, the community has given Terry Pratchett nicknames based around the novels. The first is 'pterry' that is based on the book *Pyramids* which includes characters of Ptracy and Pteppic. The second is "The Mathter" that is based on a running series of characters all called Igor, who are a clan of servants that tend to work for mad scientists. The Igor code says that they must always lisp and that the boss is always referred to as "mathter".

These nicknames draw Pratchett into the world of the Discworld which in some sense separates him from the community. Community members tend to refer to each other by their member name or their real name, Pratchett is the only person referred to by names created out of the brand. In addition, while pterry implies an affectionate reference, The Mathter, implies that Pratchett occupies a leadership position and is held in respect. The attitudes held by the community towards Pratchett are indelibly tied to the brand as references to Pratchett are made only in the context of discussing the books rather than the non-Discworld discussions that dominate the board. Terry Pratchett's pseudo-relationship with the community is one of affection and respect but is indelibly associated with the brand.

4.4.2 The Brumbies and the Sport Structure

This section will discuss the Brumbies community's values. To some extent, the sport structure attribute of tactics includes the community's ethos of the 'beautiful game'. The community does not believe in winning at any cost but rather in winning with an attacking style of play. The Brumbies are part of an old sport but in a newly professionalised arena. However, the geographic specificity of the team means that they have a very focused and coherent marketing effort, which is in contrast with the Discworld case, where the marketing effort was diversified through different publishers in different countries.

As rugby was relatively late to professionalise, there are many layers of committees in the sports bureaucracy. One rugby supporter states that the Australian team (the Wallabies) selectors have to deal with an estimated 15 committees. This means that there is often much debate and disagreement over the players that are selected to represent the country. The Brumbies are a part of this process and have three players that have been Australian captains on the team in the 2010 season. While it was widely believed by fans at the start of the season that this evidence of quality players would lead to the team making the finals, this was not the case. With a poor showing in the 2010 season there has been speculation that having too many captains has led to a lack of cohesion within the team and its play. One commentator described it as "too many cooks in the kitchen" (Waratahs v Brumbies, April 2010). On the one hand, the fans look to Australian representative players as a sign of quality and potential to win games, the lack of success for the Brumbies can turn the fans against them.

A case that highlights the fact that perceptions of quality can be indicated by the players test experience but that their brand hero status is judged on their performance for the local team is that of Rocky Elsom. Elsom joined the Brumbies for 2010 after playing in Ireland and was formerly with the Brumbies local rivals, the Waratahs. Elsom had represented Australia 49 times and was named as the Wallabies captain in 2009. His inclusion in the Brumbies was lauded as a coup and the thought was that he would

provide experience and a 'running game' to the Brumbies squad. However, the fans were very unhappy with his performance for the team. A discussion with Robbo (male 40s, member since 1996) underlined the fact that Elsom's performance for the Brumbies did not live up to fans expectations:

"Rocky only came for the money. I reckon he's getting over a million and look at him... He doesn't look close to being useful. GET IN THERE ROCKY!!!"

Even though the Brumbies were winning this match, it was felt that Elsom was not contributing. There were many references made by the crowd about how he was making no impact on the game, despite his reputation and speculation on his pay packet. The Rocky Elsom case indicates that a player is not considered a brand hero based on their performance and success in the sport but rather for their performance within the brand. Elsom was berated by the crowd throughout the 2010 season and he has never achieved hero status for the community. Time may have led to his acceptance by the community but it was announced mid-season that Elsom would be moving to the new Melbourne team for the 2011 season. In the one year that Elsom played for the Brumbies his contribution to the team was not valued by the fans, they perceived him as not adding value or contributing to team success.

Within rugby union there is a clear ideal for the type of tactics that fans want teams to use. This is referred to as the 'running game' or an attacking style of football. The rules of rugby are such that teams are able to gain ground by either attacking the opposition's half by running the ball or they can apply the more defensive tactic of kicking the ball. The points system of the SuperRugby competition also reward the running game, with bonus points awarded for scoring 4 tries in a match or by losing by less than 7 points. Particularly, the reward for scoring tries, which can only be achieved through running rather than kicking, is designed to motivate teams to run the ball. For Brumbies fans, and also within the rugby culture, there is a desire for the attacking style of football as it is considered more exciting to watch and embodies the aesthetic of the beautiful game. This desire for beauty in the play is in contrast with the desire for victory as indicated by the competition element of the game form (Hardy 1990). For Brumbies fans the

over-riding value is on a beautiful style of play and victory is a secondary concern. This was demonstrated by my conversation with Robbo during the same game as before, where the Brumbies were winning but the crowd was unhappy with their style of play.

“I’m as big a fan of the Brumbies as anyone but they’re really playing like shit. The senior players must be rebelling against the coaching – look they’ve kicked it again! I mean we’ve got a million dollar backline and we can’t get a bonus point. We’re the only team without a bonus point. Last week they barely beat the Lions and the Waratahs go and thrash them this week. We’ve got to get the bonus points to make the finals and this defensive shit play isn’t going to do it.”

This desire for the beautiful game is not contained to Brumbies fans. A similar scenario occurred at a home game between the Waratahs and a New Zealand team. Even though the Waratahs were winning, the fans at the game were booing what they perceived as unattractive play. The expectation of fans is that the tactics that will be employed are not just to win but will be in keeping with the ideal of beautiful football. When this is not the case, the fans impose their own sanctions on the players through booing, even if the team is winning. Robbo threatened to walk out of the game that the Brumbies were winning because he was disappointed with the style of play. The judgement of players performance in the brand and the ideal of the attacking game form the basis of the fans’ evaluation of the game structure.

4.5 Brand Face Roles

This section discusses the roles that brand faces enact in the dramatic setting of brand community narratives. The literature review highlighted the roles within theatre, including the director, the lead actors, supporting cast, the set, the audience and the script (Williams and Anderson 2005). As these theatrical roles are relatively static during a performance, the actors are prescribed their role(s) until the performances end. While each performance is unique, generally actors do not change role while a performance is taking place. However as a brand performance is ongoing, the narrative is continually negotiated and actors can change roles throughout the performance. This

adds complexity: roles change as the narrative evolves and a brand face may move from back-stage to front-stage, and from an on-stage supporting role to a central heroic figure (Mangold and Babakus 1991).

The traditional theatre perspective used in the services marketing area has identified six key roles that actors play in the service encounter (Williams and Anderson 2005). However, these place the customer in the largely passive position of the audience who has little control of the script, the setting, or the over-riding narrative. However in modern theatre, which is a more applicable metaphor for the brand community situation, the customer can direct, write and form a central part of the performance (Lancaster 1997). The findings from the two ethnographic cases found that the traditional roles were less applicable; however, the community did differentiate brand faces from brand heroes based on visibility in the performance and perceived control of the brand narrative.

The three roles that brand faces could enact in the brand performance are (1) back stage faces, (2) support cast, and (3) brand heroes. The following will discuss each of these roles as they were represented in the Discworld and the Brumbies brand performances.

4.5.1 Back Stage Faces

This role describes those that are unseen by the brand community. The brand organisation has many people who fulfil functions that affect the brand performance but remain unseen by those outside of the organisation. The brand community literature implicitly views marketer negotiations in the brand community as invisible interactions (McAlexander et al. 2002; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Múniz and Schau 2005). Both the Discworld and Brumbies communities recognised that they were controlling influences behind-the scenes of the brand performance. It is often in these unseen controlling influences that the most tension is experienced by the brand community.

This unseen influence was more apparent in the Brumbies community, as the marketing and management effort was more concentrated. For the community, the control of management over the composition and direction of the team was sometimes at odds with the desires of the community. The replacement of the coach, Laurie Fisher, with a new coach, Andy Friend, for the 2007 season caused much debate in the community. Fisher was a distinctive figure with wild long hair whose coaching style was often criticised because the game style he encouraged was not the beautiful game, with too much kicking and a weak forward line. However, the sacking of Fisher was a controversial decision for the community with some members for it and others against it. The over-riding theme from the decision of the back stage faces to replace a front stage face was that these situations remind or highlight to the community their lack of control over the brand.

Previous research has discussed this tension for control of the brand (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schouten and McAlexander 1995) and the theatre perspective allows for this to be seen through a new lens. For the community, because they do not see the back stage faces, they are not perceived to be part of the narrative. However, when the behind-the-scenes intrudes on front stage performance there is a perceived break in the narrative. This break brings the profane and commercial experience to the attention of the community, much like the lowering of a boom microphone in a movie scene reminds the audience that the narrative is fiction. These unseen controlling influences are necessary for brand management but can intrude on brand narrative. The following roles are those that are visible to the community so their impact is more apparent and less intrusive on the narrative negotiation.

4.5.2 Support Cast

Support cast roles are those brand faces that are seen and have no or limited control of the narrative as it is enacted. They are generally not seen as central to the brand's creation or management but their contribution is recognised. The discussion of credibility presented in Chapter 5 identifies the support cast in both the Discworld and the Brumbies communities. For Discworld, there was a difference in importance between the author and those that were seen as less central, such as Colin Smythe, the

editor, and Bernard Pearson, the creator of Discworld merchandise. These figures were peripheral to the brand performance but the community looked to them to maintain the brand's values. In the Discworld community, the structure of the brand means that they will never become central to the narrative. This is in contrast to the Brumbies where the support cast was composed of players who were not considered crucial to the team's success. However, through performing well for the team and outside recognition such as selection to the Wallabies, support cast may be seen as heroic.

4.5.3 Brand Heroes

Brand heroes are central figures around which narratives form. They are both visible and perceived to have control of the brand performance. Brand heroes both contribute to the brand narrative and form their own sacred narratives; these narratives will be explored in Chapter 6. As indicated above, a heroic figure is determined by their centrality to the brand's creation or management or based on how critical they are seen to the brand's success. Within the Discworld community, Terry Pratchett as the author was seen as central to the brand's creation, while in the Brumbies community certain players were identified as crucial to the brand's success. How a brand face is perceived as being worthy of heroic status with associated sacred status is discussed in the following chapter.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter introduces the brand and social values inherent in each of the communities studied. These values are important when it comes to understanding the heroic narratives and perceptions of credibility that will be identified in the following chapters as it is against these values that brand heroes are judged. The second part of this chapter addressed the first research question: the role that a brand face enacts during the brand narrative. This role is determined by their visibility and their perceived influence over the brand's performance. Only brand heroes are considered sacred and having mythic qualities, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5 BRAND HERO CELEBRITY AND CREDIBILITY

5.1 Introduction

The literature review discussed the differences between celebrities and brand heroes and the importance of the media in differentiating these two concepts. However, it also identified that the celebrity concept was the most complete existing framework for considering brand hero credibility. This chapter presents the findings for Research Question 4 regarding the difference between brand hero and celebrity, with the differences in perceptions of the celebrity of Terry Pratchett based on his appearance in the media and the lack of recognition afforded him by non-fans. This chapter also addresses Research Question 5 regarding brand hero credibility and attractiveness, with the extension of the celebrity endorsement credibility and attraction framework to the brand hero situation. It is found that legitimacy, integrity and affiliation are the concepts that underpin perceptions of heroism in the Discworld and Brumbies communities.

5.2 Brand Heroes as Celebrities

This section addresses Research Question 4 and the differences between the celebrity and brand hero concepts from the perspective of brand community members. The literature review suggested that the celebrity concept assumes that a direct relationship is formed with a celebrity, based on the media's representation of that figure. However, the brand hero concept assumes that the relationship between the hero and the community is mediated by the brand rather than the media. This has important implications for how the community views and interacts with the brand hero.

Research Question 4

How do brand heroes differ from celebrities? In what ways does this influence the relationship between the brand community and the brand hero?

The concept of the brand hero as a celebrity was quite vexing for the community. There were mixed opinions as to the definition of celebrity and whether Pratchett held celebrity status. The most common point of contention was the role of the media in celebrity and the fact that Pratchett did not appear in mainstream publications. While some members of the community considered him to be a celebrity as he was ‘well-known’, others did not, or they qualified their opinion of his celebrity with the disclaimer that he was not a ‘tabloid celebrity’. The findings for this question suggest that the difference between the celebrity and brand hero is that the media mediates the relationship between the celebrity and the fan, whereas for the brand hero, it is brand narratives and reports of meetings of other community members that mediates the relationship.

Terry Pratchett as a celebrity caused a great deal of definitional problems for respondents. They struggled to define the notion of celebrity and then place Pratchett within the parameters they had created. For example, the interview with Tegan below demonstrates the problems that the community had with this issue.

“Well, I think he’s a famous author but not necessarily a celebrity. He’s not glitzy; he’s not a TV personality. He’s more the, I don’t know, an intellectual celebrity. He’s more somebody that people would talk about rather than... no that’s not right. I do think he should be on TV. He should host an award show; that would be funny. I don’t know, he’s someone who is very good at what he does and so people want to get to know him, not just his work. I guess that they feel like he’s some kind of genius so they want to meet him and try to understand the genius a bit more. So, I don’t know, I guess he attracts people without trying to. A celebrity is a person who goes look at me, look at me. I don’t know, I’ve got no answer. Pass” (Tegan, Personal interview, Canberra Social Network)

Tegan seems to tie herself in knots trying to answer the question of whether Pratchett is a celebrity and in the end comes to the conclusion that she is unable to answer effectively. However, in her attempt to address Pratchett’s celebrity she raises issues

that were common among the respondents. The first is the role of the media: to be a celebrity you need to be seen in the mainstream media, which Tegan refers to as appearing on television. Pratchett's celebrity status is framed by the fact that he is not a television celebrity, due to the absence of television appearances. She also discusses how a celebrity is someone that people talk about as a person, not just for his work. Finally, there is a difference between the seeking of attention by celebrities rather than the attention given to Pratchett because he is a genius. These issues were recurring themes when community members attempted to discuss celebrity.

The role of the media in defining celebrity was particularly important. Those that thought that Pratchett was not a celebrity often used the justification that he did not appear in the mainstream media.

“I wouldn't say celebrity in the same sense that somebody you read about in a magazine is a celebrity because he's not the kind of person who is going to pop up in the social pages of a Woman's Day. Famous person, yes, recognizable person, yes; if you saw him walking around the street you would recognize him if you were a fan but he's not famous to the non fans. I guess I tend to think of a celebrity who is known to the general public not just your own fan base... Mind you England has those paparazzi people and the strangest magazines in the world, so he could be more of a celebrity over there; I don't think he is here. A famous author, yes, but not a celebrity.” (Nicola, Personal interview, Canberra Social Network)

For Nicola, Pratchett was not a celebrity as he was not in the typical celebrity magazines and his fame was limited to his own fan base. She also held the belief that being in the UK market could increase the awareness of the general public to the brand hero, as he would be more accessible to the media. The importance of the media in perceptions and definitions of celebrity expressed by the community was crucial. Respondents all used the role of the media in bringing him to the audience, whether it is the general public or the brand community as a measure of his celebrity.

The media may be an important factor in creating celebrity, but for the brand hero it is the narratives of meetings with the community that is important in creating visibility and perceived heroism. Especially within the online community, stories of interactions with Terry Pratchett formed a core aspect of the perceptions about him. For example, when I asked the community about getting their Discworld books signed I received many stories of how the effort and the wait of standing in line added to the experience. The long wait was followed by a short meeting where there was value in being able to thank Pratchett for creating the brand and his signature made the book a sacred object.

“Having met the man and had two books signed I can add a personal touch to the theoretical I hope.

Why do you like to get books signed?

I was 13 when I had Soul Music signed and had read every Discworld book published by 1995 twice. The style of the stories was so stand alone from anything else I'd come across that I was an instant fan. He was there in full kit, hat and all.

Would you pay extra to buy a signed copy of a PTerry Book and why?

Quite simply, no. Testament to his reputation for being close to his fans, Terry Pratchett has signed more books than most other authors. Having worked in a book store with somebody who'd spent their lives managing book stores I was told he'd even given birth to the phrase 'Pratchetting', the term for an author who does a lot of book signings, because he was such a prolific signer so they weren't as valuable as somebody who signed only occasionally.

Does a book you've had signed have more value than a bought signed copy?
Why / Why not?

Getting the book signed was an *experience*: meeting the man himself, speaking to him, getting to ask questions... after that he was a hero to me. Somebody

who'd gotten so far and didn't just thank his fans but mixed with them and enjoyed it, he was having, if anything, a better time than the people queueing to meet him I think! The fact the book was signed gave me a physical mark to remember it by (especially as he personalised mine with a comment rather than just stamping and signing like he did for most others), but actually meeting him there with all those other fans in such a tiny book shop in a quiet corner of the world was so wonderful.

Do you treat your signed copies differently to your unsigned copies?

Certainly did, it had a reserved and hallowed place in my collection... till I let my mum read it and she spilt coffee on it, ripped the spine and left a ring from a wet mug on the back cover. Have had it restored to some extent and now I take extra special care of it. It may not be worth anything monetarily, but it means a whole heck of a lot to me personally."

(Watchman, online interview with Discworld forum member)

Such stories as Watchman's were not rare, with people expressing their happiness at the opportunity of meeting Pratchett. Evidence of devotion was expressed through how many hours they had to wait in the queue for a signature. It is not rare for Pratchett to sign for over 3 hours. Besides the expression of commitment that member's show by waiting a long time for the signature, the same commitment is also perceived by the fans from Pratchett because he is willing to sign for so long. For Watchman, he discusses how the experience meant a lot to him; the book took on sacred status, even after damage that would ruin a normal book, it was restored and the object maintained its sacredness. This experience was enhanced, as Pratchett's reputation of being close to the fans was reinforced by the meeting. This interview provides additional evidence that Pratchett cares and enjoys interaction with his fans. Such responses create and reinforce the narratives of Pratchett having affinity for the fans and being motivated by his enjoyment of the process and not the commercial. It also demonstrates the lack of media in mediating his relationship with the community. Book signings become shared brandfests between the brand hero and the brand community.

The importance of fan reports of meetings with the brand hero is crucial to the creation and perpetuation of the mythology. It is through the reporting of such experiences that the sacredness of the interaction and the by-products are disseminated and become mythologised. As the brand hero's relationship with the community is based on narratives of meetings and events, the relationship becomes one of mythology and the sacred. This is in contrast with media-based relationships of celebrity, where the information may be more personal about the celebrity but it lacks the extraordinary and the focus on the brand. The stories of the extraordinary actions of the hero have important implications for how these translate into credibility and attractiveness.

5.3 Brand Hero Credibility and Attractiveness

Differences exist in how celebrity and brand hero credibility is constructed. This section extends the existing literature's conceptualisation of celebrity endorser credibility and attractiveness to the brand hero situation. Brand hero credibility is dependent on three factors: legitimacy, integrity and affiliation, contrasted with celebrity credibility of attractiveness, trustworthiness and likeability. These factors will be explored further in the following that addresses Research Question 5.

Research Question 5

Are credibility and attractiveness important to the brand face and brand hero concepts? How are they incorporated into brand hero mythology?

The brand hero is different to the celebrity both in the role of the media, and in their relationship to the brand. Hence, the nature of credibility and attractiveness was also different. Brand hero credibility and attractiveness is based on the relationship of the hero to the brand and the community. The community differentiated between heroes that were central to the brand's existence, in this case Terry Pratchett, and those that had support cast roles, such as Bernard Pearson who is responsible for the high quality merchandise made for Discworld and Colin Smythe who is Discworld's editor. A key

consideration of the credibility of these different types of heroes was their legitimacy, integrity and affinity with the brand and community.

Terry Pratchett, as the central brand hero to the Discworld community was perceived to be a credible representative of the brand. It was widely accepted by the community that Terry Pratchett was motivated by a love of the brand and the creative process rather than by commercial considerations. Due to this belief, he was not asked to establish his credibility but rather the questions asked of him at brandfests and online tended to relate to his working life, his experience in writing Discworld, and to some extent his life outside of Discworld.

“I have a question to do with characterisation. My best friend and I both write a lot and also do a lot of roleplay. She likes to have her characters' life histories mapped out in her head down to the smallest detail. If I ask her what such-and-such a character was doing in August 1993, for example, she can tell me (after a moment's thought and the occasional false start).

I like to have a rough idea of where my characters are coming from, but I find too much backstory limiting. I like room to invent.

I wondered which way you like to work. When you wrote Nightwatch, was it all stuff that you already knew about your characters, or was it all made up for that book?” (Buzzfloyd, Q&A Thread Jan 17, 2003)

Buzzfloyd assumes Pratchett's authority as an author and looks to him for his work practices to inform her own writing. This belief in the brand hero's credibility as an author illustrates his position within the product category. The previous discussion of Pratchett's motivations for writing the Discworld series illustrates his credibility within the brand. It is important to note that the community considered both product category and brand credibility to be key aspects of brand hero credibility. Such questions about

the creative process are also evidence of Caughey's (1978, 1984) intense admiration relationships where the admired figure takes on a mentor or role-model character.

For brand faces, it was often necessary to establish their credibility with the brand. Brand faces are not central to the brand's existence, and come and go from the brand sphere without affecting its position in the market. However, their position as potential heroes for the brand community is based on the perception that their contribution does add value to the brand. For example, Bernard Pearson, who is responsible for a series of high quality Discworld merchandise, is seen as a champion of extending the image of Discworld as something special and out of the ordinary. Discworld merchandise is hand modelled and designed and includes sculptures, stamps, money and model buildings, all of which is quite expensive and must be ordered or purchased through specialty stores rather than being widely available. The types of questions he was asked include the following.

“Can I ask you to cast your mind back, assuming you can remember, to when you first discovered Pratchett, can you tell us a little bit about that?”
(Interviewer, AusDWcon Q&A session)

“We were all saddened by the demise of Clarecraft. Can you tell us how that whole thing came about? How did it get started?” (Interviewer, AusDWcon Q&A session)

The second question refers to the dedicated Discworld merchandising company, Clarecraft that was set up for the sole purpose of manufacturing high quality and reasonably expensive Discworld merchandise with the input of Terry Pratchett. Bernard's answers tended to refer continually to Discworld and to Terry Pratchett, enhancing his legitimacy as a Discworld brand face. He recalls that Discworld brought forth such vivid images that it inspired him to set up a dedicated line of resin and plaster figures to capture the experience. Such statements establish his legitimacy as a member of, and his commitment to, the Discworld community. It also highlights that he holds a

creative rather than a commercial narrative as the motivation to produce marketing merchandise. Similarly, Colin Smythe, Terry Pratchett's editor and then agent, was also involved in a Q&A session at the AusDWcon and questions posed to him also revolved around his history with Pratchett and the Discworld brand.

“At what point in time did Discworld go from being a small concern to being a bit more serious as it were? When book sales started to make a profit?”
(Interviewer, AusDWcon Q&A session)

“Terry tells me that the first job you had as his agent was to renegotiate all the contracts you had him sign as his publisher. Is there any truth in this?”
(Interviewer, AusDWcon Q&A session)

Q: “Do you read his [Terry Pratchett's] work in anything other than a professional capacity?” (Interviewer, AusDWcon Q&A session)

A: “Of course. I've been a fan of Terry's since 1960.”

Again the questions indicate that an ongoing concern for the Discworld community when confronted with a potential brand face is the establishment of their credibility with the brand. These questions also indicate that another concern for the brand community is gaining insight into the potential brand face's relationship with the focal brand hero Terry Pratchett. For example Colin Smythe was asked

“What's Terry like to work with and has that changed over the last 30 years?”
(Interviewer, AusDWcon Q&A session)

Questions such as this indicate that for the brand community, the brand face's role is to provide information not just about the brand but also about the focal brand hero. Such a concern indicates that the value that the support cast adds to the brand community

relationship is not just in brand information but also insight into the brand hero. This builds the brand community's knowledge of the brand hero from another perspective and provides a firsthand source of information about what kind of person Terry Pratchett is and how he creates the brand. This information builds and reinforces the affinity of the brand community to the brand hero.

The analysis presented above indicates that there are additional elements of brand hero credibility beyond those identified by the source credibility literature. Source credibility states that the celebrity will be viewed as a credible source when it is perceived that celebrity has the ability to make valid assertions (expertness), and a willingness to make valid assertions (trustworthiness) (McCracken 1989). The previous discussion of potential brand faces indicates that acceptance is initially based on establishing legitimacy of their contribution to the brand and their relationship to the central brand hero. There are two additional aspects of brand hero credibility.

The first aspect is the brand hero's integrity in maintaining the brand's values, where the brand hero's management, creation or production of the brand is perceived to be in line with the brand's values. The second is the brand hero's perceived affinity with the brand community. This type of credibility is the demonstration that the brand hero is committed to the brand and the brand community, creating the impression that the brand hero is 'just another brand community member'. For example, both Bernard Pearson and Colin Smythe stated that they were fans of Discworld or Terry Pratchett before their more formal involvement in the brand's production. This past history creates a shared bond with the brand community based on a common commitment to the brand. The following sections will go into more detail about these two aspects of brand hero credibility.

5.3.1 Brand Hero Integrity

The research revealed that for the brand community one of the key brand hero attributes was integrity. The brand hero endorsement literature refers to source credibility in terms of expertness and trustworthiness. Expertness is defined as the perceived ability of the

brand hero to make assertions about a product, and trustworthiness is the perceived willingness of the brand hero to make valid assertions (McCracken 1989). These definitions have an underlying assumption that the brand hero's credibility is based on their activities external to the brand, which are then matched-up to the brand and the message (McCracken 1989). Such an assumption does not take into account the credibility that a brand hero might attain through their association with the brand. For instance, Terry Pratchett did not need to establish his expertness in the Discworld brand or in the fantasy literature product category as his creation of the brand itself has established his legitimacy.

“Yes essentially Terry Pratchett is a giant of literature, he's a god. There's nothing else you need to say about Terry Pratchett in my mind he's a giant of literature, he's something out there, I don't need him in my life, he's there. His books are in my life and occasionally I go to his lectures and go 'oh wow this is fascinating' it really is.” (Chris, Personal Interview)

Chris' statement indicates that Terry Pratchett's credibility is enhanced because of his perceived status in the product category. One of the core aspects of brand hero credibility is the belief that they represent the top of their field. This status is often expressed in comparative terms between competing brands and brand heroes.

“I completely agree with what Terry Pratchett says. Sorry, but JK is not the only author in the world, and she's a long way short of the best authors around. I am a big Harry Potter fan, but she in no way compares to the Discworld series. She has only wrote one series of books about one main group of characters, and it will be interesting to see where her writing goes after here. Will she be able to take the world that she has invented for HP and write about different people, or will we be stuck with the same people & personalities. Pratchett's Discworld series has many different characters with different stories that all somehow complement each other. You very rarely meet a character that you feel you have already encountered in a different person. Let's just look back in twenty years,

and see whether there is still such a great demand for the Discworld series, and Discworld memorabilia, and compare it to how JK is doing.

Mind you, the Harry Potter books are so similar to the Star Wars series, that maybe we'll be up to the prequels by then!!" (Harry Potter Forum post in TP vs JKR Thread)

For the Discworld community, as a smaller brand in the market, most of the comparisons are made with the largest brand, Harry Potter (Muniz and Hamer 2001, Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). When comparing Terry Pratchett's status to J.K. Rowling the consensus of the community was that he was the better author and deserved more success but that J.K. Rowling was an adequate author who had won the 'lottery', as one online member described it. The issue of expertness for the brand hero not only depends on their ability to make assertions but also on their perceived status within the product category based on their contribution to the brand's success. This linking of expertness to the brand's success is also present in understanding the notion of trust in source credibility.

"He doesn't strike me as a kind of arrogant celebrity and I think he would be interesting. I think he writes books because he genuinely wants people to read them not because he's cashing in. I don't get that impression, I don't think he could write the books as well as he does if he was just going: 'Right, I could do with another half mil so you know I'll churn another one out'. I think he genuinely wants you to read them. If you're intelligent you realize that if you're going to make money out of people they're going to have some demand on you." (Tegan, Personal Interview)

For Tegan, Terry Pratchett represents someone who is credible because his motivation for producing Discworld is a love of the brand and the fans. This perception reveals a great deal of trust in Terry Pratchett's management of the brand. Other respondents referred to the notion of 'selling out' and a belief that Pratchett never would. An example of this is in the denial that any Discworld figurines would ever be sold at

McDonald's as Happy Meal toys. There was vehement denial that Pratchett would ever allow his brand to be used in such a way, one respondent said that he would have to be:

“dead and buried, very dead and very buried before Discworld would be sold out”
(David, Personal Interview).

The belief that the brand hero creates and manages the brand to uphold its values, rather than for commercial gain, underpins perceptions of brand hero credibility. So perceived integrity is an important factor in brand hero credibility by maintaining the brand's values.

5.3.2 Brand Hero Affiliation

In addition to the integrity of the brand hero in maintaining the brand's values, another aspect of brand hero credibility relates to their attractiveness to the brand community. Source attractiveness as a component of credibility refers to the brand hero's perceived familiarity, likeability and similarity (McGuire 1985). The most salient attractiveness dimension for the brand hero was similarity, where the brand hero had to demonstrate a similar sense of affiliation to the brand and the community as that felt by the brand community. Familiarity and likeability were not useful constructs in the brand hero context, as familiarity was a part of the brand community experience and likeability was based on a sense of affinity, so they are not covered further. Similarity of perceived affinity was achieved by the appearance that the brand hero was just another fan. In order for the brand hero to be accepted by the community the brand hero needed to show that on some level they were 'just like the community members'.

Brand hero affiliation is the appearance the brand hero is just another fan. This goes beyond merely establishing the legitimacy of their contribution to the brand as discussed previously, but includes those aspects of brand community involvement that define membership activities. For example, Terry Pratchett was considered a credible

Discworld community member because he would behave just like any other fan at community events even with the promotion duties required at brandfest events.

“Now, the question is, why does he do it? Why give up three days of precious free time to spend them in a field with people who would buy your books anyway? Even if it did increase sales, the amount would be a drop in the ocean compared to what he's selling already. So I'm left with the notion that he enjoys it. He walks around, chatting to fans, occasionally being photographed but not, I hope, being hassled too much. He doesn't appear to have an entourage (we saw him walking down from the top barn to his car on Sunday morning, presumably to pick up something) or to have any security worries (if he had any 'mindere', they were very well hidden) and because he acts like a 'regular person', that's how he gets treated. It might be that he feels he 'owes' it to the fans to turn up at events like this. In the Q&A, he was asked whether he was going to be at the Australian Convention, and after saying that the date had been changed a couple of times already, he said that whatever date it finally ended up on, he'd be there, because "they've gone to so much trouble" (and that he never misses a chance to go to Australia). I don't know of any author with a comparable level of sales who gives so much time to keeping fans happy.” (Diane L, alt.fan.Pratchett)

For this Discworld brand community member they perceive that Terry Pratchett is motivated by enjoyment of fan contact rather than by commercial concerns. In her mind this gives added credibility and appeal to Pratchett as a brand hero. The ‘regular person’ aspect of his credibility presents a persona that the brand community is able to identify as someone similarly committed to the community and the brand. The brand community perceived that they and the brand hero were working together for the benefit of the brand.

This apparent sense of affinity of the brand hero for the brand community and the resultant expectation that they are working together for the benefit of the brand is crucial. While the celebrity endorser is attempting to persuade the audience (McCracken 1989), the brand hero is attempting to motivate a communal effort between themselves

and the brand community for the benefit of the brand. The broader scope of brand hero credibility, that extends to encompass aspects such as integrity and affinity, is important considerations in developing effective marketing strategies using a brand hero to communicate to a brand community.

Posted by: Billy The Elder

Mr. Terry,

Since you have been so kind as to spend this past week with us, I was wondering what has been your most memorable, oddest, or just plain out peculiar moment involving a fan?

And I can't leave without saying thank you for the years of enjoyment and the years of enjoyment that are undoubtedly to come.

Posted by: Terry Pratchett

It may come as a surprise -- it certainly has to the publicists -- that many of my fans appear to be normal people. And they say my fan mail is nothing like as weird or icky as the stuff the romantic novelists get. One publicist, looking at a queue into the next time zone, said in amazement: 'But they're so...cheerful!'

There haven't been too many weird moments. One that sticks in my mind was a few years ago concerned a young lad and his mum, at the front of the queue.

"Frank wrote you a letter!" said proud mum.

"Good, I hope I answered it!" says nervy author.

And young Frank, beaming, opens his back to the produce my letter of reply *framed*.

It was just an average letter, answering a couple of questions. thanking the lad, one of maybe fifty I'd answered that day, not without thinking, exactly, but in what you might call 'letter writing mode'. And there it was, framed. Makes you think, stuff like.

(Q&A thread, TerryPratchettBooks.com Forum)

For the credibility and effectiveness of the brand hero there is a sense that the relationship is co-created between the community and the brand hero, for the benefit of the brand. The above quote illustrates the manner in which the community establishes Pratchett's status for his contribution to the community, and he reflects back that the community is normal, well-behaved, and that he is humbled by their adulation. This is a reflection of what the community believes about itself and wants to believe about Pratchett. In this reinforcement, he gains credibility and presents an affinity with the community even though he is separated from it by the nature of heroism, which is to bring worth to society but not to be part of it.

5.4 The Brumbies and the Making of Brand Heroes

Within sports brands, the players do not create the brand but rather create the brand experience. The Brumbies provides triangulation of results found for the Discworld community, as this community has multiple brand heroes and faces and the perceptions of the role that a figure enacts may change over time. For the Brumbies, their heroes are based on a continuing performance rather than the brand's creation. Heroes are identified based on their performance in the three areas of sportgeist; the brand, the sport and the culture (Hardy 1990). Within the sporting context, players need to establish their credibility through their performance. Having established a base level of credibility, the community develops mythology about them. This section will discuss the methods that players have to establish their credibility within the brand and community as they relate to the levels of sportgeist. While an overview of the players as a group would be ideal, it seems that individual players are singled out at particular stages of sportgeist and their heroic journey.

5.4.1 The General Structure Hero

There are two key areas of the general structure in establishing credibility: perceived identification with rugby and identification with the Canberra region. These two areas

are crucial for the initial identification of possible heroes, but players can excel in other areas of sportgeist and be accepted as a hero. However, for new and young players entering the team, the fan community's initial assessment of hero potential is based on these two areas.

The importance of the player's perceived commitment to the sport of rugby union is as a direct result of the oppositional values between rugby union and rugby league. Greater credibility is given to players that have only played rugby union in the past. This history is emphasised in marketing material produced about players, which provides the first details of new players to the community. For example, during the 2010 season injury to key players meant that a rookie contract was offered to Colby Faingaa, who at 18 was the youngest player on the team. The promotional material emphasised his history in the sport:

“The younger brother of former CA Brumbies and current Reds twins, Saia and Anthony, represented the Australian Schools side in 2008, and was a consistent performer for the CA Brumbies on last year's French Tour as well as playing a key role for the Tuggeranong Vikings in their 2009 Tooheys New John I Dent Cup premiership. He joined the Brumbies Academy in 2008 having been a long-term member of the Australian Rugby Union's National Talent Squad.

The former St Edmund's College student says signing with the CA Brumbies is the realisation of a lifelong rugby goal.”

(Rookie Faingaa signs on with the CA Brumbies, 13 April 2010)

The above media release is indicative of the method that young players are introduced to the Brumbies' fan community. It includes some key pieces of information. The first is the emphasis on Colby's relationship to rugby and the Brumbies through his family, with his brothers as former Brumbies players. This is a relatively unique situation and provides additional legitimacy to Colby's identification with rugby and the team. The second aspect emphasised is Colby's achievements within junior rugby, which provides evidence of history with rugby union and does not mention any league affiliation he

may have had. Before he signed with the Brumbies it was expected that Colby would sign with the National Rugby League competition, and some fans were surprised after the announcement.

“Colby Faingaa? I thought the NRL had him wrapped up” (Male, 20s, Standing on Concourse)

This difference between the marketing efforts to establish a player’s credibility with the sport and the high levels of knowledge of the brand community are highlighted here. While marketers try to emphasise a long lasting and faithful relationship to union, the community is aware that Colby is not as committed to the sport as would appear from the media release. However, Colby is able to compensate for this apparent lack of commitment to union with his history in the Canberra region.

Sport has been shown to have great deal of geographic orientation (Gladden and Fuink 2002). Sports fans will tend to support the team that they have either current or previous geographic associations with. This expectation of loyalty to geography is also expected of the players. This is ascertained through the player’s history with the region or his residence in the area. The above media release for Colby Faingaa highlights that he attended a local private boy's high school and played for a suburban team in the local competition. This provides evidence of his long associations with Canberra and as St Edmund’s is known to have a strong union team, this also adds support to the claims to his potential talent. This geographic association is also considered when judging the place of residence for the player. Some union fans were disgruntled with the living arrangements for some Brumbies players.

“None of them live locally. They all live in Sydney and just get put up in serviced apartments in Kingston during the season. None of them want to live in Canberra.” (Male, 30s, casual conversation)

Not living in Canberra was perceived by this respondent as undermining the player's commitment to the team which was conveyed by a look of disgust while making the above statement. It is implied that if the team is in Canberra then the players should be too. While fans were not overly concerned with details of the player's personal life, they did seek evidence of 'localness' as this was seen as a surrogate indicator of commitment to the brand.

5.4.2 The Sport Structure Hero

Besides a history with Canberra and rugby union in the development phases, a player establishes their credentials as Brumbies hero through acknowledgement of the subculture. Similar to the Discworld case where heroism was embedded in the subculture of fantasy, there is a wider subculture of rugby union that can provide players with validation. The most direct way to establish this was through selection in the Australian rugby union team, the Wallabies. This selection could happen to existing players of the Brumbies or be used to show potential heroism for new players entering the team.

For existing players the selection to the Wallabies team was seen as a validation of their ability rather than as the basis for their acceptance as an integral member of the Brumbies. When an existing Brumbies player is selected to the Wallabies for the first time it is considered an important heroic milestone. Two players highlight this with their selection to debut for the first time in the same game of Australia versus Fiji in June 2010. The first player, Salesi Ma'afu, is a more standard selection as he is a young player, who after three seasons with the Brumbies was selected to represent Australia. This demonstrates a standard progression from juniors, to SuperRugby to national selection, which shows an escalating acknowledgement of a player's talent. In contrast, Huia Edmunds is described as a journeyman player. He grew up in Canberra but has played for NSW, and the South African Stormers team, then played in the second tier rugby competition for Easts. His development has not followed the standard path and until 2010 was not considered a world class player. His selection into the Australian team provided validation for the community of Edmunds' growing stature within the

team. During the 2010 Super14 season the crowd would single Edmunds out for special attention during games:

“Come on Huia! Get out there and show them how to play!” (Male 30s, when Edmunds was warming up on sideline)

In the case of existing Brumbies, players’ selection to the Australian team provides validation of the community’s belief in their abilities. Being selected to the Wallabies team for the first time creates a great deal of attention by the media. The Brumbies marketing effort also includes such news in their Brumbies community news letter (B-mail) and a test cap is an important player statistic that is reported in all rugby literature.

In contrast, Wallabies selection for a non-Brumbies player who then joins the team is not a validation but an indication of potential. As discussed in Chapter 4 the heroic expectations of Rocky Elsom based on his Wallabies track record did not translate to brand hero status because of his perceived poor performance for the Brumbies. Players transfer between teams at the end of each season as a relatively regular occurrence. Beyond some familiarity with the player when they have played in opposition, the clearest cue to a new players potential to be an important player to the Brumbies is Wallabies selection. However, as the Elsom case highlights, this creates very high expectations for a player’s performance with the Brumbies team, and the community will hold the player accountable to these standards. For the community, performance in other rugby arenas is only indicative of potential. The key to heroic status is in the player’s performance for the Brumbies. These heroic narratives will be explored in Chapter 6.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter addressed two critical areas that differentiate brand heroes from celebrities and brand faces from brand heroes. The literature review suggested that celebrities and

brand heroes were different concepts, and the findings from the Discworld community confirm this assumption. While the celebrity relationship is mediated by the media, brand hero relationships are based on interactions with brand community members that are then shared by the community. The findings also highlight the importance of the brand in the relationship between brand heroes and the community, as this is the focus of interaction.

In addition to the nature of celebrity being different, celebrity endorsement is also different in the brand hero situation. Rather than endorser effectiveness being based on credibility and attractiveness, brand heroes distinguish themselves from brand faces on legitimacy of their contribution to the brand, their integrity in representing brand values and their affinity to the brand community. When a potential brand face can demonstrate these three attributes, they are more likely to be considered brand heroes. However, brand hero credibility is not a sufficient condition to be considered a sacred hero of the brand; heroic narratives are also required. These heroic narratives will be identified and discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6 BRAND HERO MYTHOLOGY AND IDENTITY RECIPROCITY

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has identified that not all brand faces are elevated to hero status within the community. Visibility and perceived control of the brand performance assist in distinguishing brand heroes from other performers in the brand narrative. However, just being visible and having control is not sufficient for the required heroic narratives to develop. A brand face must also be perceived as having integrity in brand management and affiliation to the brand community. Those figures that are visible have control and are perceived as credible form narrative stories in relation to their position with the brand. This chapter presents these heroic narratives of the Discworld and Brumbies communities. Firstly a brief review of the relevant literature on heroic mythology and narrative will be presented, and then the major findings on brand hero mythology in the two communities will be presented. The role of the brand hero in identity reciprocation between the hero and the community is a central part of the brand performance will be discussed at the conclusion of this chapter.

6.2 Myth, Narratives and Heroes

Brand mythology has emerged as an important theme surrounding the creation and maintenance of brand communities. Belk and Tumbat (2005) outlined the mythologies surrounding the Apple Corporation and the Macintosh computer, with their work using a number of mythological stories surrounding the brand:

- the Creation Myth, which includes the stories behind the birth and emergence of the Macintosh computer;
- the Hero Myth which charts the rise, fall and eventual resurrection of Steve Jobs;
- the Satanic Myth, which includes the competitive threats posed by IBM and Microsoft;

- the Resurrection Myth, which see Steve Jobs return to Apple to rescue the company from corporate demise; and
- Other Cultic Myths, which includes converting the nonbeliever/user, and the transcendence of corporate capitalism through using a nonconformist brand

Previous explorations of the mythological elements of brand communities have focused on the myths surrounding the brands and only relate to the brand hero in the instance where they directly affect the outcomes for the brand. Examples of this include Steve Jobs returning to Apple to save it from corporate demise or his reintroduction of a product (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Múniz and Schau 2005). These studies of Steve Jobs found that beyond the mythology surrounding the brand there is a strong mythical element to the brand hero. This mythology forms the basis of the meaning movement approach to endorser effectiveness (McCracken 1989), where the endorser's symbolic imagery is transferred to the brand. In this case, the symbolic imagery of the brand hero is derived from the mythic stories built around them by the brand community, which are co-created with the brand's narrative.

6.3 Brand Hero Monomyth

The monomyth structure proposed by Campbell (1949) states that the hero leaves the ordinary world of the profane and enters the mythical world of the sacred where they encounter trials and return to the profane world to deliver a boon to society. The literature review anticipated that the monomyth of the brand hero would reflect this path. The brand hero leaves the profane world of the consumer to enter the mythical world of the producer to create the brand and they return to give a boon to the consumer. As expected, the monomyth was found in its entirety, as a brand hero leaves the consumer world (the level occupied by the brand community) for the mythic world (brand creation), but does not enter the profane world (marketplace). This is an important distinction for the brand community narrative: rather than entering the producer world that is governed by market imperatives for profit and market share, the brand hero enters the brand world with the imperative to champion the brand's values on behalf of the brand community. The imperatives of the brand (values shared by community) can be vastly different from commercial success (profit, marketshare).

Research Question 2

What are the brand community narratives about their brand hero and what influence do these have on the community?

Within the Discworld community, the single, focal hero of Terry Pratchett leaves his background as a reporter and press officer to enter the branded world of Discworld. The boon he delivers to the community, besides the creation of the brand, is the maintenance of brand values, such as the joke and the exclusivity of the joke. This is seen as more important than the commercial success of the brand, such as a Hollywood movie adaptation of the books or McDonalds toys as merchandise. Commercial success engenders mixed feelings in the community, as it would validate their choice of preference for Discworld, but the mainstream adoption of the brand would be detrimental to the brand's values. Much of Terry Pratchett's heroic narrative revolves around his perceived upholding of Discworld values against the commercial pressure to devalue them.

Similarly, within the Brumbies monomyth players move from the everyday world of amateur junior sport to the mythic world of the elite athlete and team. This transition from amateur to elite is perceived to be motivated by a love of the game and competition rather than a commercial imperative for money and fame. This is reflected in community attitudes towards competition and style of play over victory. So the monomyth for the Brumbies' brand heroes involves leaving the amateur world for the elite world of the team and the boon they deliver to the community is gladiatorial competition and beautiful play. The narratives presented in this chapter reflect the focus of the community brand values rather than commercial success.

6.4 Terry Pratchett Mythology

Mythology around the brand hero emerged as a major theme from the Discworld analysis. The empirical findings from the Discworld case indicate that there are three

main brand hero myths: the creator myth, the maintainer myth, and the life-after-death (post-mortem) myth. All of these myths relate to the brand hero's role with the brand, from their role in the birth of the brand, to beliefs surrounding the brand hero's role in the success of the brand and to the myths surrounding what will happen to the brand after the brand hero has retired/died. The antagonist myth about competing brand heroes who are seen by their respective brand communities as adversarial emerged as an important factor during the study.

6.4.1 The Creator Myth

The first myth surrounds the role of the brand hero in the creation of the brand. The major categories to emerge in the analysis of the myths surrounding Terry Pratchett as the creator of Discworld are his professional background that indicate a past understanding of 'the joke'; his motivation for writing, with references being made to his love of writing and the fans; and the process of writing, with myths being based on Terry Pratchett's knowledge. The creator myths surrounding Terry Pratchett are steeped in his professional past as a journalist and as a press officer for a British nuclear power company. These myths were born mainly out of the book blurbs about the author, which are written in the same irreverent tone of the Discworld itself.

"Terry Pratchett was born in 1948 and is still not dead. He started work as a journalist one day in 1965 and saw his first corpse three hours later, working experience *meaning* something in those days. After doing just about every job it's possible to do in provincial journalism, except of course covering Saturday afternoon football, he joined the Central Generating Board and became press officer for four nuclear power stations. He'd write a book about his experiences if he thought anyone would believe it.

All this came to an end in 1987 when it became obvious that the Discworld series was much more enjoyable than real work. Since then the books have

reached double figures and have a regular place in the bestseller lists. He also writes books for younger readers. Occasionally he gets accused of literature.

Terry Pratchett lives in Wiltshire with his wife Lyn and daughter Rhianna. He says writing is the most fun anyone can have by themselves.”

Blurb to *Interesting Times*, 1994

The above example of a blurb indicates the tone used throughout the series to introduce the author. This blurb contains quite a lot of information about his working life prior to *Discworld*, the history of *Discworld* and personal details about Terry Pratchett’s home life. These facts introduced as part of generic pieces to familiarise the reader with the author become part of the folkloric myth surrounding Terry Pratchett. The previous occupations of Terry Pratchett are turned into myths that reflect the perceived absurdity of the *Discworld* brand, for example:

“I know pretty much what’s in the blurb advertising books. I know that he worked in a nuclear power station as a press officer starting a week before Chernobyl or Long Island Power Station disaster. I know that he at one point there was a train derailed carrying nuclear waste and all the reporters were hounding him going: ‘is it dangerous’. So he took them along to the train track and they’ve thought: ‘OK we are wandering around here with no protective suits on and absolutely nothing is happening’. The train was about 3 inches off the rails, and he [Terry Pratchett] tells them [the journalists]: ‘there it is’, and they’re like: ‘never mind’. I know he’s done work as a journalist.” (David, Personal Interview)

That the myth of the brand hero prior to the brand’s creation still reflects the brand’s values is important to the brand community. The *Discworld* books are a humorous take on the absurdities of the world. The myths surrounding Terry Pratchett’s working life prior to the *Discworld* reinforce the creator as a humourist who recognised the absurdity or ‘the joke’ and that *Discworld* is his way of sharing.

“...Terry Pratchett, you might find his sci-fi a bit weird but he writes about stuff that’s real. He takes what’s really happening and really current and downsizes it and makes it funny and kind of forces you to look at by saying: ‘hey look at it, isn’t it funny it happens’” (David, Personal Interview)

Another example of blurb information turning into a creator myth is the blurb to *Good Omens* (published 1990), which states that Terry Pratchett would quite like people to shout him banana daiquiris. This myth has resulted in fans bringing jugs of banana daiquiris to book signings as a way of extending ‘the joke’ and also a way of honouring the author with a preferred beverage. This has happened so often that the myth changed to Pratchett being sick of banana daiquiris and would quite like vodka instead, which prompted a change in the drinks that people bring to book signing events. The bringing of such gifts has its origins in the sacrificial rituals in religious practice (Belk et al. 1989; Múniz and Schau 2005). The sacralisation of the brand hero through the offering of gifts is just one method of raising the brand hero’s stature and also is a ritual founded on the myth of his preference for banana daiquiris.

The creator myth also includes the brand hero’s motivation for creating the brand. The above blurb also hints at the motivation myth surrounding Terry Pratchett, in that it says that Pratchett considers writing to be the most fun that you can have by yourself. A strong creator myth about Terry Pratchett arises from the brand community’s belief that he is motivated by an enjoyment of writing and an enjoyment of Discworld fans.

The motivation of the love of writing Discworld is reinforced in the myth of the diligent writer. It is a matter of pride amongst Discworld fans that their brand hero has produced at least one book a year for the past 25 years. At the AusDWcon this was emphasised by his agent, Colin Smythe, who when recounting his professional association with Pratchett discussed how he started by “publishing one book a year, then Terry decided he could do two a year. That went on for a while and it got so big that he had to cut it back to one a year, which is the current production rate. Although it would be quite good if we could get two a year in the future”. The ability of Terry Pratchett to produce, what in literary circles is considered a high volume of output, forms the basis of the diligent producer myth. The rate of book release is often a point of discussion in the Discworld community:

Thread: Only 1 New Discworld Book Per Year From Now On. A Good Idea?

Posted By: The Jackal

So it seems that PTerry was true to his word at the DiscworldCon 2004, where he said he'd like to only bring out 1 new book every year because he's not getting any younger and he has to tour extensively with every novel.

I'm currently suffering withdrawal symptoms from not having my annual new release this May. Instead, Wintersmith doesn't hit the shelves until September 28th!

According to Paul Kidby's website, Wintersmith was fully finished in January. And as everyone knows, PTerry always starts his next novel immediately after finishing one.

So my thought is this: Wintersmith will have been finished for 8 months when it's finally released; Odds are therefore, that Making Money will also be completed by then (since it never takes him much longer than that to write something).

Following this trend, for every book published per year, he will probably have another in reserve! Seems rather silly...

Posted by: Garner

Shrug also means he can take a vacation once in a while.

personally, i'd rather he focus on writing one good novel a year than writing one and a half mediocre ones.

Posted by: Pixel

Garner, this is blasphemy - the Mathter is no longer capable of being mediocre - having used up all possibilities of "less than perfect" by writing them into "The Dark Side of the Sun" he is now on a permanent roll - the important thing is that he continues to write - so yes, he should take vacations, but they should not be the sort of "working vacation" that means stressful signing tours (which have given him health problems) but are considered vacations because he is not actually writing at the time.

The above exchange indicates that overall the brand community has a positive view of the new book publication rate. While they debate whether more would be even better and possible, underlying this is the respect that they give Terry Pratchett for the effort. The prolific creator myth is also compared to other brand heroes, such as J K. Rowling's production schedule of the Harry Potter books.

Deep down I know 1 book a year is grand; just been so used to 2, I don't want things to change! And compare him to Rowling, who doesn't seem able to complete anything inside of 2 years. (The Jackal, posted later in the previous thread)

Colin Smythe, Terry Pratchett's agent, said at the AusDWcon that Terry Pratchett is the only author he has ever worked with who submits his manuscripts on time. A story given to emphasise this point was the fact that after a hectic schedule of public engagements and illness Pratchett contacted Smythe to ask if it would be okay to submit one week later than the deadline. Smythe informed Pratchett that this was fine as most authors struggled to submit 6 months after their deadline. Comparing Pratchett with the submission rate of other authors reinforces this myth. For example, a convention attendee told the story of how Douglas Adams was notoriously late in submitting his manuscripts and in desperation his publisher hijacked him and put him in a hotel room and told him he couldn't leave until he had finished the book. It is through stories of prolific writing and comparison with other writer's that the myth of Terry Pratchett the prodigious creator is established and reinforced within the community.

Associated with the prodigious creator myth is the creative process myth, where the brand community establishes stories about how Terry Pratchett goes about creating the

brand. Such stories deal with the specifics of the man sitting in a room and writing to stories about the crafting of ‘the joke’.

“I just know he’s an English writer and he’s very funny and a naturally funny person so it’s not forcing that he has to rewrite a joke over and over and over to make it funny. It’s just that he writes it down and if it comes out funny he might just word it or tweak it a little bit but the framework is there. He’s extremely well read; he’s the kind of person who has so many books he had to get a library... getting reinforced bookshelves to carry the weight of the books. He’s someone who takes his writing seriously in the sense he understands the serious to get to the funny. Someone I feel that I can respect.” (David H, Personal Interview)

The above respondent talked extensively about how he perceived the process of Terry Pratchett’s writing. David H refers to the library of books in which the brand is created and also the process of creating ‘the joke’. ‘The joke’ as he sees it isn’t a forced effort but rather a product of a funny man. He also considers Pratchett to be well read and respects the work that he puts into researching and writing the Discworld books. While the process of the creator is not often discussed between fans, Pratchett is often asked at public appearances about his writing process. For example, in a Q&A session at AusDWcon he was asked about the inspiration for Granny Weatherwax and his differentiation between witch and wizard magic. Such discussions indicate that the process of creation and inspiration holds a deep fascination for the brand community. The creator myth encompasses stories of the brand hero, from his past occupations and establishment of the roots of the brand’s values, to understanding the process and inspirations behind the brand’s creation. These myths create bases for rituals such as gift giving and also provide reinforcement of the brand’s values in the eyes of the brand community.

6.4.2 The Maintainer Myth

The maintainer myth refers to the stories surrounding the brand hero’s management of the brand in the past and also expectations into the future. For the Discworld brand community, Terry Pratchett is seen to have a great amount of integrity in the upholding of the Discworld brand’s values. The key brand values that the brand community seek

to have maintained are the exclusivity of ‘the joke’, and that any brand extensions remain true to the core product. In this last value, an overriding concern for the brand community was the production of Discworld books into movies. This was an anticipated event, with many feeling that this would help bring Discworld to the mainstream, but there was concern that such an extension would need to be well managed by Pratchett so as to not lose the core values of the books in the movie translation. This section will introduce the myths surrounding Terry Pratchett when it comes to his management of the Discworld brand values.

Firstly, there are a number of myths surrounding Pratchett's management of ‘the joke’. ‘The joke’ is related to the nature of the Discworld series, which started as a parody of the real world, and includes elements of satire and puns (or punes³ as they are referred to by the community). The nature of the comedy does come up for discussion within the community:

Thread: When did Discworld stop being mainly parody?

Posted by: Mynona

mr pratchett himself explains it something like this "it went from parody to irony and sarcasm and is now heading somewhere completely different, though I do not know exactly where"

And I kind of agree, you still see hints of parody as well as Pterry critisizing the world in every way, shape and form. But one thing is certain, he's a genre all by himself.

Posted by: Garner

damn good question. The first two are the ones that were the REAL parody books. lacking a strong background in the contemporary fantasy of the day, I don't even realize that some of the jokes are... well... jokes.

³ There are two references in Discworld to punes. The most familiar one to me is the term as it is used for a mispronunciation of pun, this is used in many of the books, for example in Wee Free Men (2003):

“Oh, you mean a pune, or play on words,” said Tiffany*

*Tiffany had read lots of words in the dictionary that she’d never heard spoken, so she had to guess at how they were pronounced.

The second reference to pune is as the founder of the Fools Guild of Ankh-Morpork, Jean-Paul Pune (The Art of Discworld 2004). However, the most common usage within the community is as a reference to ‘pun’.

I've often said that I feel *Mort* is the first 'real' discworld book. *Equal Rites* sets up some major elements that we'll see for years and years to come, but Granny in *ER* isn't the same person as Granny in *Wyrd Sisters* or *Witches Abroad*. if you read *ER* and then skipped to *Lords and Ladies*, you'd have two distinct characters on your hands (well, probably...)

I think that with *ER*, and especially with *Mort*, the books take a sharp turn. By the time *Guards! Guards!* rolls around, we've abandoned the notion of parodying fantasy and whole heartedly embraced the notion of satirizing everything under the sun.

You'll still see a bit of fantasy parody from time to time, but it's almost always a passing laugh that doesn't impact the actual plot. I also think the Wizards tend to get used for this role, which might be one reason why people tend to feel the Wizards are their least favorite character set.

The above posts indicate that the type of comedy has changed gradually throughout the books. The first post clearly looks to Terry Pratchett to clarify the style of 'the joke' and this quote by the brand hero is then used by Mynona to frame her own opinion on 'the joke'. Garner looks to the brand to clarify his opinion of the style of 'the joke', where he identifies the clear elements of parody in the first few books and then sees 'the joke' as "satirizing everything under the sun". Part of the myth surrounding the maintenance of 'the joke' is that the brand hero will continue 'the joke' into the future.

"Yeh, definitely you know like with *Star Wars*, I'm not a *Star Wars* person but I know people have looked forward to the movies and that have been let down. But I have never been let down by a Terry Pratchett book, I will realise that a new one is out and I will buy it and read it and I have always enjoyed it. Like it's always been funny, it's always been clever it's always been well written like there hasn't been a new bad one since I've been reading them so, yeah, so I guess he's reliable."
(Tegan, Personal Interview)

Tegan describes this myth as "being reliable", she sees Pratchett as continuing 'the joke' though out all of the books. The value in the maintaining of 'the joke' is that the brand

community has come to trust that Terry Pratchett will continue to produce books that they enjoy and they have come to rely on its continuance.

“... but usually the latest Terry Pratchett is my favourite because he keeps topping himself every time. You pick up a Terry Pratchett and you know apart from a couple it s always been better than the last, always.” (Chris, Personal Interview)

Beyond the myth of Terry Pratchett as the reliable joke provider is the myth about ‘the joke’ only being enjoyed by people who ‘get it’. This opinion of other fans also extended to how they perceived Terry Pratchett.

“When it comes to Terry Pratchett... most of the people who read... if your (sic) not that smart you probably don’t want to read Terry Pratchett or have any interest in the type of things Terry Pratchett does.” (David, Personal Interview)

For David those who don’t like Discworld are not that smart or do not have anything in common with the brand hero.

Part of the maintainer myth is that the brand hero ‘gets it’ just like the brand community. This indicates that there is a sense of affinity between the brand community and the brand hero, as they see Terry Pratchett as ‘just another fan’. This myth about the brand hero being a fan and getting ‘the joke’ leads the brand community to expect that the brand hero will maintain the brand’s values into brand extensions.

There are a number of areas into which the Discworld brand has been extended, such as theatre, merchandise and television cartoons. The most salient extension to the brand community is a possible movie adaptation of Discworld books. The community felt a great sense of anticipation about the possibility of a mainstream movie produced from the books, with rumours of Pixar producing the Tiffany Aching and Truckers series of books into animated versions, and other real life versions being speculated on. Terry Pratchett and other support cast faces were asked about this possibility in Q&A sessions at the AusDWcon, TerryPratchettBooks Forum, and at a public lecture featuring Terry Pratchett. In some sense it was felt by the community that a movie adaptation would

legitimise the success of Discworld and bring the attention of the mainstream media to the brand.

Thread: Is Time Nigh For Full-Length Movies Of Pterry's Novels?

Posted by: The Jackal

So now that we have the announcement that Sky One will film a 4 hour long version of Hogfather in time for Christmas '06, it has got me thinking that we can finally, realistically, expect a proper full-length version of a Pratchett novel.

In the past we have seen Truckers made into a stop-motion animation (1992), as well as animated versions of Sould Music and Wyrd Sisters in 1997.

There has also been a TV adaptation of Johnny And The Dead (1995). Just this year we saw Johnny And The Bomb on the box. And now Hogfather is on the way...

So, if Sky One do a good job, do people think that will finally lead the way for a properly made movie in Hollywood?

Posted by: drunkenmonkey

It might. And hopefully it won't be a crappy money magnet. I hope that the morguls know that Discworld fans are far too cynical for that.

Posted by: Maljonic

[quote]... a properly made movie in Hollywood?[/quote]

Now there's an oxymoron if ever I saw one. ☺

The forum posts above shows the history of Discworld adaptations and wonders whether a 'Hollywood' version would be a possibility. Generally, the forum was in agreement but with reservations. The first reservation is that a Hollywood adaptation may lose fans, as it would be a 'money magnet', which is something the brand community would not appreciate. Another reservation was in the ability of Hollywood to translate the books successfully, as revealed in the following exchange.

Q. Would you want a movie of Discworld made or?

A. I don't think you could fit Discworld into a movie

Q. Like Hitchhikers Guide or Lord of the Rings?

A. No because there's too much in it, I don't think you could fit a novel into a movie without missing out too much of it. I think it would change it and I think you know, yeah. I don't think you could, it wouldn't make sense. And I think the joy of Discworld is that you can read it and it would change in a movie. Possible have the whole argument of who to cast and that could be extremely tiresome, you know.

Q. Would it ruin it for you?

A. Yeah, it would, when you read something you see things a certain way and when it gets transcribed into a movie it changes it and I don't think it's always as good, you know.

(Deborah, Personal Interview)

Deborah feels that a movie translation of the books may ruin it for her as the movie version would change how she views the Discworld and she finds 'joy' in the reading of the books that may not be present in a movie adaptation. Besides problems in adapting the brand successfully to a new medium, concerns also arose about the movie industry missing core components of the brand. For example, there was a rumour that Terry Pratchett was approached by a production company to produce a movie version of 'Mort' (the story involves Death taking on an apprentice). The production company believed that Death was too negative a character for audiences and wanted to remove this character from the film. The rumour continues that Terry Pratchett refused to allow the production company movie rights to the book if they were going to remove Death. The reaction to this rumour by the brand community was unanimously in support of Terry Pratchett.

“You can’t do Mort without death. Mort is death, for goodness sake...It can’t be Mort without death; it’s just not happening.” (Alison, Personal Interview)

“That’s fantastic! More people should turn down movie executives because it’s like Lord of the Rings without the rings, exactly, you couldn’t do it. It wouldn’t make sense. Gosh, that’s stupid, anyone who thinks they can do that, it’s offensive to the author, it’s offensive to the fans, it’s offensive to the very book itself” (Deborah, Personal Interview)

Despite these reservations, there is a belief that the translation of Discworld into a Hollywood style movie would bring the brand to a wider audience. This is based on the belief that Discworld is outside of the mainstream, or as one respondent put it:

“Pratchett is a bit too mainstream to be underground now although a hell of a lot of people have not heard of him” (Judy, Personal Interview).

This lack of popular recognition has led to a conflicting desire to increase the mainstream awareness of the brand with the belief that only a few get ‘the joke’. On the one hand, the brand community would quite like to see Discworld more widely recognised.

“I would like more people to know about Discworld because I think it’s really good but I think at the same time that what you get in a movie is not necessarily the real thing. ... And I think people often go and see the movie: ‘oh ok’ and then read the book and go: ‘its not the same’ and I think then the blame goes on the author when that happens and I don’t think that should happen.” (Deborah, Personal Interview)

On the other, the brand community has a desire to keep the brand to themselves. Those that read it now consider themselves to be ‘real’ fans and compare any success that Discworld may achieve through a movie to other movie adaptations. For example:

A....I guess it’s a little bit like that and it’s nice not to have every Tom, Dick and Harry going: ‘I’m such a big Pratchett fan’, although they’ve never seen one film and never read the books or any like that, but it doesn’t really bother me.

Q. Did you find that a lot with the Lord of the Rings, like people see the movies and then took up the series?

A. Well they don’t, they often say they are an active fan, but they’ve never read the books. The Tolkien fan group at the school I work at, I’d say 50% of the kids in it hadn’t read the books, only seen the film and that’s OK. But there’s a lot of people who say they loved the Lord of the Rings but they have never read it.”

(Judy, Personal Interview)

Part of the maintainer myth for Terry Pratchett is the ability to balance these competing desires. The community looks to him to expand the recognition of the brand to a wider audience, but he is also required to do this in a way that maintains the core values of the brand so that new fans are ‘real’ and not just based on a translation of the books. The brand community believes that their brand hero would not sell out the core of a story just for the money. The myth that the brand hero will maintain the brand’s values and not sell out to Hollywood is a strong theme throughout discussions with Discworld fans. The maintainer myths include the beliefs of the brand community about how Terry Pratchett will manage the brand, with a separate series of post mortem myths surrounding what will happen with the brand after their focal brand hero is no longer able to continue maintaining it.

6.4.3 Post-Mortem Myth

There are three key concerns of the brand community in the management of the brand after their focal brand hero has gone: (1) the continued existence of the brand, (2) the increased success of the brand, and (3) the maintaining of the brand's values under a new management. Within the Discworld community this has taken an increased importance in recent times with the release of information indicating that Pratchett is suffering from a form of Alzheimer's disease. The following post illustrates increased awareness of a post-Pratchett Discworld.

Thread: Pterry has Alzheimer's disease

Posted by: katal

Right now, I am cursing the Monty Pythons for making me hesitate between wanting to cry and imagining Pterry on stage in a nighty singing "I'm not yet dead"...

Damn damn damn, that really sucks. We all know the end will come one day, but this brings it nearer, although not yet here...

The first concern is the continued existence of the brand. In the case of Discworld, when Terry Pratchett, the creator, has gone there will be no more of the brand produced. This has created the life-after-death myth for the brand hero where it is perceived that the brand hero will control what happens to the brand after he is gone. In one case, there was a rumour regarding the creation of more Discworld books after Terry Pratchett dies.

“Yeah because someone was going on about how Terry Pratchett had apparently signed a piece of paper saying there could be no more Discworld after he died. This guy was really getting up him about it, saying: ‘no there should be a Discworld; people should be able to write after you die’. Discworld dies with Terry as far as I can see it's the way things happen. I would rather not see it really screwed up like some of the other series out there.” (Chris, Personal Interview)

The post-mortem creation of more Discworld books after the brand hero's death includes the possibility based on rumour that Pratchett's daughter may take over the franchise. Others hope that with the reduced number of books released each year that a backlog of books may develop allowing for books to be posthumously released.

Thread: Only 1 New Discworld Book Per Year From Now On. A Good Idea?

Posted by: Ba

Even if he does release them more slowly than he writes them... what of it? It means there will still be discworld for a bit after he's no more, and thus will continue to provide for his widow.

The post-mortem myth of the focal brand hero is based on the belief that they will provide for the brand community after they have died or retired. This myth is based on stories of succession planning or stockpiling of new product to keep the brand community provided with new product. A core of this myth is the unwillingness of the brand community to accept that the brand is dependent on one person and that there may be no more new product to provide that excitement in the community that a new book provides. Associated with this myth about the continuation of the brand after the brand hero's demise are stories relating to the success of the brand when the brand hero is gone.

For the brand community the success of the brand in a post-brand hero world is the myth that the brand hero will still provide a focus of involvement for community members. For this myth, the brand community believes that the community will no longer be a celebration of the brand hero's current production but will become a memorial to his past achievements.

“Pratchett is very important to the community. People get together now to celebrate his birthday. After he dies they’ll probably get together to mourn the day of his death.” (Chris A, Personal Interview)

The myth of post-mortem success is tempered with the worry of who will control the brand’s values into the future. For instance, a respondent, David, was against a Hollywood movie being made of Discworld, as he believed that a movie studio would not be true to the brand’s core values. As part of his statement he said

“Terry Pratchett would have to be very dead and very buried before a movie would be made. He just wouldn’t let that happen while he was around.” (David, Personal Interview)

Such statements indicate that the brand hero will no longer control the brand’s values and that management decisions may not be made to uphold these values. David as a peripheral member of the Discworld community with limited real-world involvement at book signings, has limited exposure to the management team behind Discworld besides the focal brand hero. In this circumstance, he is unable to judge the future actions of others replacing Pratchett. Another brand community member, Susan, who has extensive brand community involvement in Discworld convention attendance and online forum involvement, has a much closer relationship with the brand hero and the behind the scenes brand faces. As previously stated in the discussion of brand hero credibility, Susan believes that the brand values will be continued once Terry Pratchett has gone because the potential managers, Pratchett’s wife and daughter, also love the brand.

These post-mortem myths provide brand community hope for the continuance of the brand, with additional success in the future while maintaining the brand’s core values. Underpinning these myths is the hope that the value of Discworld will not be lost upon the demise of its creator and that the celebration of Discworld ownership is something that will be possible without him. The creator, maintainer, and post-mortem myths are

those stories that specifically relate to the brand hero, the last myth is the place the brand hero has amongst his competitors. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

6.4.4 The Antagonist Myth

The antagonist myth is the stories surrounding direct rivalry between Terry Pratchett and other authors. This extends the theatre metaphor of the performance encounter *within* one brand to the performance that is enacted *between* brands. The communities of opposition literature allows for brand communities to define their identities in comparison to other brands (Múniz and Hamer 2001). The theatre metaphor allows for heroes from competing brands to enact narratives that differentiate each community.

Pratchett was compared to a number of different others throughout the study, including J.K. Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter series, J.R.R. Tolkein, author of The Lord of the Rings series, and Douglas Adams, author of the Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy series. The literature product category had more of these antagonistic associations, as members were likely to have read widely and have experience with a number of different brands, so while their reading behaviour suggests non-loyal consumers, they generally displayed their loyalty through their fandom (Hills 2002; Jenkins 1992, 1996). Most antagonist myths surround J.K. Rowling, within the fantasy genre, as Rowling is the only living author and she is also the most successful author in the genre's history. This makes her the target of many stories regarding a great rivalry between Pratchett and herself. The key component of the antagonist myth is the perceived animosity or rivalry between the brand heroes of each community. In this case, the Harry Potter community felt that Terry Pratchett harboured animosity towards Rowling because of her success:

Thread: Terry Pratchett letter about Rowling (Harry Potter forum)

Posted by: the grey lady

I've known he felt like this for a few months now. After reading "A Hat Full of Sky," a book that he wrote geared towards young adults, I caught what seemed like OBVIOUS Potter references. In an online chat with the author, I asked him about what I thought was a small homage to a fellow brit, childrens author, and fantasy writer. What resulted was Terry Pratchett, himself, tearing me a new one!

From his response, it seemed to me like he is resentful of JK getting "instant fame" for something he's been doing (and doing well. I'll say it... He's one of my favourite authors, even if I don't care for him personally.)

Terry Pratchett is what first got me into fantasy, and I probably never would have read Harry Potter without that introduction. I am deeply disappointed in him, however. From his books, it seemed like he had an excellent grasp of human nature. It's sad to see him displaying one of its dirtier aspects. I can't blame him for having these feelings. Which one of us wouldn't feel a little resentful, were we in his shoes? (Before JK came along I heard him described many times as "the most popular modern British writer in the world.") But it was grossly indiscrete and juvenile of him to make those opinions generally known.

This Harry Potter community member expresses a common sentiment among the Harry Potter fans that Pratchett is 'resentful' of Rowling's fame. Other terms used are 'sour grapes', 'envious' and 'feeling neglected', which contribute to a negative image of Pratchett within the Harry Potter community. This is despite many Harry Potter fans admitting to being fans of Discworld, just as graylady is. However, despite this commitment to both brands, there exists an overriding perception of the opposition brand hero as negative and in the case of Pratchett, actively trying to undermine Rowling's success.

Thread: Terry Pratchett letter about Rowling**Posted by: graylady**

anyway - pratchett's letter. how obviously jealous can you get?! i'm sure his books are good and all, but i don't plan on bothering with reading any of them now that he's shown how petty and childish he is (there are enough books out there to occupy my time without having to fork over cash to someone like this pratchett guy). he seems like the kind of guy that would take personal offense if you beat him at pictionary or something. and all that (expletive deleted) he said about pitying authors who don't get the recognition they deserve! if he really felt that way he would be glad that JKR gets the recognition she deserves! what a hypocrite.

This Harry Potter fan uses some quite strong language in disparaging Pratchett and also draws from one letter to the editor quite a detailed negative perception of him as petty, childish and 'someone who would take personal offence if you beat him at Pictionary'. Such remarks indicate that the brand community is able to draw quite detailed antagonist myths about the opposition's brand hero with very limited information, in this case, one letter to the editor. Similarly, the Discworld community has also developed negative perceptions of J.K. Rowling.

Thread: Pratchett criticises Rowling**Posted by: Brorien**

As for the article, well someone had to say it. J.K. Rowling is all over in the media. But is she actually doing anything for the genre she's writing in? No.

She wants the limelight for herself and she's not afraid to admit it. Some people even call her a role model. No f*cking way. She is looking out only for herself, that's not a value I think we should be instilling in young children.

How often has she mentioned the works of other authors? Not that often if at all. How much credit does she give to those who have come before? Not much at all.

So, she's got a storyline I happen to like but I don't think she's a really good author or a very good person.

Hmmm...I wonder if any of that made sense to anyone else. Let me sum it up, yay Terry Pratchett, Rowling needs to get off her high horse.

Brorien he perceived J.K. Rowling as a negative figure for not adequately contributing to or acknowledging the genre in which she is writing. He also sees her as not representing positive values but rather selfishness, through looking out for number one. The antagonist myths about each author provide a point of comparison between the brand communities and also a common 'punching bag' to unite them. For example, when asked about committing an illegal act for Pratchett an AusDWcon attendee responded

"How illegal? I mean I'd double park his car but I wouldn't kill anyone. Although, maybe if it was Rowling...[laugh]" (Susan, AusDWcon)

In response to this perceived animosity between himself and Rowling, Pratchett has publicly attempted to dispel the perception that such an active rivalry exists.

"If you read the actual letter, yes I'm being a bit snarky at J.K. Rowling in the second part because she seems to be being a bit disingenuous and she's putting down J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, which seems rather strange in the circumstances. What actually happened was that the BBC website took my letter and scrambled it up a bit and an attack on Les Grossman, who was the guy who

delivered the greensleaves quote, became an attack directly on J.K. Rowling. There became a suggestion in the rewritten piece that this became a direct attack on her, not what was clearly an attack on very, very shoddy journalism and may I say fairly typical journalism. This is a personal axe to grind here, a lot of journalists after the rise of J.K. Rowling acted like there had never been anything like this before. Any magical school had to be based somehow on Hogwart's and anyone who's read any fantasy over the last two decades knows that this isn't true. Everyone knows this isn't true, J.K. Rowling knows this isn't true, it's just that journalists who come across this thing for the first time think this is new.

“And then the scrambled version on the BBC website was picked up by a number of Harry Potter websites and everything went ballistic. The BBC... when the grown ups at the BBC came in and found out what had happened the page was rewritten to reflect something like the true state of affairs and they actually apologised to me. Getting an apology out of the BBC is as difficult as getting an apology out of the BBC. But when you do something like this and you send an email of apology to some guy it doesn't really sort things out, so the thing then took off under its own momentum. It always seems rather puzzling why people should assume there is some animosity between the two of us, or on my part. I don't recall it being suggested between myself and Douglas Adams, where you could say that we are perhaps more equally matched. It all seems to be a media created thing, aided and abetted by fans because it's fun. I have no particular objection to this.

“I've only met J.K. Rowling once. She was kind enough to congratulate me on winning the Carnegie medal. I said: 'well she'd picked up a few things of her own', but she said: 'not the Carnegie' and I said: 'yes but isn't it nice at the end of the day to know you can fall backwards into a pile of pound notes the size of a house'. And she was gracious enough to smile. And that was it. So it was all really a rather manufactured thing. Of course the other aspect is... and let me assure you by the standards of authors slagging off other authors, that up there (pointing to letter to the editor) that is absolutely nothing compared to some of

the literary rows there have been, and that's that whole point really. And that's how it's almost supposed to work, authors do call other authors cowards or object to their views or write things in a different way. I think one of the things I got fed up with is, and I've heard this a lot, and it's absolutely not the fault of J.K. Rowling, after a while a guy gets a bit pissed off that people of 12 or 13 years old can't read that little notice at the front of a book that tells you when a book was written." (Terry Pratchett, AusDWcon, Session on Discworld versus Harry Potter)

The above quote from Terry Pratchett about this issue addresses a number of different areas. The first is the media's involvement in generating a perceived animosity between these two authors, with a letter from Pratchett regarding 'shoddy reporting' being published as an attack on J.K. Rowling. The second element is the role of the fans in creating this perception of animosity 'because it's fun'. The final element that contrasts starkly with the view of the authors' relationship presented in the online brand community discussions presented earlier, is the actual relationship between the two authors. The perceived 'jealousy' and 'animosity' between the authors is in contrast with the authors' actual relationship, where there has been only one conversation and from Pratchett's account this was quite civil. This apparent dichotomy between the antagonist myths of the brand community and the actual relationship of colleagues engaged in a minor literary 'row', but with no personal hostility towards each other, indicates that brand heroes need a counterfoil for the truly dramatic narrative. From Caughey's (1978, 1984) parasocial relationship types, the antagonist myth differs where rather than the individual having a hate relationship, they imagine that their favoured author has a hate relationship with the competing author.

These myths shape the beliefs of the brand community about their brand hero's role within the brand and also the hero's commitment to maintaining the brand's values. The following section will present the brand heroes narratives of the Brumbies community.

6.5 Heroic Narratives in the Brumbies Community

The findings from the Brumbies study highlight the importance of establishing a brand face's heroism. As players can move in and out of the team and the brand continues, the community looks less to individual players to establish and maintain brand values. Rather they see players as heroic for their embodiment of existing values. These existing values include the ideas that players are in it for the team and not for individual accolades or the money. The marketing effort of the Brumbies is strongly focused on establishing players' credentials as heroic figures for the community. However, the reality does not necessarily reflect the mythology, as the Matt Giteau case highlights. This case will be described later. The following will provide an overview of the game structure from which the Brumbies' brand values are drawn.

There are four elements within the rugby union game structure that are negotiated by players and the community: competition, physicality, creativity and achievement. These four elements have been discussed previously in Chapter 4, where they were examined in terms of establishing credibility, and as critical criteria to judge player performance. The following section will deal with how heroic narratives develop around those players deemed to be credible heroes and who were reflective of the brand community's desire for the performance of the 'beautiful game'.

The Brumbies hero narratives contrast with the Discworld mythology. Within the Brumbies community, heroes are transitory participants in the creation of the brand experience, with the overarching Brumbies brand continuing as individual players come and go from the club. This means that the establishment of credibility with the brand and the community is a co-created process with the myths. The process of players developing credibility has been discussed in the previous chapter. There is a joint process of credibility and narrative development, where, after credibility is established, the player's heroism becomes the focus of the narratives. This section explores the parallel narratives of heroism and credibility as well as the heroic status of established players.

6.5.1 Moving From Brand Face to Brand Hero Narratives

The game theatre is surrounded by sidelines that are inhabited by the brand community and support cast. These include the players of both teams as they do warm up exercises on the boundary; the media people, such as the Foxtel production team and news photographers; ball boys; touch judges (side line referees); and the ground security staff. The sidelines provide one of the first opportunities for the crowd to get to know players and are a place where interaction between the community and the players can occur during the game. The Brumbies players on the sideline are often juniors and new players. Sideline interaction with the crowd builds rapport with the community, and can generate brand narratives. For example, the red-headed player Peter Kimlin built up a narrative based on his hair colour and that he was a hard and fast running forward. During his first year in 2008 he was primarily a substitute who would warm-up past the crowd during the game and before going on to the field. His distinctive hair colour drew the attention of the community and narratives of an appropriate name for him provided entertainment. Some of the nicknames developed included 'Bluey', 'Bloodnut' and 'Ranga'. This was an important process, as the name had to 'fit'. The nick-name had to reflect the community's perception of Kimlin as a credible, hard running player.

In the 2009 season, as a regular starting player the crowd had reached an unspoken consensus with Bloodnut. This name seemed to be the one that reflected their perception his playing style the best. These nicknames were generated by the fans and did not translate to the marketing of the players, where the game guide referred to the Peter Kimlin's nick-name in the team as Kimbo, even as the spectators continued to call him Bloodnut. Kimlin's narrative was expanded to include others in the sideline sideshow. In the 2009 season, a red-headed ball boy was included in the Bloodnut narrative and was nicknamed the Little Brother of Bloodnut. The red-headed hair colour became a focus for building a family narrative for Kimlin and the ball boy in a reflection of the growing stature that Kimlin was gaining in the brand performance. This process was interrupted as Kimlin did not play in 2010 season due to injury. There is the possibility that he will need to re-establish credibility and narratives or the community may continue with the existing narratives. In the Kimlin case, the narratives were developed in parallel with the perceptions of his performance credibility. The following section will focus on those players that have established their credibility and narratives.

6.5.2 Established Hero Narratives

For players that have established their credibility within the Brumbies and the Wallabies, the narratives are not constructed in conjunction with credibility but move beyond this into more mythical styles of heroic stories. For example, George Gregan (a foundation player), the former Wallabies captain and the record holder for the most capped player, received very personal attention from Brumbies fans, even though he was not the Brumbies captain. This can be seen in conversations held by middle-aged couples that sat behind me in the crowd that emphasises Gregan's performance, his link to Canberra and these fans's link to the player.

“Gregan has incredible fitness with heart. Such a clean looking bloke.” (Middle-aged Female in Row 3, 2006)

Woman: “So you're a big fan of Gregan are you?”

Man: “Yeah. George's mum is a nurse at King James Hospital and she changed this one's nappy [referring to grandchild in lap]. We think that gives him a big future in rugby.” (2007)

The first quote demonstrates the kind of comments that are made about a well-known player's ability. She admires the fact that he performs well because he is fit and has 'heart'. This idea of 'heart' refers to courage and persistence, a quality often associated with Gregan, as he is smaller in stature than most rugby players and his success with the Brumbies and the Wallabies were often attributed to his determination. The second part of this quote referring to 'clean looking' is an oblique reference to Gregan's distinctive appearance with his shaved head for his entire career. As has been shown with the Peter 'Bloodnut' Kimlin and now with Gregan, having a distinctive appearance also garners greater attention and associated fan commentary. The second conversation demonstrates the (half-joking) mystical qualities that an interaction with the brand hero can impart. For this fan, the fact that Gregan's mother changed a grandchild's nappy means that rugby ability will be bestowed. This apparent mystical quality of brand heroes in

bestowing abilities in the Brumbies case tends to be reserved for those that are perceived to be pinnacles of rugby performance, not just a Brumbies player.

6.5.3 Heroes and Villains

During the game the spectators in my section would converse amongst themselves with commentary and often with speculation as to why a referee had called a penalty. The rules of rugby are quite intricate and without the television commentary, that includes the audio feed of the referee's decisions, it is sometimes difficult to know what or why a decision has been made. Due to this, spectators at the live game often discuss various decisions, what had happened and how wrong or right the referee was in his call. The spectators also interact with the players on the field, both Brumbies and opposition players. Brumbies players are singled out when they do something positive, such as an effective tackle or a territory claiming kick. However, they also singled out when it is felt a player isn't playing to the kind of football the fans expect. For instance, Brumbies fans value the 'running' style of football over the 'kicking' style that involves kicking volleys between teams in an attempt to gain territory. As one fan put it,

“If I wanted to see that much kicking I'd go see a soccer game.” (Male 50s, acquaintance discussing an away game)

For spectators at the game, Mark Gerrard, (Brumbies full back) was often singled out for this perceived negative style of play. There were often calls of “Don't kick it!” and “What a waste of possession!” when Gerrard got the ball. Occasionally, an opposing player is singled out, this was often not based on that player doing wrong against the Brumbies but more as a game for the crowd to get their attention. For example, the former Brisbane Reds captain, Chris Latham, who played full back, would get the attention of the male group in the front row's attention because his socks were pushed down, whereas most players have their socks pulled up. This anomaly would cause a chant:

“Bay 36 says pull your bloody socks up!”

or shouted comments:

“Pull your socks up so we don’t see how you shave your legs!” (Male 20s in Row 1)

This happened in two games in which the Reds played at Canberra stadium. In the first game, the Reds captain acknowledged the chants with a wave. This caused a cheer and an increase in volume for the chant. When an opposing player was perceived to do wrong, usually an illegal hit on a Brumbies players, the chant of “Off! Off!” would start. If the player was sent off then this would be greeted with cheers, and if not, then the offending player would be jeered when they next touched the ball. The last interaction of the crowd with the opposing team is in their attempts to reduce the scoring efforts of the opposing team. This is in the form of jeering and yelled comments to put the goal kicker off, such as “Miss it!” and “Kick it to me!” these efforts are a way for the crowd to feel involved and in a small way responsible for the game’s outcome (Tripp 2009).

6.5.4 Fall and (Possible) Resurrection of the Brand Hero

The other major event that gains the attention of the fans is when a player leaves the club. This has occurred in three ways during the course of the ethnographic study: retirement, leaving to go to another club, and the accidental death of a player.

The first way in which players leave the club and possibly the most common, is their retirement from rugby and the Brumbies. Two key retirements occurred at the end of the 2006 season, for George Gregan, previously mentioned, and Stephen ‘Bernie’ Larkham, full back for the Brumbies and the Wallabies. Both of these players had been with the Brumbies since the team’s inception into the Super 14 competition in 1996 (originally it was the Super 12 with an extra two teams added in 2006). Due to their long careers and international success, there was a great deal of interest when they retired. At the last

home game of the season there was a ceremony held at the end of the game where both players gave speeches. Usually at the conclusion of a game there would be an exodus for the gates but many people stayed behind to watch the seeing off these players. There was also a dedication where the western stand of the stadium was renamed the Gregan-Larkham Stand. Much of the discussion of fans after these players retired was about how the Brumbies would find future success with two key and 'superior' players leaving.

The second way in which a player has left is in going to another team in the competition. For players that are considered less key, the news that they are going to another club receives little comment. For example, the trading of Saia Faingaa, a player that had come up through the juniors ranks to play a couple of seasons with the Brumbies at the first grade level, passed with little comment from fans. Faingaa was reasonably popular with the fans and would be singled out for encouragement from members of Bay 36, so it was not as if he was overlooked, he just did not seem to be considered key to the Brumbies continued success. However, when it was announced that Matt Giteau was leaving the Brumbies to join the new Perth Western Force team for a record contract of \$6 million for 5 years there was uproar. This was seen by the fans as 'selling out' and many comments were made about Giteau's focus on money after the announcement, even when he was still playing for the Brumbies. The following exchange between the male group in the front row illustrates this.

Male 1: "You should go to Perth. They'll give you at least half a mil."

Male 2: "I'm going to Perth as their number 1 supporter."

This conversation infers that being involved with the Perth team requires monetary reward, where the second man indicates jokingly that he would change for the money. When Giteau played with the Western Force in Canberra the comments were even more particular, with calls such as

“Ching, ching Giteau!” (started by fan called Robbo, male 40s, but taken up by others in crowd)

“Don’t bother kicking the ball, you don’t get paid enough!” (Male 20s)

The above quotes demonstrate a negative perception of playing for monetary reasons, which is an obvious juxtaposition with the fact that all of the players were employed to play rugby. These comments demonstrate that leaving the team for monetary reasons was considered negative and not reflective of the community values of commitment to the Brumbies. This view has some historic basis, as rugby was one of the last sports in Australia and worldwide to go professional. The myth of playing rugby for the Brumbies for the love of the team and the sport is reinforced by the values of the brand and the rugby subculture. This tenet is carried in the marketing of the SuperRugby competition on Fox Sports in Australia, which uses the tagline “For the love of the game”. This would indicate that Faingaa leaving the Brumbies to gain a more central position in another team is true to the spirit of rugby but leaving for money is not. Interestingly, in the 2009 season it was announced that the funding for Giteau’s contract with the Western Force had failed so he was breaking the contract and returning to the Brumbies. The Western Force played in Canberra a week after this announcement with Giteau playing for the Force and no comments were made by the crowd about this or that he was money focused. This response indicates that returning to the Brumbies fold may mean that the fans have forgiven him.

At the start of the 2010 season when Giteau was returning to the Brumbies, there was a concerted effort to re-establish his credibility. Media coverage of Giteau’s return repeated his statement that he was looking forward to returning to the Brumbies.

“I’m so excited! I’ve been sleeping in my jersey.” (Matt Giteau, TV and radio February 2010)

This display of excitement and commitment to the Brumbies helps to re-establish his credibility. This seemed to be successful as his 'defection' for money to the Western Force was not mentioned by the fans the entire season. It would appear that leaving the brand community for greater monetary incentive is not acceptable; however, the same restrictions did not apply for returning to the club. I was unable to gauge the Western Force's fans reaction to Giteau's return to the Brumbies for money as he did not play in the game between the two teams in 2010. In terms of previous research into brand heroes, Giteau is the closest to the prodigal son myth that Belk and Tumbat (2005) found in Steve Jobs return to Macintosh.

The final way that a player left the Brumbies was through an accidental death. This only happened once during the study period and occurred during the 2009 season where Shawn MacKay died while on tour in South Africa mid-season. His death was the result of him being hit by a car after a game rather than on-field. However, this created a surge in interest in him as a player. Prior to this, MacKay had been a relatively unknown player who had received no particular attention from the brand community. While there was an outpouring of sympathy for the loss of MacKay, there was also an over-riding sense that beyond the grief, the concern of the community was in the impact of this event on the Brumbies' performance. As a male in his 50s put it,

"We're screwed for the rest of the season now. We've got no chance of making the finals now." (Male 50s, casual conversation)

This was said in a conversation with a group of people where the initial discussion was about what a tragedy it was and the details of the incident. The concern for the performance of the team would generally follow on from this. There is a sense that this is insensitive in terms of the wider social norms and when I mentioned this response to non-Brumbies fans the response was generally negative. However, for the Brumbies community any event either positive or negative that occurs to a player is weighed in terms of the effect it will have on the team.

6.5.5 In it for the Team: The Myth of Brand Hero Motivation

The underlying myth within the Brumbies brand community is that the players are motivated by their love of the team. The players establish their credibility by linking their performance with that of the brand. Once this has been achieved, the community and the players' narratives reinforce the myth that 'it's all about the team'. Players perpetuate the myth by the narratives they provide when they talk to the media and the fans. Giteau's statement that he sleeps in his jersey is the extreme end of these narratives. However, players' narratives focus on the team's tactics and performance. Rather than discuss what they will bring to a game as an individual, they refer to the team and what the team needs to succeed. Part of the 'in it for the team' myth is that the individual player is giving their best to the team for the goal of the 'beautiful game'.

The Brumbies case provided a rich setting to explore how marketers build mythology about their brand heroes. This case focused on the programs provided at the games for Brumbies fans and on a participant observation study of the interaction between fans, and between the fans and the players at the game. The author interviewed two of the Brumbies marketing managers to ascertain a managerial perspective on these activities. The building of the brand hero myth was achieved in three inter-related ways.

The first was to establish the commitment of the brand hero to the brand; this was done through showing that the player had a long junior history with the club or had contractual agreements with the club for an extended period of time. This is exemplified with the case of Saia Faingaa, who attended a Canberran boys school and was part of the Brumbies junior development program. He also had brothers that played for the club throughout their junior development and early professional careers. However, Saia left the Brumbies to join another team within the Super Rugby competition. This highlights the fact that within the Brumbies situation, brand faces and heroes can come and go but the brand values continue.

The second was to establish the brand hero's relationship with the brand community. The Brumbies did this through meet the players days and informally through player interaction with the crowd during a game. Marketing efforts to establish these relationships were relatively limited in providing direct interaction with only one meet the player day per season. Other interaction opportunities included schools visits and the end-of-season awards dinner. However, these were available to only a select few. Indirect relationships were established using traditional media, with sports reports in various news outlets. Also, online profiles were created and the season and game guides highlighted individual players. These indirect methods enabled parasocial relationships to develop between players and the community (Caughey 1978; Horton and Wohl 1956).

Finally, the brand hero myth was developed through personalising the brand hero to the brand community, which was achieved through revealing personal details of the player in marketing material or through public relations activities with the media, with such information as birthdays and new babies publicized. These personal details, while reflecting parasocial relationships, also provided a sense that the team was a family, of which the community was also a member. This is closely associated with Caughey's (1978) framework of pseudo-relationships where rather than romantic love the Brumbies players represent familiar or fraternal love relationships. The Brumbies represent a family to which the players and the community have chosen to belong and all members are working for the benefit of this family. So players are not just in it for the team, they are motivated by their belonging to the Brumbies family.

6.6 Conclusion

The findings from the Discworld study reveal a complex relationship between the brand hero and the brand community. While the brand hero is seen to represent community norms, these norms also represent beliefs about the brand hero. This relationship is established through narratives and mythologies of who Terry Pratchett is and what he means to the community. In the brand hero situation these are often based on real-world experiences that the community members have had with the hero, which are shared and help to build a body of mythology that establishes the hero's sacredness.

The comparison between the narratives that emerge from both communities illustrates the importance of the type of brand hero. In the Discworld community, Terry Pratchett as the creator means that the narratives around him as the central heroic figure are unwavering. Other brand faces can be in the support cast but they can never move into the central heroic position. On the other hand, in the Brumbies where faces come and go, the narratives are focused around establishing and maintaining the brand face's role and performance within the brand. As the cast moves between roles the support cast's purpose is not to support the hero, rather the entire cast is an equal part of the brand performance narrative.

The role of the brand hero is to provide a norm of behaviour for the community to aspire to and replicate. They reflect the qualities that the community believes themselves to possess. The heart of the impact of the brand hero in brand communities is in the co-creation of identity; where Terry Pratchett is "intelligent, literate and well-mannered", the brand community believes itself to reflect those qualities, and Pratchett tells them that they reflect these qualities. The brand heroes in the Brumbies community reflect the value of being in it for the team, the game and then the sport. For the brand hero to be effective, they must continue to embody these qualities or risk the undermining of the core of the community's ethos. This is a major challenge as the hero is a commercial figure, up against a community who believes them to be motivated by non-commercial objectives and who is ultimately human.

Within the theatre metaphor, these narratives provide the focus of action in the brand performance. However, as both the Discworld and Brumbies brand hero mythologies demonstrate, the narrative is negotiated by both the brand heroes and the brand community where perception meets reality meets marketing. This theatre is in a constant state of flux as the community desires the sacred experience of the non-commercial hero who is in it for the love of the brand / community. They are often at odds with the reality of brand heroes as people with their human frailties and commercial imperatives. There is also the complexity of the positioning and perceptions that marketers are trying to create around their brands and brand heroes.

CHAPTER 7 PROXY, PROXIMITY AND PATHOLOGY

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have highlighted the positive outcomes of the role of the brand hero in the brand community. However, there are some limitations and pitfalls associated with brand heroes. This chapter explores the tightrope that marketers must walk between proxy and proximity worship of the brand hero and the nature of parasocial relationships in that context. These issues form the boundary conditions between the hero, the brand and the community, as well as between an individual level of behaviour and the social dynamic of the community.

7.2 Proxy versus Proximity of the Brand Hero

Schau and Muniz (2007) identify the distinction between the brand hero as a god by proxy rather than proximity in their study of the TPATH community. The authors differentiate between the proxy role, which views the brand hero as god and as a source of greatness as it is bestowed through the brand's product, versus the proximity role, in which the community seeks greatness through contact. A crucial difference in the motivation of brand community members and celebrity worshippers is the brand community desire to seek greatness through a relationship with the product. This section extends Schau and Muniz's work by considering the tension of seeking and having both proxy and proximity with a brand hero.

Research Question 3

How is the brand hero sacred and commercial as opposed to profane and everyday?

7.2.1 The Mythological Affable Brand Hero versus the Profane Self-Promoter

The perception of the Terry Pratchett as the mythical hero of the brand community versus the profane self-promoter with his own agenda was heavily influenced by the proximity of Pratchett to the community members. There is a tension between being perceived as accessible by the community, and that level of access creating disappointment when the juxtaposition of the mythic view of the brand hero conflicts with the experience of a person having the feet of clay reality to them. That is, the idealised vision of the hero is based on a false or flawed basis. This supports Schau and Muniz's (2007) proposed "religiosity through proxy" rather than proximity. With worship through proxy, authenticity is achieved through mythology rather than reality of the brand hero. In the Discworld case, while community members desired greatness through proxy, they also desired a certain level of proximity. This section will explore the community reactions to the perception of proximity, actual proximity and how this influences the narratives of Terry Pratchett as a sacred and as a profane figure within the brand hero mythology.

Proximity plays an important role in the creation of the hero narratives and perceptions of sacredness. The transcendent religious experience of the brand hero was most strongly observed in the convention setting where Pratchett was present and supported through the evidence of the qualitative study that communal interaction was the basis for many of the narratives of Pratchett accessibility. The accessibility myth represented interpretations of proximity: that if Pratchett was nearby, community members could approach him in conversation. These myths of accessibility were detailed in Chapter 5 in the discussion of brand hero affinity.

For example, at the AusDWCon Pratchett sat with up to 50 attendees in conversation outside of the formal sessions. These conversations ranged in topics from the shepherd's hut that Pratchett had built as his library to the various ancient sites of interest around England, such as the Long Man, and the White Horse, which are referred to in Discworld books. During the observational data collection, I witnessed a two hour

conversation at the convention as one of the many reported interactions between Pratchett and the brand community. This experience corroborates many of the community stories of long interactions in bars and pubs at other events, which in turns created and reinforced the narratives of the hero's accessibility and approachability. Although the proximity in communal interactions formed an important basis for part of Pratchett's heroic mythology, there are negative consequences of proximity to the brand hero.

The issue that proximity to Pratchett raises is around the revelation of the hero as profane and ordinary, as interaction with the hero reveals his feet of clay. There were two instances within the Discworld community that illustrated the dangers of proximity between brand community members and their brand hero. The first relates to Pratchett making rude comments to a respondent at a book signing, and the second was an attendant at the AusDWCon, who after a small group discussion with Pratchett was disillusioned with the brand hero mythology and the market motives that underpin his behaviour.

The first incident was revealed in an interview with Judy, a member of the Canberra-based social network. Judy describes meeting Terry Pratchett twice, the first in a large group setting for a public lecture and the second in a book signing. The book signing meeting was quite confrontational, she described it in the following way.

“At that particular signing I also got Discworld magic cards signed. I was playing Discworld magic deck, I don't know if you know them...it is just a card game basically of dungeons and dragons sort of thing....Cardboard, expensive bits of cardboard. Anyway there's an orangutan card, there's a wizards card and a Terry Pratchett thing. When I took gave them to him to be signed he was quite scathing about the amount of money people spent on silly pieces of cardboard.”

The second meeting at a book signing event was also perceived as negative.

“The one with the cards which I said he was quite scathing about silly card games the way people spent masses amounts of money on etc. And the other was probably entirely my fault. I got up to the table and hadn’t really been thinking: ‘what can I say to this man’. I got to the table put the books down and foolishly made a reference to banana daiquiris. He says: ‘couldn’t people come up with something original’ or something like that. He was a fraction rude, so like his books, but as a person I find him quite abrasive.”

Judy’s experience with Terry Pratchett indicates an antithesis to the open and friendly hero figure described in previous narratives. For her, he was scathing, rude and abrasive. Interestingly, these apparently negative character flaws were justified by their reflection in ‘the joke’ at the core of the brand. So in this case, if the hero is perceived as negative this is what makes their contribution to the brand so special. Also, evident in Judy’s description of the meeting with Pratchett is the need to think about and plan the interaction prior to the event. This was reflected in a number of respondents who felt intimidated by the pressure of the formal meeting situation that book signings provided. Community members didn’t want to appear gushing or clichéd but wanted to express their appreciation for the books. Many described their encounters as brief.

“What happened, I went up said: ‘I’m a big fan’. He said: ‘Thank you’ and I got my books signed.” (Chris, Personal Interview, Canberra Social Network)

Others described wanting to meet Pratchett in a more informal setting, with the implication that both parties could more accurately represent themselves. There was also a sense that a long informal ‘chat’ with Pratchett would in some way validate them as an interesting and therefore worthy individual.

“I guess it would be cool to just run into him by accident. Like, you know, in a pub or something and wind up talking and it’s a situation where he could genuinely walk away and say: ‘I’ve had enough of talking to you’, but didn’t. So if you actually were able to hold you own in a real life conversation with him,

that would be cool because, like I said, I think of his intellect as being, you know, somewhere up there, you know. So having a real life conversation with him would be cool.” (Tegan, Personal interview, Canberra Social Network)

This respondent sees an informal meeting as being on a more level playing field where it is an opportunity to match intellects with Pratchett. Although the formal book signing meeting seems to attract the community, with most respondents attending one, there is a desire or the fantasy for the personal meeting between equals. The formal meetings, especially the book signing events, place the hero and the community within prescribed roles. It would seem that these roles do not sit comfortably with either party, with Pratchett appearing occasionally abrasive and fans uncomfortable with appearing gushing and deferential. So for the community, the ideal form of proximity is in an idealised informal scenario, where the fantasy form of a pseudo-relationship is considered more a desirable encounter than the stilted actual interactions available in the formalised brand community events.

The second negative outcome that proximity caused was to draw attention to the commercial motives of the hero, which conflicts with the community belief that the hero acts out of love for the brand and affinity for the community. The second encounter that was reported as negative was where this perception of Pratchett’s motives as love and affinity are undermined. Vanessa, an attendee at the AusDWCon, was one of a few attendees who won the opportunity to meet with Terry Pratchett in a small group meeting. She describes the experience as disillusioning.

“You have all sorts of ideas about what Terry’s going to be like. But I was disappointed. Terry Pratchett really is in it for Terry Pratchett.” (Vanessa, informal conversation at a post-AusDWCon meet-up in Canberra)

For Vanessa, the meeting with Pratchett undermined her idealised ideas of who he was as a person, with the reality that he is motivated by his own desire for commercial success. The encounter illustrates a central problem for community – hero relationships: the idealised myth is couched within the commercial and profane environment, which

creates a tension with the fantasy of the brand hero that can be exposed when the community is placed within proximity of the hero.

A certain level of positive proximity can create and reinforce myths about a hero as approachable and as having affinity for the community. The wrong kind of proximity, or a negative encounter, can expose feet of clay and bring the hero back into the real-world or reveal him as a profane commercial ‘sell out’. In this context, the idea of Pratchett ‘selling out’ was in the belief that he was motivated by self-promotion rather than a love of the brand and a kinship with the fans. The Discworld community wants to believe that he loves what he does, from writing the books to meeting the fans. The commercial side is a by-product of this love rather than the motivation for it. This has important implications for how Pratchett is viewed as a celebrity, which will be discussed in the following section.

7.2.2 The Myth and the Reality: When Proximity Highlights Inconsistencies

Research Question 6

Are the brand hero and brand mythology congruent and what effect does this have on the brand community?

The role of the brand hero is to provide a norm of behaviour for the community to aspire to and replicate and to reflect back to the community the qualities that they believe themselves to possess. The heart of the impact of the brand hero in brand communities is in the co-creation of identity; where Terry Pratchett is “intelligent, literate and well-mannered”, the brand community believes itself to reflect those qualities. To reinforce this, Pratchett tells them that they reflect these qualities. For the brand hero to be effective, he must continue to embody these qualities or risk undermining the core of the community’s ethos.

For brand communities, the “touching of god” through proxy is a process of negotiating identity (Schau and Muniz 2007), where the brand hero reflects the ideal identity and provides an outline for members to achieve the same ideal state. In the case of the Pratchett brand community, this ideal state is in getting ‘the joke’ and in being intelligent enough to equal ‘the joke’s’ creator. This sense of identity is not reliant on actual interactions with the brand hero. However, the sense of community is enhanced when there is the possibility of brand hero proximity. So in this case, the greatness of the proxy was improved by the hope of proximity, which is the first tension that exists between proxy and proximity. For marketers, the issue becomes how much access to allow between brand heroes and the community where the hero can be seen as accessible but retain their mythology.

The dangers of proximity were also found when Terry Pratchett revealed that instead of being the idealized inclusive and kind figure of the mythology, he could be abrasive and rude. Encounters like this formed a negative impression for the community member. This was relayed to her friends, who when I spoke to them were all familiar with her experience. However, while they were familiar with the incident they seemed to not believe it; the community members were unwilling to accept an actual negative encounter over their idealized idea of the hero. Judy explained Pratchett’s behaviour as a reflection of ‘the joke’, so rather than negatively affecting her perception of the brand, it reinforced her reasons for liking Discworld. This suggests that isolated negative encounters do not eclipse idealised mythologies of the hero. More research is needed into when and how many negative brand hero experiences cause a shift in a positive idealised brand hero myth.

A second major challenge arises when the hero is a commercial figure in reality, and viewed by their brand community as someone motivated by non-commercial objectives. The commercialism of the brand hero becomes the feet of clay that the community does not want to see, yet has to accept in order to participate in the celebration of brand ownership (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001). The issue becomes more apparent when brand community members come into proximity with the brand hero, and must reconcile the idealised vision with the reality of the brand hero as a commercial figure.

The brand hero forms an intersection between the market imperatives of the brand and the non-commercial religiosity of the brand community. While the mythology of the brand hero is couched in the marketplace, including narratives of triumph based on commercial success, the assumption of non-commercial motivation is still prevalent. Within the Discworld community there is the belief that Pratchett is motivated by a love of the brand and a respect for the community. Proximity with brand heroes may reveal that they are motivated by market forces or self-promotion, even where proximity is acquired through commercial transaction such as paying for attendance at a brand community event in order to meet them.

The ongoing tension between brand communities' desire for the celebration of ownership and brand heroes is in their motivations for profit (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; Muniz and Schau 2005). This tension between marketers' need to make profits and brand community's desire for a non-commercial magico-religious experience has been recognized in previous research (Muniz and Schau 2005; Schau and Muniz 2007). The brand hero forms relationships not only with the community as a whole, but also with individual brand community members. The following section uses the psychological perspective of celebrity worship to analyse the relationships formed between individuals and the brand hero.

7.3 Celebrity Attitude Scale and Brand Hero Worship

The literature surrounding brand heroes has drawn heavily on notions of celebrity and celebrity worship. Chapter 2 of this thesis outlines the differences between celebrities and brand heroes and the previous section highlights the fact that brand hero relationships tend to be mediated by the brand, in other words it is worship via proxy. The celebrity worship literature assumes that an unmediated relationship exists between the individual and the object of worship; the implication is that the relationship is based on imagined proximity. However, as the previous section illustrates, there is a level of both worship by proxy and proximity in brand community – brand hero relationships. This section reports the findings of applying a measure of celebrity worship to the brand

hero situation, to answer the research question on whether the worship behaviours are different in each situation:

Research Question 7

How is brand hero worship different to celebrity worship?

This quantitative study aimed to determine whether an existing psychological measure of celebrity worship, the Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS) (McCutcheon et al. 2002), is appropriate for the brand hero situation. Previous studies have suggested that the more organized the fan behavior and the more religiosity displayed by these groups, the more pathological the parasocial relationship is likely to be, which suggests that celebrity worship behaviours are the same for the brand hero situation (Maltby et al. 2002). However, given the findings from the qualitative research, it is possible that the types of worship experienced by brand community members for brand heroes may be different than those for celebrities.

This chapter will first present the research proposition developed based on the qualitative research. Secondly, the method and findings of the study in the Discworld community will be presented. Lastly, the findings from the survey and post-survey interviews will be discussed in terms of their implications for understanding the type of brand hero worship encountered in brand communities and the issues surrounding measurement of brand hero worship.

7.3.1 The Levels of Brand Hero Worship

Psychological research into the area of celebrity worship has assumed that members of a brand community will have a strong attachment to the celebrity(ies) of that community. These studies have likened brand communities or ‘fan clubs’ to nonpathological celebrity worship (McCutcheon et al. 2002) and claimed that as brand communities display religious or cult-like devotion and practices towards their media text, these fans

are likely to display high levels of celebrity worship (Maltby et al. 2002). From these studies, it is posited that brand community members will exhibit celebrity worship behaviours towards the brand hero, as a result of their involvement in community activities. However, the results from the qualitative research conducted in this thesis imply that this may not be the case, as the mediated nature of the relationship may influence worship behaviours towards the brand hero. The following will explore the nature of celebrity worship and the development of hypotheses that were tested.

7.3.2 Celebrity and Brand Hero Worship

The concept of brand hero worship has not previously been explored in the literature, with the closest proximate concept being found is the notion of celebrity worship. Celebrity worship has been studied in a number of settings, in terms of types of celebrities, including soap opera stars (Sood and Rogers 2000), talk radio personalities (Rubin and Step 2000), television news readers (Rubin et al. 1985) and various other television figures (Auter 1992; Cohen 2004; Eyal and Rubin 2003; Hoffner 1996; Turner 1993). Studies have asked respondents to nominate a favourite celebrity, which has indicated that a 'celebrity' can come from a wide range of fields. For example, North (2005) found that respondents' top five categories of favourite celebrities were acting, music, humour, sport, and television presenting. This suggests that the notion of who constitutes a celebrity is extensive.

The research question of interest in this section is whether celebrity worship is different to brand hero worship. As has been previously explored in the literature review, the underlying process of worship between a brand hero and a celebrity is similar, while the concepts are not the same. For instance, in North's (2000) study that compared the categories of celebrities to favourite heroes found the top five categories of heroes were politics, sport, science, religion, and music. The difference in categories of celebrities and heroes highlights that these are indeed different concepts, where celebrities are well-known and heroes are sacred and great. However, according to the psychological perspective the process of worship of celebrities and heroes should be the same, whereas the qualitative findings from this thesis suggest that differences may exist. On

this basis, the first quantitative study aims to test whether a scale of celebrity worship can effectively measure brand hero worship behaviours.

Celebrity worship is conceptualised as a parasocial relationship, where there is an imagined relationship between an individual and an object of worship (Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956). These relationships have been operationalised as quantitative constructs that reflect attitudinal and behavioural components of celebrity worship (Boon and Lomore 2001; Maltby et al. 2004b; Maltby et al. 2006; Maltby et al. 2004a; McCutcheon et al. 2002; Sheridan et al. 2006). The measure used in this thesis is McCutcheon et al.'s (2002) three-factor celebrity attitude scale based on an absorption-addiction model. This model states that:

a compromised identity structure in some individuals facilitates psychological absorption with a celebrity in an attempt to establish an identity and a sense of fulfilment. The dynamics of the motivational forces driving this absorption might in turn take on an addictive component, leading to more extreme (and perhaps delusional) behaviours to sustain the individual's satisfaction with the parasocial relationship (Maltby et al. 2004a, p.1476).

This absorption-addiction model suggests that there are three types of celebrity relationship, with increasingly extreme attitudes and behaviours (Giles and Maltby 2004; Maltby et al. 2005; Maltby et al. 2002; McCutcheon et al. 2002). The three factors that make up the celebrity attitude scale are (1) Entertainment-Social, where the celebrity is perceived to be entertaining and able to capture the individual's attention; (2) Intense-Personal, referring to intensive and compulsive feelings towards the celebrity; and (3) Borderline-Pathological, with social pathological attitudes and behaviours as a result of worshipping a celebrity (Giles and Maltby 2004; Maltby et al. 2006; Maltby et al. 2004a; Maltby et al. 2005; Maltby et al. 2002; McCutcheon et al. 2002; Sheridan et al. 2006). These factors represent an increasing absorption in the individual's relationship with a celebrity. These are also not exclusive behaviours, as

the attitudes and behaviours of the first factor build into the intensive parasocial relationship displayed in the second and third factors (McCutcheon et al. 2002).

The qualitative research conducted for this thesis gives support to the presence of these three levels of worship in the brand hero context. However, as the relationship is mediated by the brand rather than a directly formed attachment to a celebrity there may be differences in the manifestation of these worship behaviours. This leads to the following research proposition:

Research proposition

Brand hero worship displays the same worship behaviours, entertainment-social, intense-personal, and borderline pathological, as celebrity worship.

Entertainment-Social worship has the most support from the ethnographic findings from both the Discworld and Brumbies communities. For example, in the Discworld community the respondents would discuss Terry Pratchett's public appearances as a form of social event or entertainment. Within the Brumbies community, discussion focused on the presence of players and their performance with particular reference to the community's preferred style of brand performance of "beautiful" football.

There was less evidence of the higher levels of celebrity worship in the brand communities studied. In the case of intense-personal worship there was limited evidence in either community of individuals displaying such behaviours. In discussions with brand community members there was an acknowledgement of the importance of the brand hero, with one respondent saying,

"Of course he's important. People celebrate his birthday every year now. They'll probably do the something on the anniversary of the day he died" (Chris A, Personal Interview)

This celebration of the good and the mourning of the bad is characteristic of intense-personal relationships.

Whilst both communities express some evidence of intense-personal behaviours, there was even less evidence of borderline pathological levels of worship in the brand communities. However, Terry Pratchett once said at a book signing event that “generally fans are normal. However, every so often I get young women with strangely hungry eyes” (Conversation with Terry Pratchett during a book signing event). The brand-hero’s observations indicate that whilst still relatively rare, the borderline pathological behaviours can exist in this environment.

The following section presents the method used to test this research proposition and the findings are then examined and discussed.

7.3.3 Method

This section presents the method used to test the appropriateness of a celebrity worship scale in a brand hero worship context. The following will introduce the scale items included in the survey instrument used in this analysis, the research setting and an overview of the respondents’ information and profiles.

7.3.3.1 Instrument Development

The survey instrument was composed of six constructs, with a total of 55 items. The complete instrument used can be seen in Appendix G. The parasocial relationship construct was measured using the modified 22-item Celebrity Attitude Scale (Maltby et al. 2004a; McCutcheon et al. 2002). This scale was chosen as it represents a non-context specific scale that denotes the three types of celebrity worship relationships: Entertainment-Social, Intense-Personal, and Borderline-Pathological that have been

most commonly measured in the current celebrity worship literature (McCutcheon et al. 2002). This scale was modified to reflect the single celebrity nature of the Discworld community by substituting the item statements ‘my favourite celebrity’ with ‘Terry Pratchett’. For example, the item “My friends and I like to discuss what my favourite celebrity has done” was modified to “My friends and I like to discuss what Terry Pratchett has done”. The other constructs included in the study were the brand and community outcome variables; these will be discussed in the next chapter, on the impact of worship on community outcomes.

In addition to the construct measures, a series of classification and demographic questions were included. These questions comprised information on the respondent’s age, gender, education, brand ownership, the length of time they have read Discworld, and how often they participate in the brand community. These questions are important to identify differences in respondents and the influence that these factors may have on celebrity worship, brand and community outcomes. The following section will outline the sampling and data collections procedure used in this study.

7.3.3.2 Research Setting

The questionnaire was distributed at a Discworld fan convention held in Melbourne, Australia in February 2007. This site was chosen as the qualitative study revealed a strong brand hero in Terry Pratchett for the Discworld community. As this study is attempting to measure whether celebrity worship behaviours are applicable in the brand hero situation, this site should indicate whether fans of Discworld display celebrity worship behaviours towards its creator.

7.3.3.3 Questionnaire Implementation

The questionnaire was included in the convention bag that all attendees received upon registering at the Discworld convention event. It included a cover sheet explaining the research and three pages of questions, including the Celebrity Attitude Scale, brand

commitment, brand involvement, social identity salience, and the future membership intention scales. All of these scales were measured on a 5-point likert scale ranging with 1 being Strongly disagree to 5 being Strongly agree, except for Zaichkowsky's 10-item involvement scale, which was measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale, weighted with items such as Boring/Interesting and Relevant/Irrelevant. This questionnaire was a self-completion instrument during the three days of the convention: it involved attendees voluntarily completing and returning the questionnaire to a designated box to maintain confidentiality.

7.3.3.4 Respondent Information

Of the 321 attendees at the event, 127 usable questionnaires were returned (4 questionnaires were discarded due to missing data), giving a response rate of 39.6%. Respondents were aged between 14 and 72 (mean age 34 years), and 58% were female. This is consistent with research done on Discworld readers in the UK (Terry Pratchett, Personal Correspondence) where it was found that the number of female Discworld readers was proportionately higher than other fantasy titles. The education level was high: 43% of attendees had achieved a university degree, and 17.5% had achieved a postgraduate level of study.

There was also a high level of brand ownership evident among respondents, with 55% of attendees owning all of the books, or multiple copies of all of the books, between 31 books and greater than 50 books. However, there was a low proportion of respondents with ownership of supplementary merchandise, with 43% having no merchandise, 38% of people 1-5 items of merchandise and only 19% of respondents with more than 5 items of merchandise. This indicates that owning the core product of the brand, the books, is the key determinate of Discworld fandom and merchandise is considered unnecessary by many brand community members.

Respondent's involvement in the brand community was also varied. While 32% of fans have read the books for between 11-15 years and 25% have been reading them for more than 15 years, the amount of involvement in Discworld community activities was

relatively low. A majority of respondents were involved in Discworld community activities a few times a year or less (66.6%), with only 20.6% participating more than monthly in activities, and 12.7% of respondents stated that they are never involved in Discworld community activities. This may be due to the relative lack of events or activities available in Australia.

7.3.4 Results of Brand Hero Worship Scale

The analysis of the CAS scale indicated that many of the items were not applicable to the brand hero context. Table 7.1 shows the results of the exploratory factor analysis conducted on the 22-item scale.

Distribution of responses for items measuring Intense-Personal and Borderline-Pathological types of relationships were heavily skewed to the negative end of the scale. For example, 98.4% of respondents answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree to the item “I often feel compelled to learn the personal habits of Terry Pratchett”, indicating that there are low levels of Intense-Personal and Borderline-Pathological behaviours. A confirmatory factor analysis was also conducted using AMOS 16 and a very poor model fit was estimated (Chi square = 546.69, df = 206, p = .000; GFI = .699; NFI = .623; CFI = .720; RMSEA = .115). In addition, the correlation between the Intense-Personal factor and Borderline-Pathological was very high at .937.

Table 7.1 Brand Hero Worship Descriptives and Factor Loadings

	Descriptives		Factor Loadings				
	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Entertainment-Social							
1. My friends and I like to discuss what Terry Pratchett has done.	3.45	1.006	<u>.422</u>	<u>.382</u>	<u>-.429</u>	.240	.241
2. One of the main reasons I maintain an interest in Terry Pratchett is that doing so gives me a temporary escape from my life's problems.	2.99	1.185	<u>.506</u>	.092	-.052	.254	.124
3. I enjoy watching, reading, or	4.60	.581	<u>.259</u>	<u>.360</u>	<u>.462</u>	<u>.398</u>	-.209

listening to Terry Pratchett because it means a good time.								
4. I love to talk to others who admire Terry Pratchett.	3.78	.890	<u>.349</u>	<u>.591</u>	<u>.328</u>	.218	-.203	
5. When something bad happens to Terry Pratchett I feel like it happened to me.	1.72	.825	<u>.684</u>	-.046	<u>-.385</u>	.292	-.230	
6. Learning the life story of Terry Pratchett is a lot of fun.	3.01	.859	<u>.460</u>	<u>.500</u>	-.194	-.229	.089	
7. It is enjoyable to be with others who like Terry Pratchett.	3.94	.732	<u>.403</u>	<u>.531</u>	<u>.436</u>	-.013	-.276	
8. When Terry Pratchett fails or loses at something I feel like a failure myself.	1.49	.711	<u>.641</u>	-.234	<u>-.420</u>	.134	-.263	
9. I like watching and hearing about Terry Pratchett when I am in a large group of people.	3.31	.904	<u>.435</u>	<u>.583</u>	-.112	<u>-.376</u>	.048	
10. Keeping up with the news about Terry Pratchett is an entertaining pastime	2.95	.967	<u>.460</u>	<u>.523</u>	-.118	<u>-.466</u>	.047	
Intense-Personal								
11. If I were to meet Terry Pratchett in person, he would already somehow know that I am his biggest fan.	1.59	.705	<u>.724</u>	.040	-.191	.071	-.134	
12. I share with Terry Pratchett a special bond that cannot be described in words.	1.41	.609	<u>.706</u>	-.146	-.004	-.177	<u>-.323</u>	
13. I am obsessed by details of Terry Pratchett's life.	1.28	.530	<u>.640</u>	-.118	.123	-.074	.112	
14. When something good happens to Terry Pratchett I feel like it happened to me.	1.51	.700	<u>.770</u>	-.155	-.193	.172	-.229	
15. I have pictures and/or souvenirs of Terry Pratchett, which I always keep, in exactly the same place.	1.42	.729	<u>.653</u>	.040	.085	.031	<u>.419</u>	
16. The successes of Terry Pratchett are my successes also.	1.34	.594	<u>.751</u>	-.248	.092	-.125	-.038	
17. I consider Terry Pratchett to be my soul mate.	1.21	.498	<u>.543</u>	<u>-.370</u>	.250	<u>-.410</u>	-.164	
18. I have frequent thoughts about Terry Pratchett, even when I don't want to.	1.24	.499	<u>.762</u>	<u>-.341</u>	.180	-.140	.217	
19. When Terry Pratchett dies I will feel like dying too.	1.26	.552	<u>.724</u>	.040	-.191	.071	-.134	
Borderline-Pathological								
20. I often feel compelled to learn the	1.23	.458	<u>.498</u>	-.267	.265	<u>.361</u>	.050	

personal habits of Terry Pratchett.							
21. If I was lucky enough to meet Terry Pratchett, and he asked me to do something illegal as a favour, I would probably do it.	1.57	.850	<u>.701</u>	<u>-.423</u>	.217	-.161	.150
22. If someone gave me several thousand dollars to do with as I please, I would consider spending it on a personal possession (like a napkin or paper plate) once used by Terry Pratchett.	1.32	.603	<u>.483</u>	.114	.103	.245	<u>.606</u>

In order to determine whether respondents displayed significant levels of Intense-Personal and Borderline-Pathological worship behaviours, a one-sample t-test was performed comparing the means of these factors against the Brand Hero Worship (BHW) - Entertainment-Social mean (BHW-ES mean = 3.1228). Table 7.2 displays the results of this t-test where it can be seen that both Intense-Personal and Borderline-Pathological means were significantly less than the Entertainment-Social mean. This indicates that respondents were significantly less likely to display the higher level traits of pathological worship. Only Entertainment-Social behaviours were found to be relevant to the brand hero worship context, and the Intense-Personal and Borderline-Pathological items were removed from further analysis. These results indicate that the research proposition is incorrect, there is a difference between brand hero worship and celebrity worship behaviours. Further confirmation of the scale performance was undertaken through post-survey interviews which are reported in this chapter. Table 7.3 presents the results of the re-estimated factor analysis of Entertainment-Social items only.

Table 7.2 One-Sample T-test of Intense-Personal and Borderline-Pathological Behaviours

Entertainment-Social Mean Score = 3.1228						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
BHW - IP	-46.347	126	.000	-1.76060	-1.8358	-1.6854
BHW - BP	-38.417	126	.000	-1.74747	-1.8375	-1.6575

Table 7.3 Entertainment-Social Principal Component Factor Analysis

	Mean	SD	Component		
			1	2	3
Keeping up with the news about Terry Pratchett is an entertaining pastime	2.95	.967	<u>.846</u>	.049	.102
I like watching and hearing about Terry Pratchett when I am in a large group of people.	3.31	.904	<u>.787</u>	.125	.212
Learning the life story of Terry Pratchett is a lot of fun.	3.01	.859	<u>.739</u>	.221	.122
My friends and I like to discuss what Terry Pratchett has done.	3.45	1.006	<u>.449</u>	<u>.439</u>	.065
When something bad happens to Terry Pratchett I feel like it happened to me.	1.72	.825	.126	<u>.878</u>	.099
When Terry Pratchett fails or loses at something I feel like a failure myself.	1.49	.711	.080	<u>.854</u>	- .083
One of the main reasons I maintain an interest in Terry Pratchett is that doing so gives me a temporary escape from my life's problems.	2.99	1.185	.136	<u>.547</u>	.220
I love to talk to others who admire Terry Pratchett.	3.78	.890	.236	.130	<u>.785</u>
I enjoy watching, reading, or listening to Terry Pratchett because it means a good time.	4.60	.581	-.056	.093	<u>.785</u>
It is enjoyable to be with others who like Terry Pratchett.	3.94	.732	.366	-.005	<u>.724</u>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Closer examination of the Entertainment-Social items revealed that most of the items for the factor were valid measures of fan behaviour towards Terry Pratchett. The criteria used to determine whether items were not relevant to the measurement of Entertainment-Social behaviours were if there was a significantly lower mean and there was no clear factor loading. In the first case, two items displayed a lower than expected mean, these were “When something bad happens to Terry Pratchett I feel like it happened to me” and “When Terry Pratchett fails or loses at something I feel like a failure myself”, see Table 7.4. These items were also identified in the post-survey interviews as being categorized with extreme fan behaviour items. For these reasons these two items were also removed from the analysis.

Table 7.4 One-Sample T-Test of Items with a Low Mean

Entertainment – Social Mean Score = 3.1228								
			t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			LowerUpper					
When something bad happens to Terry Pratchett I feel like it happened to me.			-19.205	126	.000	-1.406	-1.55	-1.26
When Terry Pratchett fails or loses at something I feel like a failure myself.			-25.901	126	.000	-1.635	-1.76	-1.51

The two factors can be interpreted to be subcomponents of fan behaviour with one designated as ‘information sharing’ or trying to keep up with the latest news, which is a cognitive component, and the other designated as ‘affect’, or the enjoyment of being with other fans, which is an affective component. This two-factor solution displays acceptable internal validity with both cronbach alphas above .7. These factors were used in the subsequent analysis to represent the cognitive and affective attributes of brand hero worship.

7.3.5 Post-Survey Interviews

In order to determine whether there was measurement error, post-survey interviews were conducted with two different samples. The first sample consisted of attendees of the Discworld convention where the survey was conducted. The second sample comprised members of an online forum, where the members did not attend the event and had not seen the questionnaire previously. This second sample was chosen so as to eliminate the effect of social interaction with other respondents that may have affected the convention attendees’ responses. These interviews involved respondents grouping the CAS items by their perceived similarity, and these groups were then discussed to assess why individual items were included and to understand in detail the criteria that groupings were based on. Subsequently, each individual item was discussed to see if there were any interpretation biases or difficulties.

There were three main themes to emerge from these interviews: (1) the items were considered too extreme or inappropriate; (2) the perception that the fan focus was on the brand and not the creator; and (3) a social norm element that Discworld fans ‘aren’t that kind of fan’.

The first theme to emerge suggested that respondents either genuinely did not believe items to be appropriate or that they were psychically distancing themselves from a perceived negative identity. The post-survey interviews indicated that items for the

Intense-Personal and Borderline-Pathological factors were considered too extreme for their style of fandom. Words used to describe items or categories were “stalker”, “I AM Terry Pratchett” and “the questions were just too extreme”. These comments suggest that further research will be necessary to develop a scale of brand hero worship without these perceived extreme or negative connotations.

The second theme to emerge from the interviews was that worship behaviours were more likely for the brand rather than the brand hero. For example, Sandra, a convention attendee in her late 40s, in reference to the item “If I were to meet Terry Pratchett in person, he would already somehow know that I am his biggest fan” said that she wasn’t Terry Pratchett’s biggest fan but that she was a “huge fan of Discworld”. The separation of worship between the brand and the brand hero would suggest that worship behaviours are moderated by the context. The brand hero context also provides a moderating factor absent from the celebrity worship environment, in that the brand hero is an agent of the overall branded experience, and as such, plays one role within the overall brand experience. In contrast, the celebrity is the focal point of the celebrity worship experience, and lacks the moderating externality of a branded product.

The third theme, that individual worship behaviours were curbed by a negative social norm about excessive worship of Terry Pratchett, indicates that another moderating relationship exists. In this theme, respondents suggested that “Terry Pratchett is not that kind of celebrity” and “Discworld fans are not that kind of fan”. Rather than referring to any overt negative social pressure, statements were made in terms of identity. This poses an interesting challenge for the operationalisation of any social norm of worship scale that would need to be developed to measure this moderating effect. The following section discusses the implications of these findings.

7.3.6 Discussion of Discworld Brand Hero Worship Results

This study found that in the Discworld context, the most important aspect of brand hero worship is the provision of entertainment and social influence for individuals. This is in

contrast with previous research regarding parasocial relationships, which proposed that members of a fan community should experience high levels of celebrity worship (McCutcheon et al. 2002; Stever 1995). It is also inconsistent with the mainstream view that brand community members are, in some way, unusual or unhealthily obsessive (Hills 2002). Findings from this study suggest that this is not necessarily the case, with only the lowest form of celebrity worship, Entertainment-Social, found to be significant within this particular setting. The finding that being a member of a brand community did not mean exhibiting high levels of brand hero worship behaviours was also reinforced in the post-survey interviews, where one interviewee described Discworld fans as “intelligent, literate and social people” (Female, 40s Personal Interview). Discworld fans saw themselves, their brand community membership and their relationship to Terry Pratchett as ‘normal’, a view that was supported by the findings of this study.

The lack of higher levels of brand hero worship may be context specific, warranting further study. The ability of a brand hero to engage the attention and interest of the brand community is crucial to the development of brand involvement and identification with the brand community (Giles and Maltby 2004; Maltby et al. 2002; Rubin and McHugh 1987; Sheridan et al. 2006; Turner 1993). The final 6-item brand hero worship scale supports this important role of the brand hero to the community. The post-survey interviews indicated other potential explanations for the lower levels of brand hero worship found in the Discworld fan community. The need for further research is indicated by the three themes: viewing survey items as extreme, a focus on the brand and a social norm mediating against extreme behavior.

The first theme may be a function of the Discworld setting. Fan communities of individual celebrities may exhibit high levels of celebrity worship behaviours; however, this may not necessarily be the case for members of other types of fan communities. So, the Britney Spears fan community may exhibit high levels of celebrity worship for their celebrity, whereas a movie franchise community such as the Star Wars fan community may not have high levels of celebrity worship for Star Wars celebrities. Future research needs to consider the relationship between worshipping the celebrity and worshipping the celebrity’s creation. For instance, a person may be a fan of Star Wars without

necessarily worshipping George Lucas or a fan of a musician's work without worshipping the musician. The apparent separation between fan attitudes would be of interest, as it provides a possible segmentation between fans of the individual celebrity and fans of the brand and the psychological and behavioural differentiation that they may display.

The second theme that the interviews uncovered was that the brand was a more important focus of worship than its creator, and that the brand is an important mediator of the relationship between hero and community. A second study was conducted and will be explored in more detail in the following chapter. The final theme, the negative social norm of brand hero worship, is more problematic. The social norm of worship is likely to be highly context specific and developing a scale to measure this concept, while important, would be quite challenging.

7.4 Conclusion

The findings discussed in this chapter highlight the importance of the brand in mediating the relationship between brand communities and brand heroes. The importance of the brand as a proxy for worship is confirmed with the quantitative findings. For the Discworld community, the focus of worship is the brand rather than the brand hero. Their interest in the brand hero is related to his contribution to the brand, rather than his individual characteristics. However, as the tension between proxy and proximity underscores, the mediated relationship with the brand hero is based on an idealised version of the hero, and proximity can undermine this lionised image with the profane reality. This chapter also found that only lower levels of celebrity worship are applicable in the brand hero situation. The following chapter presents the results of the effect of Entertainment-Social worship on brand community outcomes.

CHAPTER 8 THE HERO AND THE BRAND: WORSHIP EFFECTS ON THE BRAND COMMUNITY

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is based on the quantitative data collected during the Discworld and Brumbies study. The chapter overviews the literature underpinning the development of a model that tests the effects of brand hero worship on brand community outcomes. The method and findings for the study of the Discworld community are presented. A second extended model using the proxy role of brand worship in the Brumbies brand community is presented. Finally, the results of these studies are discussed in terms of our understanding of brand hero worship's role in brand community outcomes.

This chapter reports the findings of two quantitative studies to measure the influence of brand hero worship on brand community outcomes. The six Entertainment-Social items from the Maltby, Day et al. (2004a) modified celebrity worship scale tested in the previous chapter are used as a measure of brand hero worship for estimating two models of brand community worship. The first explores the direct effect of brand hero worship, and the second includes a modified brand hero worship scale to measure brand worship behaviours, which allows for the measurement of the proxy worship of the hero via the brand. This chapter presents findings for Research Question 8.

Research Question 8

What impact does brand hero worship have on the brand community?

8.2 Model Development

The absorption-addiction model of celebrity worship contains the notion that brand communities' behaviours provide important outlets for celebrity worship (Boon and Lomore 2001; Maltby et al. 2002; McCutcheon et al. 2002). This section will present a

simple model to test the relationship between brand hero worship and brand community outcomes to establish the link between worship and community.

There have been a number of studies into the nature and consequences of celebrity worship. These psychologically based studies have essentially viewed celebrity worship as a negative psychological and behavioural trait that results in negative outcomes for the individual in terms of their mental, emotional and social lives (Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956; Maltby et al. 2004b; Maltby et al. 2006; McCutcheon et al. 2002; Perse 1990; Perse and Rubin 1989; Rubin et al. 1985; Rubin and Step 2000). Even though previous studies have found that celebrity worship is not an unusual phenomenon for individuals (Rubin and McHugh 1987; Rubin et al. 1985), research persists in testing the relationship between parasocial relationships and negative psychological outcomes. These include personal issues such as negative body image (Maltby et al. 2005) and dissociation (Maltby et al. 2006), and negative social outcomes such as loneliness (Rubin et al. 1985), aggression and homophily (Eyal and Rubin 2003). This tendency to focus on the potentially negative outcomes of worship has limited research into the potential positive outcome of celebrity worship as a basis for social interaction with other followers of the celebrity rather than as an inhibitor of overall social interactions. The brand hero concept is an essentially social one, as it is through the social interaction of a brand community that a hero is identified and worshipped. For this reason, the application of celebrity worship to this situation is viewed as essentially a positive antecedent to brand community outcomes. However, this relationship has yet to be empirically tested.

The basis of the celebrity worship concept is the notion of parasocial relationships, identified by Horton and Wohl (1956) in relationship to television audiences' perceived one-way relationships with television presenters. Based on this unreciprocated relationship, McCutcheon et al. (2002) developed the absorption-addiction model of celebrity worship, whereby the more absorbed an individual became with their parasocial relationship with a celebrity the more addictive the relationship became, with the associated pathology and behaviours related to addiction. Subsequent to this model, Giles and Maltby (2006) propose that a brand community provides a context to enact

celebrity worship and also the social reinforcement to support the addictive components of celebrity worship.

There have been three levels of celebrity worship associated with this model: Entertainment-Social, Intense-Personal and Borderline-Pathological. Each of the higher levels represents a building on the absorption and addiction behaviours and attitudes displayed in the preceding levels (McCutcheon et al. 2002). The first hypothesis is based on this absorption-addiction framework. These hypotheses are summarised and further discussion of the specific components of brand and community outcomes are discussed in the following.

H1a: Brand hero worship will have a positive effect on brand outcomes

H1b: Brand hero worship will have a positive effect on community outcomes

The brand outcomes included in this study are involvement and brand commitment and will be discussed in relation to hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 will discuss the specific community outcomes of social identity salience and future membership intention. Research into the components of brand communities is relatively new and there is little consensus as to what variables represent the brand community process (Algesheimer et al. 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Carlson, Suter, and Brown 2008; Casaló, Flavián, and Guinalíu 2007; Schouten et al. 2007b; Shang, Chen, and Liao 2006; Veloutsou and Moutinho 2009). Three broad categories of constructs have been measured in previous research: psychological factors, brand outcomes and community outcomes. The rationale for the specific constructs included in this study and their hypothesised relationships are discussed in the following.

Psychological factors include personality traits (Füller et al. 2008) and emotions (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006). In the current study, the psychological factor considered is brand hero worship. This was selected to represent the parasocial relationship that is proposed to exist between the brand community and important or central brand faces. This relationship is a psychological representation of the importance of the brand hero

to the individual and is seen as an important determinate of their brand and community activities.

Brand outcomes cover areas such as brand reputation (Veloutsou and Moutinho 2009), trust (Casaló et al. 2007; Füller et al. 2008; Shang et al. 2006), involvement (Shang et al. 2006) and loyalty or commitment (Algesheimer et al. 2005; Casaló et al. 2007; Shang et al. 2006). Involvement and brand commitment were selected for measurement as they are present in the brand community literature, and related fan community research fields of sports fan literature (Laverie and Arnett 2000; Shank 1998; Wann and Branscombe 1990). Further, an existing relationship between these two variables has been established in the wider marketing literature (Warrington and Shim 2000). However, it should be noted that involvement has been shown to be a mediator of brand commitment (Warrington and Shim 2000) and as such the following hypothesis is made.

***H2:** The relationship between brand hero worship and brand commitment is mediated by brand involvement*

Two brand outcomes are examined: brand involvement and brand commitment. Brand involvement is the ongoing concern for a brand, which indicates a centrality of the brand to the identity of the individual (Zaichkowsky 1985, 1994). Brand involvement is also likely to be positively associated with high levels of celebrity worship behaviours, as the ongoing concern with the brand and the centrality to identity increase as the individual's absorption with the brand hero increases. Brand commitment is defined as "an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship" (Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992, p.316), where the valued relationship is that of brand community members towards their brand. It becomes an important attribute of individuals who become members of brand communities where the overriding purpose is the celebration of brand ownership (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). The concept of commitment includes three aspects: affective or emotional commitment, cognitive commitment and behavioural commitment (Dholakia 1997; Fournier and Yao 1997; Odin, Odin, and Valette-Florence 2001).

Previous brand community research has addressed the community outcomes of brand community integration (Schouten et al. 2007b), community identification or social identity salience (Algesheimer et al. 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Füller et al. 2008), membership or membership intentions (Algesheimer et al. 2005; Carlson et al. 2008). Community outcomes including social identity salience and future membership intentions are drawn from this previous brand community research (Algesheimer et al. 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Carlson et al. 2008). Social identity salience is the self-prescribed identification with a particular social group. Future membership intentions are defined as the individual's intention to maintain contact with a particular social group into the future. Laverie and Arnett (2000) found that identity salience mediates future attendance of sports fans. This mediation effect is kept in the proposed model here as discussed in the literature review the difference between fan communities, which includes sports fans, and brand communities is in their areas of focus rather than in functional differences.

These elements are part of the model as they are represented within other fan literature (Laverie and Arnett 2000) and they signify a mediated relationship to a positive behavioural outcome for the group. Previous research has shown future membership intention to be a mediated outcome, which leads to the following hypothesis.

***H3:** The relationship between brand hero worship and future membership intention is mediated by social identity salience*

These community outcomes include the integration of the brand community into the individual's self-concept to form their identity and also a behavioural component of future intention. Social identity theory views the individual as a person who has self-categorised himself or herself as a fan of a particular object, person or activity (Deschamps and Devos 1998; Reed 2002; Turner 1999), and these categorisations allow for the formation of an active network of self-proscribed social identities. This approach recognises that consumers appropriate and commit to a series of social identities, each of these varying in their centrality to their self-concept (Reed 2002).

A multi-dimensional conceptualisation of social identity is applied in this study from Tajfel's (1978, p.63) definition of social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership". This definition implies that social identity is constructed from three factors: (1) awareness of group membership, knows themselves to be a member of a particular group; (2) group evaluation, the cognitive evaluation of their membership; and (3) emotional aspects of belonging, the affective response to membership (Cameron 2004).

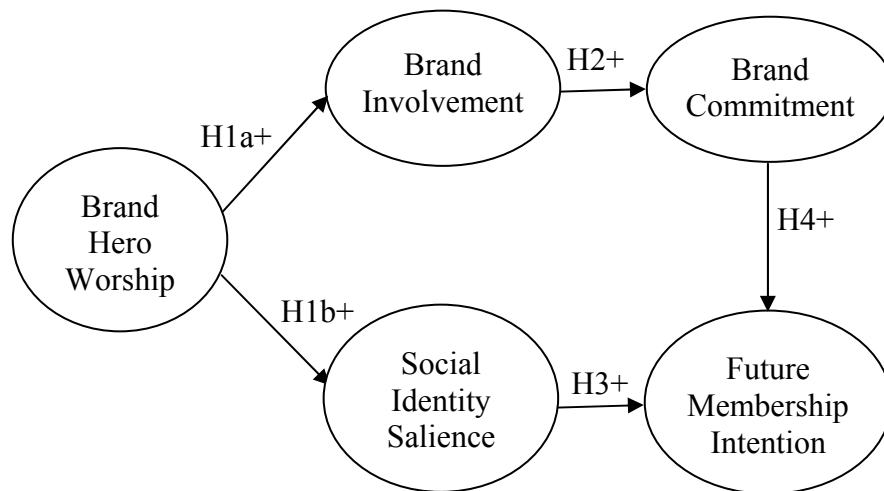
However, it should be noted that the relationship between brand hero worship and social outcomes is not necessarily as clear cut as Maltby and Wohl (2006) would suggest. An individual who experiences high levels of celebrity worshipping behaviours will feel absorption and addiction toward the brand hero. This may not necessarily translate towards engagement with the brand, and as such the individual may limit their interaction with the brand community, which is likely to be more brand-focused than celebrity-centric. For example, Ashe and McCutcheon (2001) found that individuals in very intense celebrity worship relationships feel less connected to their social network. However, based on the findings from the previous chapter, the brand hero situation seems to be based on social behaviours within social networks and as such, brand hero worship is likely to be positively associated with community outcomes.

The final relationship proposed is between brand and community outcomes, where there is an expected relationship between brand factors and community outcomes. Carlson (2008) found that brand commitment positively affected individuals' intentions to attend future brand community events. Participating in brand community events reinforces commitment to the brand (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001), so a person with a strong commitment to a brand would seek to participate in events that reinforce their loyalty. For this reason, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Brand commitment will have a positive effect on future membership intention

The hypothesised relationships between the components of the models in illustrated in Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1 Proposed Model of Brand Hero Worship on Brand Outcomes



H1a: Brand hero worship will have a positive effect on brand outcomes

H1b: Brand hero worship will have a positive effect on community outcomes

H2: The relationship between brand hero worship and brand commitment is mediated by brand involvement

H3: The relationship between brand hero worship and future membership intention is mediated by social identity salience

H4: Brand commitment will have a positive effect on future membership intention

While a more complex model may provide a more comprehensive display of the intricate nature of the social interactions within brand communities, the purpose of this study is not to explain the entire brand community process, but rather to demonstrate the relationship between the brand, and social and psychological aspects of brand communities.

8.2.1 Study 1: Method

Study 1 sampled members of the Discworld brand community who attended the Australian Discworld Convention in 2007 using a self-reporting survey instrument. The study has a sample size of 127 respondents from 321 surveys distributed, for a response rate of 39.6%. This chapter focuses on the data and results for the current model. Portions of the dataset were described in Chapter 7 in response to Research Question 7. The survey instrument was composed of six constructs, with a total of 55 items. The complete instrument used can be seen in Appendix G. The parasocial relationship construct was measured using the modified 22-item Celebrity Attitude Scale (Maltby et al. 2004a; McCutcheon et al. 2002). However, based on the results presented in Chapter 7, only the 6 items that displayed acceptable factor loadings were included in the measurement of the proposed model.

There were a number of measures taken in this study in addition to the Celebrity Attitude Scale. Brand outcomes measured were brand involvement and brand commitment. Brand involvement was measured using Zaichkowsky's (1994) revised ten-item involvement scale. This scale uses a 7-point semantic differential scale to measure the affective (Boring / Interesting) and cognitive (Important / Unimportant) involvement of individuals. This scale provides a measure of the emotional and knowledge investment that an individual has made into a brand.

A three-item brand commitment scale, which measures the different aspects of brand commitment, was used in the study (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman 2001). Brand commitment has been posited to be composed of three types of loyalty: affective, cognitive and behavioural (Anders, Michael, and Inger 2005; Beatty, Kahle, and Homer 1988; Dholakia 1997; Geyer et al. 1991; Gill et al. 1988; Morgan and Hunt 1994). This scale provides a comprehensive, if simplified, measure of the different types of loyalty that an individual displays towards a brand.

The second set of outcomes to be tested are those related to the effect of brand hero worship on community outcomes of social identity and future membership intention. A multi-dimensional conceptualisation of social identity is applied in this study based on Tajfel's (1978, p.63) definition of social identity as being constructed from three factors: (1) awareness of group membership; (2) group evaluation; and (3) emotional aspects of belonging (Cameron 2004). Cameron's (2004) measurement instrument of social identity was used to capture respondents' integration of the group identity into their self-concept. This scale is comprised of 12 items and predicts a three-factor solution of social identity. As social identity is predicted to impact on behavioural intention, the future intention to maintain group membership was measured using a three item future intention scale, developed by Garbarino and Johnson (1999) to measure future intentions of members of a theatre company. This scale is appropriate as it considers the future intentions of an individual in relation to their membership of a group.

8.2.2 Results

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on social identity salience and revealed problems in discriminant validity, as shown in Table 8.1. The items for identity affect have inconsistent loadings across factors and for this reason this factor was removed from the analysis. A two-factor social identity salience construct using social ties and identity centrality, was used in the measurement of the structural models. In addition, the identity ties item "I often think about the fact that I am a Discworld fan" also had an inconsistent loading, where it factored with the identity affect items. This item was also removed and a two factor solution was used in the following analysis, as presented in Table 8.2.

Table 8.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis: Social Identity Salience

	1	2	3	4
I often think about the fact that I am a Discworld fan	<u>0.71</u>	.001	.214	-.072
Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a Discworld fan	<u>0.67</u>	-.073	.202	.313
I feel strong ties to other Discworld fans	<u>0.62</u>	<u>.609</u>	.021	.016
In general I am glad to be a Discworld fan.	<u>0.55</u>	.148	.236	<u>.518</u>
I find it difficult to form a bond with other Discworld fans	-.022	<u>0.79</u>	-.031	.310
I don't feel a sense of being "connected" with other Discworld fans	-.028	<u>0.76</u>	.305	.045
I have a lot in common with other Discworld fans	<u>.570</u>	<u>0.61</u>	-.038	.131
Overall, being a Discworld fan has very little to do with how I feel about myself	.095	.098	<u>0.88</u>	.027
The fact that I am a Discworld fan rarely enters my mind	.168	.028	<u>0.81</u>	.104
In general, being a Discworld fan is an important part of my self-image	<u>.473</u>	.134	<u>0.59</u>	-.061
I often regret that I am a Discworld fan	.125	.116	-.001	<u>0.87</u>
I don't feel good about being a Discworld fan	-.010	.171	.028	<u>0.85</u>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Table 8.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis: Social Identity Salience - Two Factor Solution

	Identity Ties	Centrality
I have a lot in common with other Discworld fans	<u>0.80</u>	.135
I feel strong ties to other Discworld fans	<u>0.79</u>	.202
I find it difficult to form a bond with other Discworld fans	<u>0.77</u>	-.090
I don't feel a sense of being "connected" with other Discworld fans	<u>0.64</u>	0.22
Overall, being a Discworld fan has very little to do with how I feel about myself	.063	<u>0.88</u>
In general, being a Discworld fan is an important part of my self-image	.053	<u>0.82</u>
The fact that I am a Discworld fan rarely enters my mind	.243	<u>0.71</u>
Cronbach α	.758	.750

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Internal construct validity was assessed using Cronbach alpha, with coefficients ranging from .704 for affective brand hero worship to .833 for brand commitment, as reported in Table 8.3. Therefore, the constructs display acceptable levels of internal consistency.

Table 8.3 Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities

Scale	Mean	Std Dev	Coefficient- α
Brand Hero Worship - Social	12.31	1.771	.704
Brand Hero Worship - Entertainment	9.27	2.269	.775
Brand Commitment	6.11	2.471	.833
Involvement – Cognitive	5.78	4.413	.793
Involvement - Affective	10.11	3.428	.731
Social Identity Salience - Centrality	7.05	5.204	.750
Social Identity Salience – Ingroup Ties	13.02	2.499	.758
Future Membership Intention	10.65	2.080	.775

In order to determine discriminant validity, a correlation of constructs was conducted (see Table 8.4), and the measurement model was tested in AMOS. The correlation table indicates that the construct correlations are less than the rule-of-thumb measure of $r < .85^4$, indicating that they display acceptable distinction in their measurement. The measurement model produced acceptable goodness-of-fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 448.401$, $df = 349$, $p = .000$; TLI = .913; CFI = .925; RMSEA = .048. The chi squared statistic is treated with caution as it is affected by small sample sizes, such as in this study. The Taylor – Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) are reported as they represent fit estimates that are least affected by sample size (Schumacker and Lomax 2004). In terms of discriminant validity, the measurement model indicated that all items weighted to a significant level ($p < .01$) on their respective constructs.

As this study used only data from a single source of self-report questionnaires, it was deemed appropriate to test for common method variance (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Common method variance was tested by comparing the fit of the measurement reported above with an alternative model that included an unmeasured latent variable, to capture common method biases in the data. In order to overcome problems with the identification of the model, correlations between the unmeasured latent construct and measured constructs were set to zero and latent variable variances were set to one (Schumacker and Lomax 2004). This alternate model produced slightly better fit results than the unconstrained model: $\chi^2 = 416.762$, $df = 340$, $p = .003$; TLI = .931; CFI = .942; RMSEA = .042. Within this study, common method variance appears to have a slight effect on results, therefore this was factored into the structural model.

⁴ All correlations were significant. The lowest correlation was between affective involvement and social identity salience – identity ties ($r = .260$). The highest correlation was between cognitive commitment and affective commitment ($r = .522$). These results indicate that while there is a relationship between constructs, they are significantly dissimilar to be measuring differing things.

Table 8.4 Correlations across Study Constructs

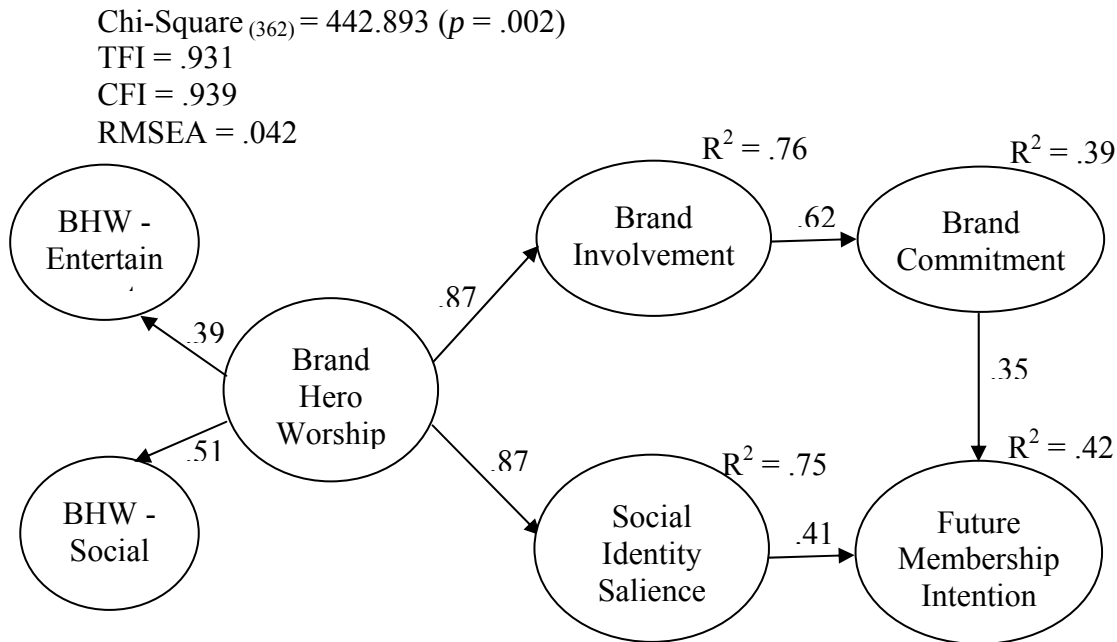
	Brand Hero Worship Entertainm ent	Brand Hero Worship Social	Brand Commit	Future Membership Intention	Social Identity Salience Identity Ties	Social Identity Salience Centrality	Involve Affective	Involve Cognitive
BHWC	1							
BHWA	.407**	1						
BC	.309**	.334**	1					
FMI	.415**	.377**	.531**	1				
SISIT	.409**	.314**	.287**	.504**	1			
SISC	.290**	.289**	.376**	.313**	.292**	1		
INVA	.246**	.294**	.465**	.341**	.260**	.295**	1	
INVC	.352**	.361**	.406**	.427**	.280**	.364**	.522**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To test the proposed model of the effect of brand hero worship on brand and community outcomes, a structural equations model was estimated using AMOS 17. The path coefficients are standardised in order to see the relative importance of each construct in the sample (Schumacker and Lomax 2004). Common method variance was incorporated into the model with a latent construct and it was necessary to constrain the correlations between the unmeasured latent construct and brand hero worship to zero and latent variable variances was set to one (Schumacker and Lomax 2004). The model estimated can be seen in Figure 8.2.

The overall fit of the model is good: $\chi^2 = 442.893$, $df = 362$, $p = .002$; TLI = .939; CFI = .939; RMSEA = .042. The model displays acceptable fit of above .90 for the TLI, CFI and below .05 for the RMSEA measures of model fit (Tanguma 2001). Again, the chi-squared statistic does not indicate adequate model fit but this is likely due to the small sample. However, the normed chi-squared is 1.223, which falls within the recommended parameters of acceptable fit (Ullman 2001). Furthermore, all of the hypothesized paths were found to be significant and in the predicted direction. In addition, the model accounted for between 39 and 76% of the variance in the outcome constructs.

Figure 8.2 Structural Model of Brand Hero Worship on Brand Community Outcomes



Brand hero worship was hypothesised to relate positively to brand outcomes (Hypothesis 1a). This hypothesis was based on the proposed relationship between parasocial relationship absorption and the brand as a proxy for this worship behaviour (Maltby et al. 2004a; McCutcheon et al. 2002; Rubin and McHugh 1987). This hypothesis was supported and all proposed relationships were found to be significant: Brand hero worship → Brand involvement ($\gamma = .87$, $t = 2.041$, $p < .05$) and Brand involvement → Brand commitment ($\gamma = .62$, $t = 5.038$, $p < .01$).

The estimated model also indicates that brand hero worship positively affects social outcomes (Hypothesis 1b). This hypothesis is also based on the parasocial relationship concept where the cult-like behaviours of fan communities are proposed to reinforce the addictive nature of brand hero worship (Giles and Maltby 2006). This hypothesis was supported with all proposed relationships found to be significant: Brand hero worship → Social identity salience ($\gamma = .87$, $t = 3.040$, $p < .05$) and Social identity salience → Future membership intention ($\gamma = .41$, $t = 1.768$, $p < .10$).

To test the second hypothesis, which sees involvement as a mediator of brand hero worship and brand commitment, the procedure outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) was conducted using the sobel test for mediation. This mediation hypothesis is based on previous research that has found involvement to be an important mediator of commitment (Beatty et al. 1988; Gill et al. 1988; Laverie and Arnett 2000). The results of this analysis confirm previous research and indicate that involvement mediates the relationship between brand hero worship and brand commitment ($z = 3.361$, $p = .001$), thus Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that this social relationship was also mediated. Social identity salience mediates future membership intention, an idea based on previous research that psychological identification mediates behavioural intentions (Garbarino and Johnson 1999; Laverie and Arnett 2000). The sobel test again indicated a significantly mediated relationship ($z = 3.816$, $p = .000$), thus Hypothesis 3 is accepted.

The final hypothesised relationship in the model is that brand commitment is positively related to future membership intention (Hypothesis 4). Previous brand community research has found that commitment to the brand is an important precursor to involvement in the community (Algesheimer et al. 2005; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schouten et al. 2007b). This relationship was supported ($\gamma = .35$, $t = 2.116$, $p < .05$) and the hypothesis was accepted.

8.3 Extending the Brand Hero Worship Model

Study 1 demonstrates a direct relationship between brand hero worship and brand community outcomes. However, findings from Chapters 6 and 7 indicate that brand hero worship behaviours can also be proxies for brand worship. This section examines how the preliminary model of brand hero worship can be expanded to include brand worship behaviours. The extended model with additional appropriate hypotheses is presented, and the revised data collection instruments discussed. Finally, results and analysis of the brand worship model are examined.

From the results of the Discworld study, it was clear that there was scope to extend the understanding of the relationship between brand hero worship behaviour and brand and social outcomes. Qualitative feedback from the post-survey interviews indicated that respondents felt that it was not only the brand hero driving their commitment to the Discworld brand and community but also their relationship with the brand. Many respondents commented that the brand hero worship items would be more indicative of their behaviour towards the Discworld brand rather than to the brand hero Terry Pratchett.

A second model of Brand Worship was developed to test the premise that brand community outcomes are driven by brand hero worship and brand worship behaviours. Based on Figure 8.1, the Brand Worship model uses the same branded outcomes measures, with the addition of the brand worship measure. Due to the nature of brand hero worship by proxy, the brand is the focus of worship rather than the hero (Schau and Múniz 2007).

H1a: Brand worship will have a positive impact on brand hero worship

H1b: Brand worship will have a positive impact on brand and community outcomes

H1c: Brand worship will have a positive impact on brand commitment

This brand worship component was added as the ethnographic study and the post-survey interviews suggested that the worship behaviours associated with the brand hero would also be appropriate for the brand community's relationship with the brand. This additional brand worship component is connected to brand hero worship. From the interviews conducted in the first study, it was found that respondents felt that brand worship behaviours were a precursor to brand hero worship.

The brand hero concept is likely to have a direct impact on the brand outcomes of brand involvement and brand commitment. Due to the nature of brand worship being the entertainment and social expression of a valued relationship with a brand, a high level of brand worship is likely to cause an individual to have psychological preoccupation

with the brand and to have an enduring concern for the brand into the future. Due to brand worship being the expression of a psychological relationship with the brand, it is expected that brand worship will be directly related to the brand outcomes of brand involvement and commitment.

***H2:** Brand hero worship behaviours will have a positive effect on brand and community outcomes*

Based on the absorption-addiction model of the Celebrity Attitude Scale, it was expected that brand hero worship would have a positive relationship with brand involvement. The more the brand hero is used to maintain entertainment and social relationships, the more likely the individual is to display high levels of brand involvement as a representation of their absorption with the brand hero. As confirmed in the first study, the relationship between these mediating variables on the outcomes of brand commitment is the same. Brand involvement leads to higher levels of brand commitment as the psychological preoccupation with the brand results in higher affective, cognitive and behavioural commitment.

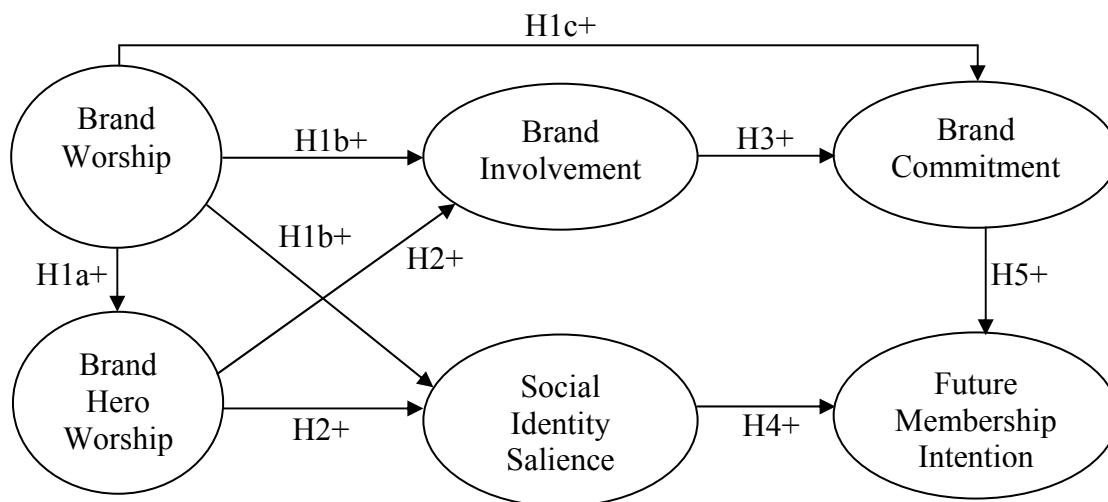
***H3:** Brand involvement will mediate the relationship between brand worship and brand commitment.*

***H4:** Social identity salience will mediate the relationship between brand worship and future membership intention.*

***H5:** Brand commitment will have a positive effect on future membership intention.*

These hypotheses are illustrated in Figure 8.3, with the nature of the proposed relationships indicated.

Figure 8.3 Proposed Model of Brand Hero and Brand Worship on Brand Outcomes



8.3.2 Study 2 Method

This second study extends the findings of the previous Discworld study by incorporating brand worship into the proposed model. This study was also a self-completion questionnaire but was conducted within the Brumbies brand community. This provided an alternative setting to improve the generalisability of results beyond a fantasy community to include a sports-based community. This study involved a random sample of attendees at a Brumbies home game, with a sample size of 210 usable questionnaires completed. While this is not optimal in terms of model development, the Brumbies setting provided a convenient sample to confirm results from the qualitative results. The following section details the research setting, questionnaire development, instrument design and the data collection procedures. This method is designed to collect data to measure the proposed extended brand hero worship model.

8.3.2.1 Research Setting

This site was chosen because the Brumbies has an established membership base and access was achieved at Canberra Stadium where all home games are held and many of the Brumbies fans attend these events. This site also was fruitful as the brand

community has multiple brand heroes, which provided an important point of comparison for the single brand hero site of the first study.

The Brumbies is based in Canberra, Australia and was created at the beginning of the Super14 competition in 1996. They have been champions three times in the lifespan of the competition, making them one of the most successful Australian teams in rugby union. There are several thousand members of the Brumbies club, the majority of which attend each home game. The presence of a strong and continuing fan community surrounding the Brumbies in a fixed game setting provided access to a large number of community members in a limited time frame. The drawback of the setting was physical access to respondents given seating configurations of the stadium and timing of fan arrivals. However, results indicate that a broad cross-section of the community responded to the survey, enhancing result validity.

8.3.2.2 Questionnaire Development

The survey instrument was composed of seven constructs, with a total of 43 items; see Appendix H to view the complete instrument. The brand hero worship and brand worship constructs were measured using six items identified in the first study as appropriate for brand hero worship, which was based on the Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS) developed by Maltby et al. (2004b). This scale was modified to reflect the brand hero worship behaviours of the Brumbies fans by asking an initial question: “Who is your favourite Brumbies player?” Respondents were then informed that the following set of questions related to the player they identified. The scale was also modified to test respondents’ worship behaviours of the Brumbies brand, so for example “My friends and I like to discuss what my favourite celebrity has done” was modified to “My friends and I like to discuss the Brumbies achievements”. This was done as many of the respondents in the post-survey interviews in the first study identified that many of the behaviours relating to the brand hero were more appropriate for the brand.

Brand outcomes of brand involvement and brand commitment measured using the same scales as for Study 1. Involvement was measured using Zaichkowsky’s (1994) revised

involvement scale that includes ten semantic differential items measuring affective and cognitive involvement. Brand commitment was measured on Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman's (2001) 3-item brand commitment scale that measures affective, cognitive and behavioural loyalty.

A second set of outcomes related to the effect of celebrity worship on community outcomes of social identity and future intention to maintain group membership. Based on the post-survey interviews conducted in Study 1, only the in-group ties component of social identity salience was tested. This was due to the setting of the research and the need to minimise survey length. This modified scale was composed of three items that measured the extent to which respondents felt bound to the Brumbies fan community (Cameron 2004). The future membership intention was measured using a 3-item future intention scale developed by Garbarino and Johnson (1999) to measure intentions of members to maintain their membership into the future.

8.3.2.3 Instrument Design

The survey instrument included a cover sheet explaining the research, a page to enter personal details for the voucher draw and two pages of questions, including the brand hero and brand worship scale, brand commitment, brand involvement, brand identity salience, social identity salience, and the future membership intention scale. All of these scales were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 as Strongly Disagree to 5 as Strongly Agree, except for Zaichkowsky's 10-item involvement scale, which was measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale, weighted with items such as, Boring/Interesting and Relevant/Irrelevant.

In addition to the construct measures, a series of classification and demographic questions were included. These questions comprised information on the respondent's age, gender, education, attendance, the length of time they have supported the Brumbies, and the number of Brumbies signatures they have collected. This information

is important to identify differences in respondents and the influence that these factors may have on brand hero and brand worship and on brand and community outcomes.

8.3.2.4 Survey Procedure and Implementation

The questionnaire was distributed to attendees of the last home game of the 2008 season. Researchers approached members of the crowd for 45 minutes prior to the commencement of the game with potential respondents told that completion of the questionnaire would qualify them for the draw of a \$100 Brumbies merchandise voucher. This approach was taken as it was felt that the widest selection of Brumbies fans would be accessible at the game and the offering of a voucher for Brumbies merchandise would limit the participation and interest of non-Brumbies fans. The last home game of the season meant that the respondents had the maximum opportunity to familiarise themselves with the Brumbies players. Also, completion of the survey prior to the start of the game meant that the selection of respondent's favourite player was not influenced by reactions to players' performances during the match. This was confirmed by collecting all surveys prior to the game's commencement. This removed the situational influence of affective reactions to individual players and focuses responses on their long-term positive affect to a particular player.

The questionnaire was distributed Friday, 25th April 2008. Of the approximate 10,000 adult attendees at the game 210 (85 female and 124 male and 1 missing information) usable questionnaires were returned (6 questionnaires were discarded because of missing data), giving a response rate of 2.1%. Respondents were aged between 7 and 85 ($M = 44$ years, $SD = 14.627$). Respondents tended to be well educated with 51% of respondents achieving a tertiary level of education and most were single (21.5%) or married (72.7%). While the response rate was low subjective estimates of response rate bias were applied (Armstrong and Overton 1977). The descriptive data on respondents did not vary markedly from the researcher's experience of attendees during qualitative data collection. The results are also consistent with the description of Brumbies fans provided by the Brumbies marketing manager.

There was a high level of game attendance evident among respondents, with 49% of attendees attending all of the games in a season. However, there were also a sizable proportion of respondents who were not members of the Brumbies (38%). Respondent's involvement in the brand community also varied, with 32.5% of fans having supported the Brumbies since their foundation in 1996 (12 years) and the mean length of time for supporting the Brumbies was 8.4 years ($SD = 3.766$). To sample widely five different areas of the stadium were targeted, these included members and non-members areas and the least and most expensive seats (except for the corporate boxes). The following section reports the results from the statistical analysis of the survey data.

8.3.3 Results

An exploratory factor analysis was run on the brand and brand hero worship constructs to test their validity in measuring distinct constructs, as shown in Table 8.6. This was conducted as the brand worship scale was a modification of the existing Celebrity Attitude Scale (Maltby et al. 2002; McCutcheon et al. 2002) and the validity of this scale needed to be tested. All items in the two scales loaded onto separate factors except for "Learning the history of the Brumbies is a lot of fun", which displayed some cross-loading. For this reason this item was removed.

To test the discriminant validity of all of the scales, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using the measurement model testing in AMOS. The squared multiple regression estimates indicated that two more items displayed poor factoring with their respective constructs. Schumacker and Lomax (2004) suggest that a minimum level of .40 is achieved in constructing structural models, both the brand worship item "I enjoy watching the Brumbies because it means a good time" (.302) and the social identity salience item "I find it difficult to form a bond with other Brumbies fans" (.204) had estimates under this level. The first item had a very high mean of 4.21 ($SD = .721$, $Var = .520$); it would appear that the hedonic nature of watching football means that being enjoyable does not differentiate brand worship. This item was removed, resulting in a 4-item construct for brand worship. The social identity salience item was the only reverse coded item in the survey instrument; the placement of such an item in a survey intended

to be completed quickly and in social surroundings may have led to respondent inattention. The removal of this item leaves only two items measuring social identity salience, however, the cronbach α is acceptable (.844) and indicates strong internal validity of the construct. For these reasons, these two items were removed from the analysis and the measurement model was re-estimated. The correlations of the constructs used with their cronbach alphas are reported in Tables 8.7 and 8.8. The correlations indicate acceptable discriminant validity with no correlation above .85 and alphas above .70, indicating good internal validity.

Table 8.6 Exploratory Factor Analysis of Worship Scales^a

	BHW	BW
It is enjoyable to be with others who like my favourite player.	<u>0.89</u>	.262
I love to talk to others who admire my favourite player.	<u>0.86</u>	.255
I like watching and hearing about my favourite player when I am in a large group of people.	<u>0.84</u>	.241
Learning the history of my favourite player is a lot of fun.	<u>0.83</u>	.248
Keeping up with the news about my favourite player is an entertaining pastime	<u>0.83</u>	.275
I enjoy watching, reading about, or listening to my favourite player because it means a good time.	<u>0.8</u>	.307
I love to talk to others who follow the Brumbies.	.205	<u>0.78</u>
I like watching and hearing about the Brumbies when I am in a large group of people.	.283	<u>0.73</u>
It is enjoyable to be with others who like the Brumbies.	.316	<u>0.72</u>
Keeping up with the news about the Brumbies is an entertaining pastime	.338	<u>0.69</u>
I enjoy watching the Brumbies because it means a good time.	.055	<u>0.67</u>
Learning the history of the Brumbies is a lot of fun.	<u>0.46</u>	<u>0.63</u>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Table 8.7 Correlations across Study Constructs

	BW	BHW	BC	INVA	INVC	SIS	FMI
Brand Worship	1						
Brand Hero Worship	.601**	1					
Brand Commitment	.666**	.458**	1				
Involvement - Affective	.615**	.476**	.555**	1			
Involvement - cognitive	.597**	.446**	.555**	.770**	1		
Social Identity Salience	.680**	.529**	.605**	.503**	.490**	1	
Future Membership Intention	.616**	.413**	.703**	.485**	.443**	.611**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8.8 Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities

Scale	Mean	Std Dev	Coefficient- α
Brand Worship	15.47	2.606	.821
Brand Hero Worship	20.28	4.698	.944
Brand Commitment	12.42	2.267	.805
Involvement – Cognitive	8.48	4.665	.842
Involvement - Affective	7.87	5.060	.863
Social Identity Salience*	7.10	1.703	.845
Future Membership Intention	11.56	2.298	.731

*Two-item scale Pearson $r = .731$ (significant at the .01 level). This suggests acceptable internal reliability.

The estimate of the measurement model displayed reasonable model fit: $\chi^2 = 621.322$, $df = 329$, $p = .000$; TLI = .913; CFI = .925; RMSEA = .065. The normed chi-squared estimate is within accepted parameters (1.889) (Ullman 2001) and the Tucker-Lewis and the comparative fit indices are above .90 (Schumacker and Lomax 2004). However, the RMSEA index is higher than the .05 recommended by Schumacker and Lomax (2004) and the .06 level suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). This data may suffer from the same common method biases as the first study did, as they both rely on a single source of data. In addition, the fewer items included in this instrument may have exacerbated the consistency motifs of respondents. In order to test this effect, a latent

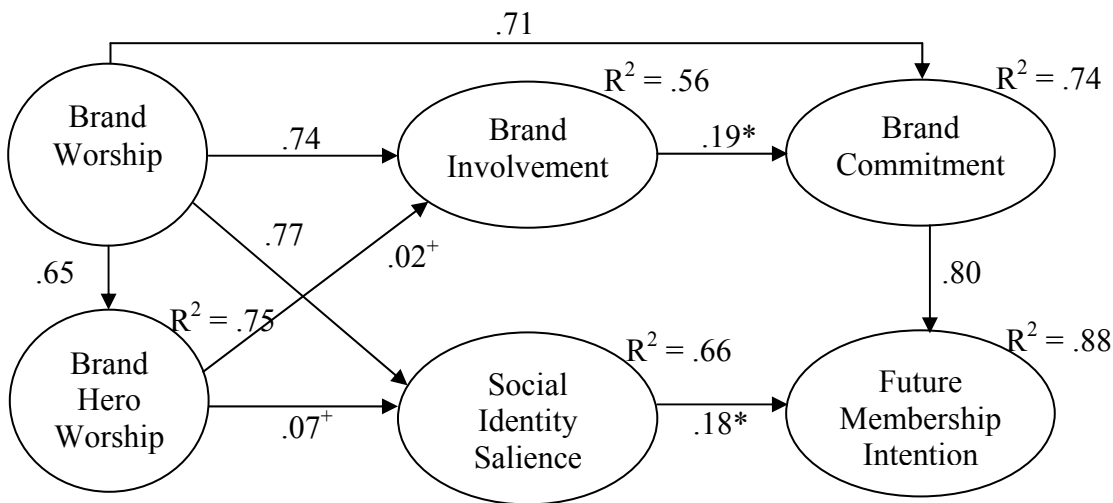
unmeasured construct was included in the measurement model: it was necessary to include the same constraints as in the first study, due to under-identification of the model. The inclusion of the control for common method bias improved the fit of the measurement model substantially: $\chi^2 = 544.429$, $df = 322$, $p = .000$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.691$; TLI = .933; CFI = .943; RMSEA = .057. All of the comparative fit estimates improved and critically the RMSEA estimate is now within acceptable levels (Hu and Bentler 1999). This indicates that common method variance is an issue with the data and will be controlled for in the structural model.

To test the proposed model of the effect of brand and brand hero worship on brand and community outcomes, a structural equations model was estimated using AMOS 17. The path coefficients are standardised in order to see the relative importance of each construct in the sample (Schumacker and Lomax 2004). Common method variance was incorporated into the model with a latent construct and it was necessary to constrain the correlations between the unmeasured latent construct and brand hero worship to zero. Latent variable variances was set to one (Schumacker and Lomax 2004). The model estimated can be seen in Figure 8.4.

The overall fit of the model fit is good: $\chi^2 = 559.382$, $df = 333$, $p = .000$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.680$; TLI = .934; CFI = .942; RMSEA = .057. The model displays acceptable fit of above .90 for the TLI, CFI and below .06 for the RMSEA measures of model fit (Hu and Bentler 1999; Tanguma 2001). Again the chi-squared statistic does not indicate adequate model fit but this is likely due to the small sample. However, the normed chi-squared is 1.680, which falls within the recommended parameters of acceptable fit (Ullman 2001). Not all of the hypothesised paths were found to be significant, nevertheless, the model accounted for between 42 and 88% of the variance in the outcome constructs.

Figure 8.4 Structural Model of Brand and Brand Hero Worship on Brand and Community Outcomes

Chi-Square₍₃₃₃₎ = 559.382 ($p = .000$)
TFI = .934; CFI = .942; RMSEA = .057



All paths are significant to $p < .000$ except where indicated
 $^+$ Not significant
 * Significant to $p < .05$

Brand worship was hypothesised to relate positively to brand hero worship (Hypothesis 1a), which was supported: Brand worship $\rightarrow$ Brand hero worship ($\gamma = .65$, $t = 9.986$, $p < .000$); and involvement and social identity salience (Hypothesis 1b BW $\rightarrow$ Brand involvement ($\gamma = .74$, $t = 8.191$, $p < .000$); BW $\rightarrow$ Social identity salience ($\gamma = .77$, $t = 9.155$, $p < .000$); and directly and positively impact on brand commitment (Hypothesis 1c) BW $\rightarrow$ Brand commitment ($\gamma = .71$, $t = 7.268$, $p < .000$). The model also suggests that brand hero worship mediates the relationship between brand worship and involvement and social identity salience. The sobel test was used to evaluate this mediation effect and it was found to be significant for both paths (BW $\rightarrow$ BHW $\rightarrow$ INV: $z = 2.381$, $p = .017$; BW $\rightarrow$ BHW $\rightarrow$ SIS: $z = 2.890$, $p = .004$). However, the estimated model indicates that brand hero worship does not significantly affect brand and social outcomes (Hypothesis 2): Brand hero worship $\rightarrow$ Brand involvement ($\gamma = .02$, $t = 0.190$, $p = .850$) and Brand hero worship $\rightarrow$ Social identity salience ($\gamma = .07$, $t = 0.885$, $p = .376$).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that involvement would mediate the relationship between brand worship and brand hero worship and brand commitment. The model supported this

mediated relationship: Brand involvement $\rightarrow$ Brand commitment ($\gamma = .19, t = 2.007, p = .045$). Further confirmation was provided by the sobel test for mediation which was significant for both paths (BW $\rightarrow$ INV $\rightarrow$ BC: $z = 3.976, p = .000$; BHW $\rightarrow$ INV $\rightarrow$ BC: $z = 5.546, p = .000$).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that social identity salience also mediated the relationship between the worship constructs and future membership intention. The model supported this relationship: Social identity salience $\rightarrow$ Future membership intention ($\gamma = .18, t = 1.995, p = .046$); and the sobel test also confirmed this relationship (BW $\rightarrow$ SIS $\rightarrow$ FMI: $z = 4.753, p = .000$; BHW $\rightarrow$ SIS $\rightarrow$ FMI: $z = 6.155, p = .000$), thus the hypothesis is accepted. The final hypothesised relationship in the model is that brand commitment will positively affect future membership intention (Hypothesis 5). This relationship was supported ($\gamma = .80, t = 8.505, p < .000$) and the hypothesis was accepted.

8.4 Findings

The models tested in this study explain the effect of brand worship and brand hero worship by brand community members on brand and community outcomes. The first study in the Discworld community suggested that respondents felt the items in the CAS reflected their worship behaviour towards the brand, not just the brand hero. The modified brand worship scale adopted in the second study demonstrated that brand worship is a critical variable in understanding the impact of brand heroes on brand and community outcomes.

The first major finding from the second study was the lack of direct effect of brand hero worship on brand and community outcomes when brand worship was included in the models. The first study indicated that brand hero worship had a significant effect on brand involvement and social identity salience, but the post-survey interviews indicated that respondents felt that the items also reflected their relationship to the brand. For this reason, the second study included this additional construct of brand worship, which appears to have better explanatory power than brand hero worship in directly

influencing brand and community outcomes. On the other hand, brand worship does have a significant effect on brand hero worship. This suggests that in the Brumbies community brand hero worship is an outcome of brand worship. This finding is consistent with the qualitative research conducted for this thesis that the influence of a brand hero is affected by the brand, product and community. The suggestion for marketers is that the emphasis on players may be erroneous as the key determinant of a fan's involvement with the brand and the community is their worship of the brand rather than their relationship with a favourite player.

The second finding of this second study was the single factor solution found for brand hero worship. While in the first study of a single brand hero a two factor solution was found of affective and informational hero worship behaviours, the second study found that the same six items represented brand hero worship as a single factor. This is likely due to the framing of the survey instrument. In the first study, respondents were only asked about their relationship with a single figure, Terry Pratchett, thus the behaviours of worshipping this single figure might be separate constructs. The second study asked respondents to identify their 'favourite' brand hero and then were asked about their worshipping behaviours of this figure. The act of identifying an affectively attractive brand hero is likely to have caused the single brand hero worship outcome as the affective and informational attributes of worship are more likely to be combined when considering a favoured brand hero rather than a specified brand hero. This is an important finding, as it highlights the differences that exist in the brand worship behaviours between a single brand hero community, such as the Discworld community, and a multiple brand hero community, such as the Brumbies.

In the single brand hero community, social and entertainment brand hero worship are likely to be separate, as the community may not consistently form an affective preference for the brand hero. On the other hand, a multiple brand hero community is likely to form an overall affective and informational relationship with a particular brand hero, as they have actively developed a preference for that figure as a representative of the brand.

The final major finding from this second study was that in the brand community context, involvement is less influential and brand worship is a better predictor of brand commitment. This is likely to be due to the underlying high levels of brand involvement that exist in a brand community; one of the central attributes of a brand community is a high enough level of involvement to motivate consumers to celebrate brand ownership (Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). Brand worship behaviours seem to represent a better predictor of brand commitment in brand community members. That is, the more likely they are to display social brand worship behaviours, the increased likelihood of strong brand commitment. Further study is necessary to ascertain whether brand worship has the same consistent predictive power of brand commitment in other brand communities.

The overall models tested in this study provide good model fit and explanatory power of the hypothesised paths. This indicates that brand hero worship does not directly affect brand community outcomes and that the effect of brand worship is substantial. This has implications for marketers in a number of arenas. Firstly, for sports marketers it indicates that use of individual players in marketing the team may have no significant effect on brand community outcomes. That is, marketing efforts to increase worship of a particular player will only affect brand and community outcomes, such as brand commitment and future membership intention, if this worship of the brand is transferred to worship of the player. In the Brumbies setting, it seems that having a strong relationship with a particular player may not mean a strong relationship with the brand or the community.

In addition, the measurement of brand hero worship using an existing celebrity worship scale is inappropriate. The communities studied here did not see themselves as extreme or unusual and questions that implied extreme worship were rejected. For this reason, marketers need to recognise the community norm of 'normal' worship; that is, each community has a level of worship that is acceptable to it and behaviours are enacted to display this norm.

Further research beyond the scope of this thesis is required to develop a new scale instrument that differentiates levels of normal and acceptable brand hero worship and

brand worship. It is also essential that marketers recognise the brand community member's self-concept of normal fans and adjust their strategies accordingly.

8.5 Conclusion

The overall purpose of these quantitative studies was to test the impact of worship on brand community outcomes. It was found that celebrity worship has only limited applicability to the brand hero situation and that a new scale will need to be developed that incorporates less extreme items, brand worship and the social norm of worship. These studies have also found that a proxy measure of brand worship subsumes all effect of brand hero worship on brand community outcomes. This means that brand worship has the more influential role in determining a member's commitment and future membership intention. Brand hero worship seems to be another outcome of brand worship and forms a component of the brand community outcomes. The following chapter will discuss the outcomes for all the research conducted in this thesis and its implications for marketers and future research.

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

HEROIC WINDMILLS AND BRAND COMMUNITY THEATRE

9.1 Introduction

This chapter recaps the results and finding of the previous qualitative and quantitative studies. It addresses the central research question of the thesis across three thematic areas: the brand-mediated relationship between brand heroes and brand communities, sacred narratives that exist within an invisible market system, and the brand community theatre model. Conclusions for each of these findings will address the central research question, the contribution to theory and the managerial implications for marketers. Finally, the limitations of this thesis will be identified and areas of future research will be discussed.

9.2 Overview of Research Findings

Eight questions were developed based on the extant literature and addressed through data collected through the ethnographic and quantitative studies of the Discworld and Brumbies brand communities. Each of these questions addresses specific areas of the central question of this thesis:

What influence do brand faces have within brand communities where the interactions between brand actor and audience are limited, imaginary or idealised as part of an ongoing brand performance?

This question will be addressed in the thematic conclusions presented in the following section. Initially the findings for the sub-questions will be summarised.

9.2.1 Research Question 1: What is the nature of the interaction between a brand hero and the brand community?

Chapter 4 presents details of the study, and extended findings related to this research question. Presented here are three key determinates of the interaction between the brand community and their brand hero(es). First, no matter the type and amount of interaction between the brand hero and the community, the relationship is indelibly tied to the brand. The interaction between brand community members and brand heroes was determined by their centrality to the brand's creation and whether they were considered crucial to the brand's creation or continued existence.

Second, the brand hero is ultimately judged on their association with the brand. To that end, product category or subcultural success does not necessarily translate into brand hero status. While the relationship between a single brand hero (Pratchett) and the community was invariably positive due to the close connection between brand and brand hero, it was the individual hero's contribution to the brand and the community's understanding of the brand which was valued by the audience. For the team based environments, a two-step interaction emerged. The brand hero must first establish a contribution to the brand, and then a relationship is formed with the community based on this heroic performance.

Finally, judgement of a potential hero's performance is based on those brand values that are important to the brand community. Within the brand community, achievements of brand faces outside of the focal brand were regarded neutrally or negatively, these outside achievements were indicators of potential heroism rather than of actual heroism. Visibly adhering to the brand community's values was more positively perceived by the brand community members, and more widely respected than individuals whose achievements which may have been contrary to brand values.

9.2.2 Research Question 2: What are the brand community narratives about their brand hero and what influence do these have on the community?

This question was addressed in Chapter 6, where the mythological narratives of Terry Pratchett as a central brand hero figure and the concurrent performance and hero narratives of the Brumbies were explored. The key difference between these two contexts is the narratives surrounding creationism for the Discworld community, where the hero is central to the brand's existence and the concurrent establishment of performance and heroism narratives in the Brumbies as players come and go from the brand sphere.

The narratives from both cases suggest a strong link in perceptions of heroism between the hero's contribution to the brand's performance and maintaining brand values. All judgments of heroism are based on the brand faces contribution to the brand and how this contribution has influenced the brand's success. However, this judgment is based within the confines of the brand's values, as separate from the commercial imperatives of the market. While the hero may be admired for bringing a brand to the market, they are attributed truly magical status if they can appear to rise above the commercial imperatives and maintain the brand's values despite commercial pressures. The appearance of commercial motivation undermines perceptions of heroism, and is largely rejected by the community as a profane act, even when the perpetuation of the brand through the commercial actions is understood as important by the community. This tension between the commercial and the mythic will be explored further in the thematic conclusions.

9.2.3 Research Question 3: How is the brand hero sacred and commercial as opposed to profane and everyday?

Brand faces enact a number of different roles within the brand narrative based on their visibility and their perceived control. Differences between brand faces and brand heroes involve the attribution of sacred narratives to the brand hero. These sacred narratives

revolve around the proxy relationship with the brand, and can be reinforced or undermined through proximity between the brand community and the brand hero. Proxy worship was seen to coincide with a desire for a sense of proximity, where perceived proximity creates myths of accessibility for the brand hero and has a positive impact on their credibility. Actual proximity may undermine the sacred narratives that surround the heroic figure with the profane reality of the person. The balance between the idealism of the mythic hero and the reality of the individual is also part of the conflict between the commercial and the mythic, which is explored further in the thematic conclusions.

9.2.4 Research Question 4: How do brand heroes differ from celebrities? In what ways does this influence the relationship between the brand community and the brand hero?

Differences between brand heroes and celebrities arise from the nature of the mediation of the relationship between the admired figure and the follower. Celebrity relationships assume a direct parasocial or pseudo-relationship mediated by the media (Caughey 1984; Horton and Wohl 1956). Within the brand communities, relationships with brand heroes are mediated through the brand and the brand hero's perceived contribution to the brand's performance.

There are three ways to form a brand-mediated relationship: mythology narratives, brand community member generated reports of meeting the brand hero, and reports of extraordinary contributions to the brand. Myths tend to be stories shared between brand community members about the brand hero and their contribution to the brand. Reports of meeting the brand hero are associated with the notion of proximity, and are a positive outcome of actual proximity where brand community members share tales of accessibility, wonderment and the extra lengths the hero will go to acknowledge and recognize members of their brand community. The final way to form this type of relationship is the hero's contribution to the brand through other sources, such as marketer generated content through newsletters, promotional literature, media releases and coverage.

Community-created sources tended to focus on the impact of the information about the hero on the brand, whereas marketer created information was more like celebrity media, where information concentrated on the personal aspects of the hero. These marketer-created sources were often appropriated by the community for further discussion and integration into their understanding of the brand. This practice of relating information to the brand is another aspect of the brand mediated nature of the relationship between brand heroes and brand communities that will be discussed further in the thematic findings.

The influence of this mediation of the brand on the relationship between brand heroes and the brand community is in the nature of identity formation and transfer. The identity of the brand hero is constructed by brand community members to reflect idealised attributes and values, whereas the reality of the hero may not reflect this identity. The nature of heroism is to bring worth to society, but not necessarily to be a part of the same society (Campbell 1949, 1988). In brand communities, heroism lies in either creating the brand (Creator myth) or bringing success (hero). The identity which community members construct for their hero reflects the values they perceive the brand to possess, and which they believe reflect their own values, through the adoption of the brand (McCracken 1986). The construction, transfer and representation process contains an essential element of image reciprocity whereby the brand hero is a reflection of what the community believes about itself and wants to believe about the brand hero. This fundamentally idealised vision of the brand hero, the brand and the brand community can cause tension with reality, as detailed in the findings on Research Question 6.

Brand heroes differ from celebrities because the brand mediates the relationship and the way the relationship is created and because there is a process of image reciprocity. The following research question will explore how these differences translate into ideas of brand hero credibility and attractiveness.

9.2.5 Research Question 5: Are credibility and attractiveness important to the brand face and brand hero concepts? How are they incorporated into brand hero mythology?

Credibility and attractiveness, as drawn from celebrity endorsement theory, are considered to be fundamental to the effectiveness of using a celebrity source (McCracken 1989). However, as the focus of the brand community is on the contribution of the hero to the brand's performance; this means that credibility and attractiveness are not critical issues as they are established aspects of the brand face's performance of the brand. In brand communities the key determinates are legitimacy, integrity, and affinity.

Legitimacy is the contribution of the individual to their brand's performance, which is established through a historical connection to the product category, geographic connection to a physical community, or a shared historical narrative of belonging between the brand and the individual. Within certain communities, legitimacy could also be achieved through external sources of validation, although these are secondary to the final source of performing to community ideals. Brand faces that have high perceived legitimacy can become brand heroes by validating their contribution to the brand community expectations.

Integrity requires the brand face or brand hero to actively maintain the community's brand values, which is tied to the underlying myth that the hero is motivated by a love of the brand. Brand hero integrity is based on perceptions that the hero creates or maintains the brand for the benefit of the brand rather than for commercial reward. This aspect of brand hero credibility has the greatest tension with the commercial world in which the brand resides, which creates a contradictory framework between the heroism of bringing success to the brand, and the profanity of being motivated by commercial success. The brand hero is perceived as more heroic for maintaining the non-commercial brand values in direct relation to the increased commercial incentives and imperatives by staying 'true' to the brand values.

Affinity with the brand is the final aspect of brand hero credibility. The brand hero receives greater admiration when they are perceived to be closer to the brand community. This is achieved in two ways: by demonstrating a long term affinity with the brand and the community through brand performance or by attending brand community events, and through maintaining the community perception that the brand hero is just another fan. The more affiliated the brand hero appears to be to the community, the greater the sense that the brand hero is motivated by the same love of the brand. The community regards the brand face as a champion of the brand values considered essential to the brand experience. Perceptions of affinity are strongly tied to narratives associated with the brand hero's accessibility and motivations. These constructed narratives are compared to the reality of the brand hero in the following research question.

9.2.6 Research Question 6: Are the brand hero and brand mythology congruent and what effect does this have on the brand community?

Brand hero mythology is a constructed narrative based on brand community ideals about values and identity. Tensions exist between this constructed myth and the reality of the brand hero. This can be highlighted through proximity of the brand hero to the brand community, where the community is confronted with the reality of the person in juxtaposition to the ideals that the hero is supposed to embody. Two main tensions exist: between the myths and the person's actual conduct, and between the myth of the hero's motivations versus the reality of commercial imperatives to make profit. Overt displays of commercial reality undermined the magico-religious experiences of the celebration of brand values for the community. The brand community actively seeks to avoid reminders of the commercial and embraces the myth through non-commercial brand worship behaviours.

9.2.7 Research Question 7: How is brand hero worship different to celebrity worship?

The findings for this question were reported in Chapter 7, and are based on a quantitative study which examined the research proposition regarding brand hero worship and celebrity worship, using a pre-existing celebrity attitude scale:

Research proposition

Brand hero worship displays the same worship behaviours, entertainment-social, intense-personal, and borderline pathological, as celebrity worship.

Only entertainment-social behaviours were found to be relevant in the quantitative results. The Entertainment-Social behaviours, were found to have face-value validity in representing behaviours identified in the qualitative findings.

As no support was found for the higher levels of brand hero worship, post-survey interviews were conducted with survey respondents and a non-respondent sample to establish possible causes for this lack of higher levels of worship. Three causes were identified. First, scale items were deemed inappropriate for the brand hero situation by interviewees. Second, respondents saw the brand as more important than the brand hero, which mediated their hero worship behaviour. Finally, a social norm of ‘normal behaviour’ existed, where a strong social pressure was exerted to not to display extreme worship behaviours. This needs further research to understand the dimensions and impacts of social norms on worship behaviours of individuals and groups. The following section reviews the findings of the brand hero worship scale’s impact on brand community outcomes.

9.2.8 Research Question 8: What impact does brand hero worship have on the brand community?

This research question was addressed with two quantitative studies of the Discworld and Brumbies communities, as presented in Chapter 8. The study of the Discworld community estimated a model of the direct effect of brand hero worship on brand community outcomes. The study of the Brumbies community estimated a model including the mediating effect of brand worship on the impact of brand hero worship on brand community outcomes. The brand community outcomes were brand commitment, mediated by brand involvement, and future membership intention, mediated by social identity salience. Both models were estimated using structural equation modelling using AMOS, where a control variable for common method variance was incorporated.

The first model measured the single effect of brand hero worship and found all paths to be significant, suggesting that brand hero worship has a strong positive effect on brand community outcomes. The second model incorporated the mediating effect of brand worship into the measurement of the effect of brand hero worship on brand community outcomes. This model found that the only direct effect on brand community outcomes were from brand worship. While brand hero worship significantly and positively influences brand worship, when brand worship is incorporated into the model brand hero worship has no significant direct effects on outcome variables.

These studies suggest that brand hero worship is a heretofore overlooked variable in understanding brand community outcomes. However, its effect is mediated by brand worship, suggesting that the influence of brand heroes is in the magico-religious experience of the brand rather than on commercial outcomes of commitment and future membership. This supports the notion that the brand hero relationship is mediated by the brand, as has been found with the qualitative findings of this thesis. The following section will explore the thematic findings of this thesis by incorporating recurring conclusions.

9.3 Thematic Conclusions

There are three thematic findings which address the central research question of this thesis,

What influence do brand faces have within brand communities where the interactions between brand actor and audience are limited, imaginary or idealised as part of an ongoing brand performance?

This section will discuss the thematic findings that address this central question, which will lead to the key contributions and managerial implications of this thesis. First, the brand-mediated nature of the relationship between brand faces and the brand community will be discussed. This will focus on the interaction and the value sought from the brand face through the continued performance of the values that the brand community considers important. Second, the tension between the desire of the brand community for the magic and the mythic versus the commercial imperatives of the market is explored. Reminders of the commercial devalue the mythic narratives of the brand and brand hero, and may conflict with the commercial goals of the marketer. Finally, the concept of brand community negotiation is reconsidered using a theatre metaphor. This approach examines the various roles played by brand faces during the creation of the brand narrative with the brand community. These thematic conclusions form the basis of the contribution of this thesis to theory and practice.

9.3.1 Brand Mediated Relationships between Brand Faces and Brand Communities

There is a fundamental difference in the relationships that form between brand community members and those faces that represent the brand and the relationships individuals form with celebrities. This difference lies in the role of the brand as the mediating concern between both groups. The brand face is only admired based on their contribution to the brand's performance or success. This is in contrast to the celebrity

literature and the audience's interest in the personal qualities of the celebrity (Boon and Lomore 2001; Kamins 1990; McCracken 1989; McCutcheon et al. 2002; Speck et al. 1988). Whilst notions of pseudo- or parasocial relationships may be of value in the brand hero setting, they do not encompass the entire picture.

Previous research into parasocial relationships assumed that the relationship is formed directly with the media figure based on their appearance and persona presented in a media context (Caughey 1978, 1984; Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956). Associated with this assumption is the notion that the closer the perceived relationship is with the celebrity, the greater the level of absorption the audience will exhibit with the celebrity's persona outside of the designated media environment. The strength of the perceived parasocial relationship will influence behaviour such as the gathering of personal information from tabloids and news reports (McCutcheon et al. 2002). The desire to seek personal information about the object of admiration to support an imaginary relationship is in contrast with the findings of this thesis. Where personal information is acquired in the brand face and brand hero context, it is sought to legitimise their contribution to the brand. Brand face information provides a frame for understanding the background and interests of brand faces in conjunction with the brand, and is interpreted through a lens of brand's narrative and values. Insight into the life of a brand hero is simply one lens that the brand community may use to comprehend brand meaning. Other lenses are individually or socially generated without reference to brand faces. It is in the provision of an alternate perspective that brand faces contribute to the negotiation of the brand narrative.

Brand community members are motivated by a desire to form a closer relationship with the brand, and the relationship with the brand can be augmented through an understanding of the brand faces involved in the brand's creation and maintenance. Greater familiarity with ways to interpret the brand narrative leads to an increased affective outcome of closeness as brand values become more central to the individual's self-concept (Caughey 1980; Doise 1998). The mediated nature of the relationship between brand communities and brand faces forms the basis for the following theoretical outcomes: the desire for the mythic brand hero inside the profane commercial sphere, and the brand theatre metaphor as a means to understand the

relationship between the brand community and brand faces in negotiating brand narratives.

9.3.1.1 Theoretical Contribution: The Brand Hero Concept

The discovery of the mediated nature of the brand hero concept is an important contribution to the understanding of parasocial relationships with media figures. Research on celebrity pseudo-relationships and celebrity endorsement has assumed that the celebrity – admirer relationship is direct and individualistic. Pseudo-relationships with celebrities are based on an individual's imagined version of the media figure (Horton and Strauss 1957; Horton and Wohl 1956). Celebrity endorsement is based around an individual's perceptions of credibility, attractiveness or symbolic meanings of the individual (McCracken 1989).

The brand hero concept is not dependent on assumptions of individualistic and directly formed relationships. Instead, it operates through the indirect relationships formed between brand community members and brand faces within the context of the brand. Judgements of the hero are based on their contribution to the brand rather than on their personal characteristics, through an indirect relationship which is mediated by the brand. This is a notion that is not considered by either the parasocial or celebrity endorsement perspectives.

Celebrity endorsement research focuses on a celebrity's credibility, attractiveness and symbolic meaning in isolation of the mechanisms that created their celebrity (McCracken 1989). In contrast, credibility of the brand hero is established through perceptions of legitimacy of their contribution to the brand and their integrity in maintaining brand values. Engagement with the brand creates the conditions for recognition, and the foundations for the establishment of a parasocial relationship through the connection to the brand.

The parasocial relationship in the brand hero situation exists through mutual connection to the brand. These represent the mechanisms that highlight the importance of a brand face and form the basis for their status as heroes. This is in contrast to celebrity endorsement research that focuses on trustworthiness and perceived ability as separate to the product or brand endorsed (Kahle and Homer 1985; McCracken 1989; Speck et al. 1988). Trustworthiness and ability to represent the brand are central to brand heroes as these traits are indelibly tied to their contribution to the brand.

Brand heroes are also fundamentally different to celebrity endorsers because of the brand's socially negotiated narrative. Brand communities are more concerned with brand hero affiliation to the brand, and by extension, the hero's membership of the brand community through the group's perception that the hero is 'just another fan'. The fundamental similarity to the brand hero is reflected in their love and devotion to the continuance of the brand's values. The establishment of this perceived affiliation is essentially based on a level of proximity to the community. Previous research has assumed an entirely imagined relationship (Caughey 1984; Horton and Wohl 1956; McCutcheon et al. 2002) or a relationship that is achieved entirely through proxy (Schau and Múniz 2007). However, the brand hero perception of affiliation requires some level of interaction between the community and the hero. An increased level of access indicates that there is a greater factual basis for the relationship formed and the perception of the group of the brand hero's affiliation is negotiated with the hero and also within the group.

9.3.1.2 Consumer Culture Implications: It's All About the Brand

Brand heroes represent a departure from existing notions of celebrity endorsement. As the brand hero incorporates limited proximity that is socially negotiated between the hero and the group, and engagement in the construction of the brand, this alters the traditional individually imagined direct relationship of the celebrity. Using brand heroes requires a shift of attention from a media generated celebrity to a community negotiated hero. The brand hero becomes the embodiment of the brand's values and narrative through activity within the community and connection to the brand. Marketers should

focus on the contribution that a brand face makes to the success, existence or continued values of the brand, rather than focusing on the individual and their personal attributes.

There is much lamentation about the fact that the modern commercial world glorifies the achievements of the celebrity at the expense of their contribution to society (Campbell 1988; Crowley 1999). The philosophy of the negativity of celebrity will be explored in the following section. However, the marketer's role in perpetrating celebrity culture (Maltby et al. 2002) will be discussed here in relation to its limited effectiveness in the brand hero situation. For brand communities, the ultimate boon that the brand hero brings to their essentially commercial sphere is the creation or maintenance of core brand values. It is essential to identify those that have made this contribution and then communicate this role to the brand community. However, this message needs to be couched within the overriding brand narrative and focus on the core brand values that the community admires.

Marketers need to understand the community's internally negotiated perceptions of what constitutes a hero. Efforts outside of these accepted narratives are viewed critically or are rejected, much as the manipulative influence of backstage faces; those that have influence but are considered outsiders to the brand narrative. Marketing efforts are often seen as a backstage influence where a more successful role could be to adopt a support cast position, as supporting the central heroes and the community in the advancement of brand values. The implications of this insider status will be discussed in the following section.

9.3.2 Giants and Windmills: The Search for the Myth in the (Invisible) Commercial World

He rode out to encounter giants, but instead of giants, his environment produced windmills...The hero is today running up against a hard world that is in no way responsive to his spiritual need. Referring to Don Quixote (Campbell 1988, p.130)

The above quote from Campbell is written from the perspective that greatness does not exist in the modern, highly industrialised world, where celebrity is manufactured and fame is synthetic (Boorstin 1964). For Campbell, the giants of Don Quixote represent the lost sacredness of the heroic figure and the market system is unresponsive to the magic, the spiritual and the mythical nature of the truly great. He sees the modern landscape as being populated by windmills that are pragmatic, manufactured and crowd out potential for greatness. This view assumes that the modern market system eliminates the sacred experience of consumers. However, current consumer behaviour research differs from this view.

Belk et al. (1989) document consumption experiences that are inherently sacred in their experience of ritual and personal transformation. Other studies have identified the extraordinary and spiritual experience of river rafting (Arnould and Price 1993) and the heroism of male consumers (Holt and Thompson 2004). This consumer research contradicts Campbell's assumption that the market system is devoid of the sacred and the spiritual and posits that the market can provide giants within windmills. However, the findings from this research suggest that consumers can experience the giants of the marketplace only if the windmill is invisible.

The tension that lies between the greatness admired through proxy and the narrative formation achieved through proximity highlights the nature of 'greatness inside the invisible windmill'. While the brand community worshipped the brand hero through the proxy of the brand, they also desired a certain level of proximity. This proximity had positive benefits in creating myths of affiliation and accessibility; however, there were negative consequences in drawing attention to the commercial motivations of the hero and the brand. One of the most consistent myths of both communities studied was that brand heroes were motivated by a love of the brand rather than for personal gain. There was greater heroism attributed to brand faces that placed the maintenance of core brand values over commercial success or profit. The expectation of heroes placing brand values over commercial incentives is the core of their perceived heroic narrative.

This means that while heroes and myths can exist within the commercial world they are not great and sacred because of the market. For the hero to be identified as mythic and sacred, the framing of their contribution must be in relation to brand values rather than commercial success. The desire for profit or greater market share or overt reaction to competition undermines the belief of brand love as the hero's motivation and their narratives become villainous as they are perceived to have 'sold out' to market forces. The market must endeavour to remain invisible for the narratives of myth and sacredness to thrive, which means that the performance enacted in the following section on brand community theatre is a negotiation of brand values rather than brand success.

9.3.2.1 The Authentic Brand Hero

Boorstin's (1964) assertion that modern life is essentially synthetic as it is market and media created is reflected in Baudrillard's (1988) belief that contemporary consumption lacks depth, originality and a sense of place, where Disneyland becomes the reality rather than the imagined (Baudrillard 1994 [1981]). This dismissal of the industrial system's ability to create an authentic experience for modern consumers is a widespread philosophical position (Leigh et al. 2006). However, this perspective tends to place consumers as passive recipients of consumption objects and as being at the mercy of the market system. When marketing theorists consider consumption authenticity, the consumer is an active and self-determinate player in the industrial system (Belk et al. 1989; Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Beverland, Farrelly, and Quester 2010; Cova 1997; Firat 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Holt 2002; Kates 2000; Kozinets 2001; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). However, this existing research has focused on the authenticity of the consumption object or brand rather than the authenticity of the people who produce these objects.

The iconicity versus indexicality framework is widely accepted when considering the authenticity of a consumption experience (Grayson and Martinec 2004). Indexical authenticity is where the object is original or a person's actions and expressions are authentic reflections of the self rather than reflections of social conventions or money. This has clear implications for brand hero authenticity as through proximity and proxy

reports of interactions with the brand hero, a narrative is developed of the 'real' person. Throughout both ethnographic studies, the authenticity of the hero was based on perceptions that they were not motivated by the market or profit. The brand hero is authentic when they are true to themselves and their perceived love of the brand.

Iconic authenticity refers to objects that resemble those that have indexical authenticity, such as reproduction or retro brands (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003). In the brand hero situation, iconic authenticity is problematic as the brand community is constantly seeking evidence of the heroic. The appearance of the heroic with the requirement constant and consistent evidence to support this claim can lead to disillusionment and active antagonism towards the (former) brand hero. The findings indicated that the pursuit of individual wealth could convert a hero to villain, and even on re-entering the brand community for reasons connected to the brand, the heroic status would not necessarily be reinstated as the memory of commercial motivations linger.

An alternate system for understanding authenticity in brand communities was posited by Leigh et al. (2006) who theorise three types of authenticity: the authentic object, the authentic experience and the authentic identity. While the findings from this thesis indicate that a common factor in perceptions of authenticity in a brand hero is based on their apparent embracing of brand values over market imperatives, other traits are negotiated by each community. The concept of the authentic brand hero extends this existing framework and adds depth to the other types of authenticity as a brand hero reflects an ideal state of being (Campbell 1949; Jung 1964). As such, the brand hero can demonstrate the ideal object, experience and self that becomes an archetype for authenticity within the community expectations. The following section discusses whether this idealised version of the brand hero is a simulation or a genuine sacred figure.

9.3.2.2 The Simulation of the Brand Hero

The assumption that the commercial world is essentially artificial and simulated gives rise to the possibility that the brand hero is a hollow figure that is created by marketers

and the media to replicate sacredness (Boorstin 1964; Campbell 1949). This possibility is reflected in Baudrillard's (1994 [1981]) discussion of the iconoclasts fear that the images of God formed a simulacrum in which God never existed and only the images were real. So is the brand hero a simulation of a hero, a marketer and media created figure that symbolises the heroic? Is he a simulacrum of a hero that exists only in image and there is no hero? Or is he a genuine sacred hero with transcendent power and narrative? The brand hero is a combination of all three possibilities, as a marketing creation, an imagined persona and as an authentic hero.

Marketers and the media do create an image of the brand hero that is incorporated by the brand community into their narratives. The marketer and media images do not so much simulate heroism for the community, rather these images represent potential heroism. True heroism of a potential brand hero is determined by the community through reports of member's interactions with the brand hero where the hero markets themselves or through a negotiated process of whether the actions of the brand hero further brand values in the face of competing forces. While certain aspects of the brand hero may be considered simulacrum because the relationship is not direct, the hero has to display a level of authenticity through their actions, irrespective of their created image. Brand heroes are not Gods who rely on their image to convey their godliness, brand heroes are active players in their perceptions of sacredness.

9.3.2.3 The Blurred Line between the Brand Community and the Commercial Windmill

The distinction that the brand community makes between the commercial success of the brand and the success in advancing the brand's values raises the question of where the community sits within the industrial system. The story of Don Quixote uses the metaphor of the windmill to represent the hard and unresponsive industrial world in a heroes search for the sacred and magic (Campbell 1988). Alongside this assumption that the world of commerce is hard and invariably profane, is the supposition that it is artificial and synthetic (Boorstin 1964). This adds to the complexity of the relationship of the brand community to the commercial entity that produces their admired brand.

Previous research has identified the importance of the community in developing and enacting brand narratives (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Brown 2007; Kozinets 2001; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schau and Múniz 2007; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). This thesis has found the importance of heroic narratives in this ongoing brand narrative and that brand value is a negotiated process between the community and brand faces. This close relationship with the brand and brand faces places the community as a part of the commercial world. Does this then mean that the brand community is also hard, unresponsive, profane and artificial?

It can also be argued that the brand community is outside of the commercial system, as its members are driven by differing motivations than brand faces. Brand faces exist within the commercial world where market imperatives of profit, market share and market growth drives their decisions, whereas the brand community is motivated by a love of the brand and a drive to advance key brand values ahead of any concern regarding commercial necessity. The hard and unresponsive industrial windmill metaphor has overtones of the manufactured world being superimposed on to the bucolic countryside (Campbell 1988). There seems to be a tendency to consider this pastoral pre-industrial landscape as a lost utopia where the artificial symbols of modern life have superseded the genuine non-commercialised experience of an [overly] nostalgic past (Baudrillard 1994 [1981]; Boorstin 1964; Campbell 1988). While the brand community is separate from the commercial system, it does not automatically contain the authentic consumer rallying against the artificial industrial world.

Within the Don Quixote metaphor, the consumer is the passive countryside on which the industrial system stamps its dominance by constructing windmills. However, the postmodern perspective rejects the consumer as a passive object in the commercial process (Cova 1997; Firat 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Brand communities exist within the artificial industrial system through their active participation in creating brand value and narratives (Cova and Ezan 2010; Schau et al. 2009). They also exist in separation from the industrial system as they are motivated by differing needs. Consumers can also be active in emancipating themselves from the market (Kozinets 2002a). While there was not an outright rejection of the market within the brand communities studied in this thesis, there was a tension between the two imperatives. For

example, there was a tension in the Discworld community about a Hollywood movie version of the books. On the one hand there was a desire for a high quality adaptation that could attract a wider audience to the brand, thus providing external validation of their brand preference. On the other hand there was a fear that a Hollywood adaptation would lose the values that the community considered essential to the brand, in particular ‘the joke’. Pratchett’s authenticity as a brand hero was based on his perceived management of the brand to maintain the brand’s values in the face of the commercial imperative of expanding the Discworld’s audience through a movie adaptation.

Does the decision of the brand hero to place brand values over commercial imperatives represent a hard and unresponsive imposition on consumers? This placement of the shared brand values between the community and the brand organisation highlights the ultimate flaw in the windmill metaphor. The consumer is an active participant in building brand value and the commercial world cannot be hard and unresponsive in the face of active consumption. The relationship between the brand community and brand faces is sacred when there is a consistency in the perception that actions are taken for the benefit of the brand. In this case, the authenticity of the brand is based on those values that make it unique and valued rather than what makes it a commercial success. The authenticity lies in this shared perception of the brand’s values. The market is not unwaveringly artificial but the placement of commercial imperatives over consumer preferences for particular brand values places those consumers in an uncomfortably passive role and restricts their involvement to outsiders of the windmill. The tension that exists for control of brand values will be explored in the following section on brand community theatre. The findings from this thesis suggest that the authentic and the sacred are experienced in the context of the brand rather than the market. This means the marketing efforts with the brand community need to focus on the brand and brand values rather than on external commercial concerns.

This thesis contributes to our understanding of authenticity in the marketplace. While previous research has suggested that commercial objects can exhibit authentic qualities, this has tended to ignore the authenticity of the people who produce these objects. This thesis has identified the factors on which the authenticity of these producer figures are based. This thesis has also provided support for Holt’s (2002) suggestion that brand

authenticity lies in distancing brand values from the commercial imperatives of the market. While philosophers see the market as inherently synthetic, this research suggests that consumers, who are the market, can perceive their participation as authentic when they engage in brand communities that focus on brand values rather than commercial concerns. For brand community members, authenticity lies in the celebration of brand values core to the community (the countryside) rather than celebration of market success (the windmill).

9.3.2.4 Consumer Culture Implications: Real Giants, Invisible Windmills

For marketers, the most important consideration of the invisible commercial world surrounding brand hero mythology is the understanding that a brand face is usually not admired simply because they have caused market success for the brand. The assumption that brand faces and heroes act for the benefit of the brand rather than commercial success is the overriding concern for brand community members. For example, previous research on the effect of David Beckham's signing to the LA Galaxy soccer team mentions his influence on increasing sponsorship, membership and crowd numbers (Vincent, Hill, and Lee 2009). However, this thesis suggests that for the LA Galaxy brand community, his narrative needs to focus on how he has embodied and enhanced the brand values considered important to the community. For example, within the Brumbies community, perceptions of localness and performance for the Brumbies in playing a beautiful game was more important in establishing a player as a brand hero than their success with another club or in international competition. For marketers, this means that they need to know what values the community admires and articulate a brand face contribution in terms of these values in order for them to be accepted as a hero by the community.

Marketers also need to build invisible windmills where the commercial motives of the brand and the brand hero are veiled by mythological narrative. The myths generated by the brand community are non-commercial so the decisions and actions of the brand and brand hero need to be consistent with these narratives in order to perpetuate this sacred experience. This thesis found that the influence of backstage faces was often perceived

by the brand community as commercially driven and running counter to brand values. This added to the resistance that the brand community displayed to such actions. Previous research has identified that brand communities can limit marketer actions (Drewett 2008; Luedicke 2005; Schouten and McAlexander 1995) and a brand community's influence on brand values and identity can limit the brand's success, profitability and target markets. Brand communities do not see their worship of the brand and brand hero as a commercial endeavour but as a mythical experience defined in their own terms. They reject the confines that a commercial windmill places on their brand; marketers need to build invisible windmills that are responsive to both the commercial concerns of the brand and the spiritual desires of the brand community. This is no easy task. As discussed in the following section, the narratives that form the basis of brand value negotiation are an ongoing interactive performance with no script or director.

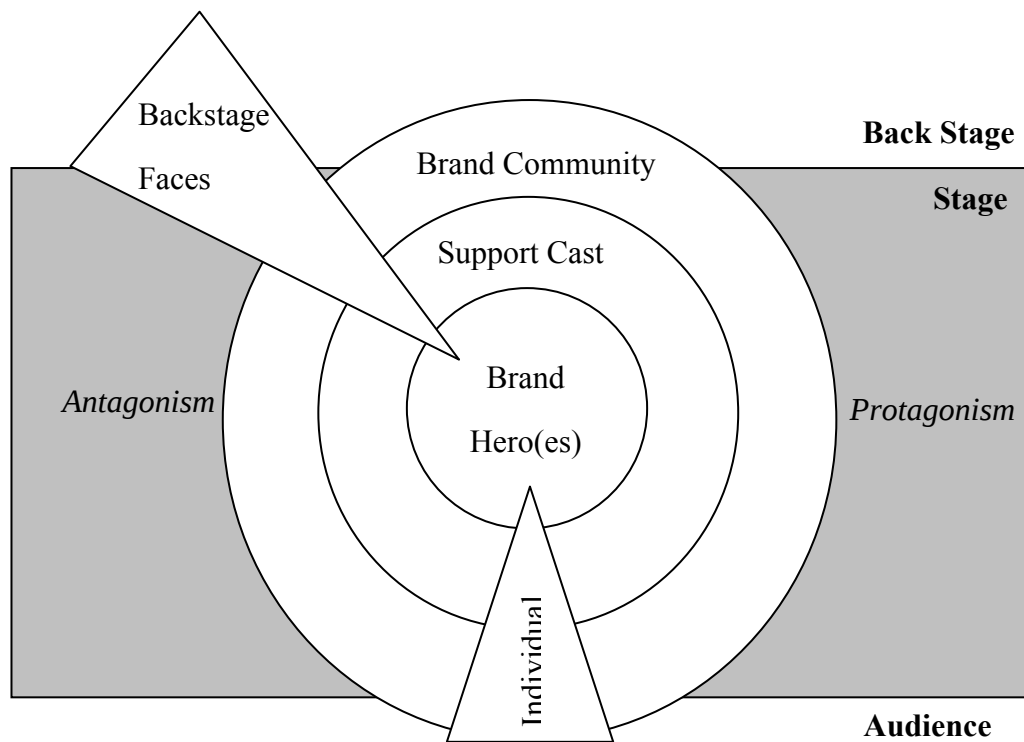
9.3.3 Brand Community Theatre

This section details the brand community theatre model which adopts the performance metaphor to describe the social negotiation of brand meaning that occurs between brand communities and brand faces. This model draws on the services theatre perspective which depicts each consumer experience as an individualistic and negotiated performance between the service provider and the customer (Baron, Harris, and Harris 2001; Goodwin 1996; Grove and Fisk 1997; Grove et al. 1998; Mangold and Babakus 1991; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Williams and Anderson 2005).

The model presented here extends this metaphor beyond individual service encounters to an ongoing negotiation of brand meaning and values. The brand community theatre model provides an alternative perspective to the individually negotiated brand community model proposed by McAlexander et al. (2002). This previous model of the brand community experience focuses on the individual customer's interaction with the brand, product, marketer and other consumers. Most research has focused on the consumers experience with the brand, product and the community. There has been very little consideration of the consumer's interaction with the marketer. The research findings of this thesis indicate that brand community members are not limited to interacting with marketers but they negotiate brand value with a number of different

faces from the brand organisation. It is also proposed here that brand value negotiation is not simply an individualistic experience but rather an interaction between different social networks with inconsistent priorities and motivations. The individual is an active player in this performance as they choose whether or not to participate in these interactions and their level of involvement. See Figure 9.1 for the complete brand community theatre model, The following sections will address the different components of the model and how they interact.

Figure 9.1 Model of Brand Community Theatre



The brand community theatre model represents all of the elements that comprise the brand performance. The stage represents the space in which this narrative is played out. This narrative is influenced both by the backstage, which creates the unseen magic that makes the brand exist, and the audience that seeks to celebrate the brand ownership (Kushner 2003; Mangold and Babakus 1991; Múniz and O'Guinn 2001). The various roles that brand faces enact are based on their visibility and influence over the brand narrative. Brand value is negotiated and the brand performance occurs through the actions and reactions of the various players. These narratives see the actions of one role causing other players to become antagonists or protagonists depending on their interpretation of the authenticity of the actor and whether the action is consistent with

perceived brand values. The following section details the components and process of the brand community theatre model. The theoretical contributions and implications for marketers will also be discussed.

9.3.3.1 Staging

The brand community theatre model combines the staging elements of traditional western styles of theatre with a more postmodern interactive theatre approach. The traditional theatre model segregates the audience from the performance and the performance from the backstage production functions (Kushner 2003; Mangold and Babakus 1991). This staging configuration places the audience in a passive position as an audience recipient, with their active participation discouraged by theatre architecture, drama style and social expectations (Lancaster 1997). As Kushner (2003, p.114) says, “The edge of the stage is a place of mystery and magic, where performers and audiences meet to exchange meaning and satisfaction.” According to this view it is only at the edge of the stage that the audience interacts with the performance; they are not allowed on stage. While an exchange occurs, the audience does not dictate the direction of the narrative. The brand community theatre perspective places the consumer in an overly passive position, whereas brand community members are active brand narrative participants. The traditional theatre staging configuration of audience, stage and backstage are applied in the brand community theatre model to indicate the brand community’s level of participation in the brand narrative.

The postmodern participatory theatre perspective is incorporated in the circular configuration of the brand community overlaying all aspects of the brand narrative. The brand community is not limited to playing a simple observer position in the brand performance but encompasses and interacts with the other players in the narrative and all positions on the stage. When the performers and the audience go beyond a simple exchange of a performance experience (Kushner 2003), the brand community leaves the passive position of the audience as performance receivers to become active players in the narrative, not just in the style of the performance but also in the performance content (Lancaster 1997). The brand narrative script is an ongoing interaction between brand

faces and the brand community in the brand community theatre model. This is a major reconfiguration of the service theatre metaphor where marketers manage the narrative, from staging to scripting, as much as possible in order to maintain service quality and consistency (Goodwin 1996; Mangold and Babakus 1991; Pine and Gilmore 1999). Within brand community theatre, the brand becomes the stage and all elements of the performance that occur are negotiated. Marketer efforts to control this narrative become contested, as consumers are active participants in the performance.

The active brand community can have three differing levels of participation. The community as audience represents a low level of involvement as it is a metaphor for the passive observer of a performance, as suggested by Kushner (2003). Findings revealed that while brand community members may be active within the community and highly committed to the brand, they may not necessarily engage with brand faces. These members do not seek contact with brand faces or the brand creation process; they tend to adopt brand values as they are delivered by brand faces and as negotiated with the brand community.

The stage represents the active negotiation between the brand community and brand faces. This is the visible interaction that occurs between the various actors. The brand community participation is crucial to the narrative formation and action. However, it is limited to the visible elements of the brand, that is, those that have been produced, marketed and sold by the brand. This is in contrast to the backstage, which represents the brand community's involvement in co-production activities (Cova 1997; Cova and Egan 2010; Thompson and Tambyah 1998). This represents the highest level of involvement, where the brand community has gone beyond the passive audience or the active brand meaning negotiator to the brand producer. The following section details the different roles that are enacted by brand faces within the brand community theatre performance.

9.3.3.2 Roles

The brand community theatre concept incorporates the element of controllable marketing elements. Instead of the product, promotion, pricing and distribution strategies, this model focuses on the people within an organisation. The theatre perspective allows for the understanding of what roles organisation members enact and how these can be best managed (Pine and Gilmore 1999). A brand face can be placed in one of three roles within the brand narrative based on the brand communities' perceptions of performance and visibility. These roles determine the amount of influence attributed to a brand face and the amount of interaction that the community experienced with them. These roles are:

- Backstage Faces are those whose influence is perceived as influencing the brand narrative but who are not visible to the community. Their influence is often mistrusted and brand decisions that were perceived as counter to the brand's values were attributed to these backstage faces.
- Support Cast are brand faces who are visible but have no or limited influence over the narrative, nevertheless their contribution is acknowledged. These are faces that perform support functions to heroes. In the Discworld case the support cast will never become heroes but in the Brumbies case the transition from support cast to hero was based on perceptions of importance to the brand's success.
- Brand Heroes are central figures that form narratives of a sacred and magical nature. They are visible and considered crucial to the brand's existence or success.

A model of brand community theatre can be applied based on the three roles that brand faces can enact in the brand performance (backstage faces, supporting cast and brand heroes). This model demonstrates the interactions between the various brand face roles and the brand community. The actions of one player influence the reactions of others and through this interaction and counter-action brand narratives are enacted and brand values are negotiated. The following section details the narratives negotiated where the action of one player can result in other actors becoming antagonists or protagonists within the ongoing brand performance.

9.3.3.3 Narratives

The narratives enacted within the brand community theatre model are determined by the brand values that are important to that community and organisation. For example, within the Discworld community, narratives revolved around ‘the joke’ and the sense of the exclusiveness of those that ‘get it’. For the Brumbies community, these brand values were about competition and the beautiful game. Previous research has also found that these brand values form important narratives within communities (Aaker 1994; Belk and Tumbat 2005; Brown et al. 2003; Kozinets 2001; Múniz and O’Guinn 2001; Múniz and Schau 2005; Schau and Múniz 2007; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). The brand community theatre model extends our understanding of these narratives as not simply community-formed but as a negotiated process between the community and the brand organisation. The model incorporates the various actors and a narrative is performed through the actions of one role influencing other actors to move into positions of protagonists or antagonists. This process will be explained in further detail in the following discussion.

The antagonist and protagonist positions represent the perceptions of a player as to whether the catalyst action was in keeping with the brand values of importance to that player. Not all members playing a particular role have the same interpretation of an action, which can lead to inter-role negotiation. This was found to be the case with the Discworld community’s perception of a Hollywood version of the books, with some being in a protagonist position in support of this adaption as congruent with the Discworld values of ‘the joke’, while others took an antagonist position as they saw such an adaption as incompatible with the brand value of the exclusiveness of those that ‘get it’. However, much of this discord was based on conjecture, as no Hollywood version of the books has yet to be released.⁵

The brand community theatre model does not just allow for the reaction of the community to the actions of the organisation. The organisation can also react to the

⁵ Options for Discworld books have been sold to Hollywood studios, forming the basis for this conjecture.

actions of the brand community. The Harley Davidson organisation is both an antagonist and protagonist of the outlaw biker element of their community (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). They are antagonists of the fact that the outlaw element limits their market size as the image creates a stigma for the mainstream market. However, they are protagonists, as the outlaw biker element of the brand community creates a point of differentiation for Harley that is virtually impossible for other brands to replicate. Harley has learned to market within these boundaries after the release of a Japanese style of motorcycle resulted in the entire brand community becoming antagonists as they saw this as not consistent with the brand's values.

An example of an extended narrative negotiation occurred in the Brumbies community during the 2011 season. The players (brand heroes) forced the management team (backstage faces) to fire the coach (support cast). The brand community was largely antagonistic to this decision as they saw it as detrimental to the team's performance in the competition. It created antagonist behaviours, as it led to a reduction in the brand community's preferred style of play, which was attributed to the failure of the support cast (lack of coaching direction). The consequent disappointing losses and a poor showing for the season resulted in negative brand community narratives about the players as being spoilt and 'too many cooks in the kitchen'. Attendance at the games also dropped consistently throughout the season. The backstage face response has been to not renew the contracts of many of the players involved in the revolt and to recruit a large number of new and young players for the 2012 season. Until the Brumbies performance once again reflects the prized brand community values of competition and beautiful play, that brand community narrative has remained somewhat negative with an outside hope for the future performance of the team.

This narrative will continue into the future as the brand values and management decisions are negotiated and interpreted by all actors in the brand performance. This model provides a framework for assigning roles in a brand narrative and for tracking the actions and reactions of those players as brand values are negotiated and developed. This brand community theatre model provides the major theoretical contribution of this thesis. It provides an alternate theoretical perspective to consider the interaction between brand and brand communities from a theatre metaphor and places various

actors into a variable set of roles, where not only is the role negotiated but also the narrative enacted. The following section identifies the key contributions to theory and practice made by this thesis, before identifying limitations of this study and prospects for future research.

9.3.4 Theoretical Contribution: Social Negotiation

The brand community theatre model provides an alternative perspective to how brand values and narratives are negotiated by the group and by individuals. The extant model represents the negotiation of brand community membership as an individual interaction between the consumer and the brand, product, brand community and marketers (McAlexander et al. 2002). The model focuses on the individual's experience of the brand community rather than how brand value and narratives are negotiated by the community and the organisation. There is also limited consideration of brand faces from within the brand as points of interaction, with only marketers as potential brand faces. The brand community theatre model differs from this established model in a number of ways.

Firstly, it places the brand as the central focus of brand community interaction. The brand becomes the stage on which individual and social performance of narratives between brand community members and the organisation occurs. This shift in focus from the individual to the brand enables an understanding of the brand as it is experienced by various sub-groups within the larger brand context. Understanding the brand on a social level provides a greater opportunity to consider the tension between brand communities and brand managers, as their motivations and values differ. For example, the desire for the sacred and mythical expressed by the community is juxtaposed against the profane desire for market success sought by brand managers. The brand community theatre framework shift from the individually negotiated brand experience to the socially negotiated narrative of brand performance provides an alternative perspective in which to consider brand community interactions with brands.

Secondly, the brand community theatre framework assumes that there is no director or script for the brand narratives, in contrast with the existing theatre metaphors, particularly in services marketing (Grove and Fisk 1997; Grove et al. 1998; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Williams and Anderson 2005). The brand community theatre model more closely resembles the participatory theatre perspective, where the involvement of the audience can fundamentally influence the nature of the performance (Lancaster 1997). The narrative of the brand that is enacted depends on which actors are involved in a performance activity. For example, a media release leaves the negotiation and assimilation of the information to the brand community. A brand hero's announcement at a community convention means that the brand community and the brand hero can actively negotiate the brand meanings and narrative together. The model assumes that any new piece of information that adds to the brand narrative is incorporated into the performance and through antagonism or protagonism the new information is integrated into or rejected from the narrative. The script is a socially negotiated entity, as information is constantly integrated and eliminated from the brand. Rather than one actor creating the script, it becomes a function of the narrative from the past, the actors involved in the current performance and whether these actors are antagonists or protagonists. This places the brand community in a position of equal control over brand values, which runs counter to much marketing research where it is the marketer's job to create and communicate brand meaning to the target audience (Aaker 1994; Aaker and Fournier 1995; Keller 1993). While it is recognised that consumers create their own brand meanings (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981), there is little consideration of how these meanings are created as a negotiated process between consumers and brand faces. The brand community theatre framework provides a model that describes this process.

9.3.5 Consumer Culture Implications: Negotiation versus Direction

The most important implication for marketers from the brand community theatre model is that there is no director. Marketers are in a negotiated relationship with the brand community and the other brand faces rather than being in a leadership position. This means that marketer actions need to be couched in the narratives of the brand and marketer decisions will be judged against entrenched brand values. This is somewhat

limiting to marketing decisions, as any attempt to shift the brand's values or market position substantially from the existing narrative will result in community antagonism and possible rejection. Marketers may need to take a long-term strategy to gradually reposition brand values, as smaller changes may result in less resistance.

9.4 Managerial Implications

The implications for marketing managers in communicating to and interacting with their brand community lie in focusing on the brand and knowing your brand community. The first important issue for marketing managers is to put the brand first. Brand communities are more interested in what your brand face / hero has to say about the brand than what they say about themselves. For example, the Discworld community's only interest in where Terry Pratchett lives is in how this affects his writing.

The second implication for marketing managers is to keep commercialism backstage. This means that communication with the brand community should not focus on profit, market share or sales. While, brand communities are aware that they exist within a commercial system they do not want to engage in a commercial narrative. For example, the negative narratives around the Brumbies' Matt Giteau for leaving the club for a large salary undermined his effectiveness as a brand hero.

The third implication follows on from the previous issue of keeping commercialism backstage. It is important for marketing managers to instead know the important brand community values and place these on the front stage. For example, an important value for the Brumbies' community was a love of the team, in Matt Giteau's return this was the value emphasized rather than the failure in funding his contract at a rival team.

Finally, it is important for marketers to monitor the congruence between the message or narrative of the brand face / hero and the brand community's response. This can be seen in the disconnect in the Brumbies usage of Rocky Elsom, as the Australian captain and new Brumbies "star", and the Brumbies' community's opinion that he did not play well

for the team and was no brand hero in their opinion. No matter how persistent or consistent the marketing campaign was around Elsom the community's perception of his performance for the team meant that he was not an effective brand hero.

9.5 Limitations and Future Research

The first limitation is intrinsic to the qualitative method where a limited number of cases are considered. This thesis considers two cases: one with a single central figure with the brand's existence inextricably tied to this figure and the other with multiple brand faces that have no influence over the brand's existence. While these two cases are important samples, there are other combinations of number of brand faces and their influence over the brand that may expand on marketers' understanding of the relationship between brand faces and brand communities. One example could be a single brand hero that has no link to the brand's continued existence, this has been considered previously with research into the Apple community and Steve Jobs (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Múniz and Schau 2005). This kind of relationship highlights the importance of the brand hero's importance to the brand's success, not just its existence. Future research should consider the complexity between a brand face's influence on a brand's existence versus its success. This research may be important in understanding and managing successor planning in organisations that have a strong brand hero or brand community.

Another limitation of this thesis lies in the tendency of brand communities to form around certain types of products. This thesis and much of the brand community literature focuses on brand communities around high involvement products, such as Hummer cars (Luedicke, Thimpson and Geisler 2010), or experiential products, such as music (Schau and Múniz 2007) or casinos (Schouten et al. 2007). There is evidence of communities that have formed around low involvement brands, such as Nutella (Cova and Pace 2006) or cola (Múniz and Hamer 2001). However, as both brands selected for this thesis are experiential findings may not be generalisable to these settings. Further research is needed in these communities of low involvement or non-experiential products.

The concept of brand hero credibility and heroism is strongly tied to perceptions that the brand face is crucial to the continuance of the brand's success in representing important brand values. Future research could extend this understanding by considering the interaction between performance and heroism when values are in transition, formation or dissolution. In addition, further research is needed to understand the interaction between brand heroes establishing brand values, upholding brand values and changing brand values and brand community reactions to these hero-led attempts to control this process. These research areas would provide a dynamic understanding of the interaction between brand hero narratives and brand value narratives when the environment is less stable.

Another limitation of this thesis lies in the problems encountered in using the Celebrity Attitude Scale as a proxy measure of brand hero worship. The theoretical differences between brand hero worship and celebrity worship were confirmed with the lack of applicability of the three factor model. The 6-item scale used for the measurement of brand hero worship is somewhat representative and is a first step in developing a scale of brand hero worship. Systematic development of a brand hero worship and a brand worship scale is needed. The idea that individual worship can be affected by social norms of worship is an unexplored area in celebrity and in brand hero worship. More research is needed to explore the dynamics between individual worship behaviours and the social influence on these propensities. This may prove fruitful in understanding the apparent disconnect between negative individual outcomes from celebrity worship and the positive outcomes of social connectedness.

The final limitation of this thesis that requires further research is found in the sacred myths sought inside an unseen commercial setting. This thesis identifies that brand community members are searching for the myth inside a commercial windmill. However, the value of these myths can only be sustained if the commercial elements of the myth and the windmill are not seen. Further research is needed to consider this more fully, particularly when and how the commercial become visible; the question of whether there are any advantages to highlighting the commercial windmill around a myth; and the relationship between the myth, the windmill and the notion of 'selling

out'. This research would provide an important contribution to the notion of authenticity in consumption and how this is achieved in a commercial setting.

9.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a review of the findings for the research questions posed in this thesis. There are three key contributions made by this research. The first is in the development of the brand hero concept that extends the traditional view of celebrity as a direct parasocial relationship to include relationships that are mediated by brands. The second contribution is in further defining the nature of brand authenticity, reflecting the notion of consumer authenticity posited by Holt (2002), where brands are vessels of meaning rather than as symbols of commercial enterprise. Finally, an alternate model of brand community interaction is developed that uses the theatre metaphor to provide a stage for brand meaning to be negotiated by brand communities and brand organisations in an ongoing performance. These theoretical contributions suggest that marketers should focus on brand meaning to establish their authenticity in the market and that the use of brand faces as representatives of the brand is a complex process of managing meanings and interactions between the organisation and the community. There is scope to explore additional aspects of the brand face / hero phenomenon as placing a human face to a brand is an effective method of creating mythology, authenticity and consumer engagement.

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Appendix A: Word of Mouth in Brand Communities - The Participant's Perspective

Consent Form and Information Sheet for Participant

Researcher: Toni Eagar

Study Topic: Background information and author's perspective of consumer interaction in brand communities

Study Description and Objective

You have been invited to participate in a research project that is being conducted by Toni Eagar, a researcher within the School of Business and Information Management at the Australian National University. The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of the word-of-mouth behaviour of the Discworld fan network. The knowledge gained could potentially inform consumer behaviourists and managers. The ultimate aim of this research is to increase the understanding of the effect of word-of-mouth communication between consumers in developing a brand community.

Data Protection Confidentiality

The data provided by this interview will be stored by the researcher in electronic and hard copy storage media as securely as possible. The information provided will be maintained in strictest confidence to the maximum possible extent. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that no information that identifies the individual will be published or disclosed to any other party without your prior permission. Neither the tape-recording nor the transcript of the interview will contain any identifying information.

Consent

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The respondent may withdraw from the study at any time without providing reasons or comments. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to complete this consent form, retaining a copy for your own information.

It is not likely that there will be any psychological, health, social, economic or political risk for the participants, resulting from contributing to this research.

The researcher on this project is familiar with the national guidelines, the "National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans" (1999) and has no interest or affiliation with the Discworld community.

Contacts

Any ethical issues of concern can be directed to the ANU Human Research Ethical Committee C/C Human Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, 6125 7945 or email Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

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Hanna Neumann Building 021

Australian National University
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I have read the information sheet for this research project. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I also understand that my comments will be treated in a confidential manner and that my identity will not be revealed in any project reports. I confirm that I am over the eighteen years of age.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Word of Mouth in Brand Communities - The Author's Perspective

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Consent Form and Information Sheet for Participant

Researcher: Toni Eagar

Study Topic: Background information and author's perspective of consumer interaction in brand communities

Study Description and Objective

You have been invited to participate in a research project that is being conducted by Toni Eagar, a researcher within the School of Business and Information Management at the Australian National University. The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of the history of Discworld and its fan network. The knowledge gained could potentially inform consumer behaviourists and managers. The ultimate aim of this research is to increase the understanding of the effect of word-of-mouth communication between consumer's in developing a brand community.

Data Protection Confidentiality

The data provided by this interview will be stored by the researcher in electronic and hard copy storage media as securely as possible. The information provided will be maintained in strictest confidence to the maximum possible extent. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that no information that identifies the individual will be published or disclosed to any other party without your prior permission. Neither the tape-recording nor the transcript of the interview will contain any identifying information.

Consent

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The respondent may withdraw from the study at any time without providing reasons or comments. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to complete this consent form, retaining a copy for your own information.

It is not likely that there will be any psychological, health, social, economic or political risk for the participants, resulting from contributing to this research. The researcher on this project is familiar with the national guidelines, the “National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans” (1999)

The researcher seeks permission to identify the respondent by name in any subsequent publication of the research results. This is entirely voluntary and if consent is not given, all comments made in this interview will remain confidential and the respondent will not be identified to any third party.

Contacts

Any ethical issues of concern can be directed to the ANU Human Research Ethical Committee C/C Mrs Sylvia Deutsch, Human Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, 6125 2900 or email Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

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I have read the information sheet for this research project. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I confirm that I am over the eighteen years of age. Please check the appropriate box below, in regards to your consent for the use of identifying information.

- ☐ I consent to the use of my name in identifying the data gathered from this interview in subsequent publications.
- ☐ I do not consent to the use of identifying data. I would like the information gathered to remain confidential and all personal identification to be removed from data.

Name: Terry Pratchett

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Brand Hero Relationships in the Discworld Brand Community

Information Sheet for Participant

Researcher: Toni Eagar

Study Topic: Fan – Hero relationships in the Discworld fan community

Study Description and Objective

You have been invited to participate in a research project that is being conducted by Toni Eagar, a researcher within the School of Management, Marketing and International Business at the Australian National University. The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between fans and their hero, Terry Pratchett. The knowledge gained could potentially inform consumer behaviourists and managers. The ultimate aim of this research is to increase the understanding of the effect of these relationships and interactions in developing a brand community.

Data Protection Confidentiality

The data provided by this interview will be stored by the researcher in electronic and hard copy storage media as securely as possible. The information provided will be maintained in strictest confidence to the maximum possible extent permitted by law. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that no information that identifies the individual will be published or disclosed to any other party without your prior permission. The transcript of the interview will not contain identifying information.

Consent

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The respondent may withdraw from the study at any time without providing reasons or comments. Please let me know if you do not wish to participate in my research.

It is not likely that there will be any psychological, health, social, economic or political risk for the participants, resulting from contributing to this research.

The researcher on this project is familiar with the national guidelines, the “National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans” (1999)

Contacts

Any ethical issues of concern can be directed to the ANU Human Research Ethical Committee C/C Mrs Yolanda Shave, Human Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, 6125 7945 or email Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

Personal Details

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Appendix D: Celebrity Attitude Scale Effects on the Behaviours of Discworld Fans

Consent Form and Information Sheet for Participant

Researcher: Toni Eagar

Study Topic: Fan – Hero Relationships in the Discworld Community

Study Description and Objective

You have been invited to participate in a research project that is being conducted by Toni Eagar, a researcher within the School of Management, Marketing and International Business at the Australian National University. The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between fans and their hero, Terry Pratchett. The knowledge gained could potentially inform consumer behaviourists and managers. The ultimate aim of this research is to increase the understanding of the effect of these relationships and interactions in developing a brand community.

Data Protection Confidentiality

The data provided by this interview will be stored by the researcher in electronic and hard copy storage media as securely as possible. The information provided will be maintained in strictest confidence to the maximum possible extent permitted by law. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that no information that identifies the individual will be published or disclosed to any other party without your prior permission. Neither the questionnaire nor the analysis will contain any identifying information.

Consent

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The respondent may withdraw from the study at any time without providing reasons or comments. Prior to the commencing the questionnaire, you are asked to read this consent form, and retain this copy for your own information. Please note, that by returning your completed questionnaire you are consenting to participate in this research.

It is not likely that there will be any psychological, health, social, economic or political risk for the participants, resulting from contributing to this research.

The researcher on this project is familiar with the national guidelines, the “National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans” (1999)

Contacts

Any ethical issues of concern can be directed to the ANU Human Research Ethical Committee C/C Mrs Yolanda Shave, Human Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, 6125 7945 or email Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

Results of this study can be obtained via email from the researcher, as detailed below.

Personal Details

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Appendix E: Fan - Brand Hero Relationships in the Brumbies Rugby Club

Consent Form and Information Sheet for Participant

Researcher: Toni Eagar

Study Topic: Fan – Hero relationships in the Brumbies Rugby Club

Study Description and Objective

You have been invited to participate in a research project that is being conducted by Toni Eagar, a researcher within the School of Business and Information Management at the Australian National University. The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between fans and their heroes at the Brumbies Rugby Club. The knowledge gained could potentially inform consumer behaviourists and managers. The ultimate aim of this research is to increase the understanding of the effect of these relationships and interactions in developing a brand community.

Data Protection Confidentiality

The data provided by this interview will be stored by the researcher in electronic and hard copy storage media as securely as possible. The information provided will be maintained in strictest confidence to the maximum possible extent permitted by law. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that no information that identifies the individual will be published or disclosed to any other party without your prior permission. Neither the tape-recording nor the transcript of the interview will contain any identifying information.

Consent

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The respondent may withdraw from the study at any time without providing reasons or comments. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to complete this consent form, retaining a copy for your own information.

It is not likely that there will be any psychological, health, social, economic or political risk for the participants, resulting from contributing to this research.

The researcher on this project is familiar with the national guidelines, the “National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans” (1999)

Contacts

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I have read the information sheet for this research project. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I also understand that my comments will be treated in a confidential manner and that my identity will not be revealed in any project reports. I confirm that I am over the eighteen years of age.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Brand hero worship of Brumbies players by the brumbies fan community and the effect on brand and social outcomes



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Dear Brumbies Supporter

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey about the fan behaviour of Brumbies. This survey is being conducted by the Australian National University as part of the PhD thesis of Toni Eagar. The results of this research will help Toni to better understand the influences of fan behaviour of Brumbies supporters. The survey should only take 5 to 10 minutes to complete. There is also an incentive prize including entry into a draw for CA Brumbies products to the value of \$100 (ACT Permit number TP 08/01608). Please complete the survey and return to the research assistant at the game to be entered into the prize draw. Thank you again for your participation in this research.

Terms and Conditions of prize

This competition is open to all participants 16 years and over, who complete the survey and include their contact details. The survey will be distributed prior to the game by researchers and will need to be returned to the researchers by the end of the game for the entry to be valid. The competition is being promoted by Brumbies Rugby (ABN 54 156 410 155). The competition is open from 6pm until 10pm 25/4/08. The competition will be drawn on 2/5/08 at 11am in Room 1097, Crisp Building, Australian National University, Canberra 0200. The winner will be notified by both telephone by the Australian National University on 2/5/08 and mail. If the winner cannot be contacted to claim their prize, a second chance draw will take place on 1/8/08 at 11am in Room 1097, Crisp Building, Australian National University, Canberra 0200.

Permit number: TP 08/01608

Appendix G: Australian Discworld Convention Questionnaire

Hello AusDiscworldCon Attendee,

This is a survey I'm doing on the relationship between Discworld fans and Terry Pratchett. This is part of my PhD and is just one component of research I'll be doing at the convention. I'm also running the session at 5pm Friday 9th February on Discworld versus Harry Potter, if you would like to come along and hear about my research or ask questions you are most welcome.

This survey is entirely voluntary and you can choose not to participate but I would be grateful for any time you can spare to complete this survey. It should take no longer than 10 minutes and can be done at anytime during the convention.

Once you have completed this survey if you could return it to the designated box at the convention registration desk I would be eternally grateful.

Thanks for your time and I hope you have a fantastic time at the convention.

Cheers

Toni Eagar

PhD Student and Discworld Fan

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. My friends and I like to discuss what Terry Pratchett has done.	5	4	3	2	1
2. One of the main reasons I maintain an interest in Terry Pratchett is that doing so gives me a temporary escape from my life's problems.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I enjoy watching, reading, or listening to Terry Pratchett because it means a good time.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I love to talk to others who admire Terry Pratchett.	5	4	3	2	1
5. When something bad happens to Terry Pratchett I feel like it happened to me.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Learning the life story of Terry Pratchett is a lot of fun.	5	4	3	2	1
7. It is enjoyable to be with others who like Terry Pratchett.	5	4	3	2	1
8. When Terry Pratchett fails or loses at something I feel like a failure myself.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I like watching and hearing about Terry Pratchett when I am in a large group of people.	5	4	3	2	1
10. Keeping up with the news about Terry Pratchett is an entertaining pastime	5	4	3	2	1
11. If I were to meet Terry Pratchett in person, he would already somehow know that I am his biggest fan.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I share with Terry Pratchett a special bond that cannot be described in words.	5	4	3	2	1
13. I am obsessed by details of Terry Pratchett's life.	5	4	3	2	1
14. When something good happens to Terry Pratchett I feel like it happened to me.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I have pictures and/or souvenirs of Terry Pratchett, which I always keep, in exactly the same place.	5	4	3	2	1
16. The successes of Terry Pratchett are my successes also.	5	4	3	2	1
17. I consider Terry Pratchett to be my soul mate.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I have frequent thoughts about Terry Pratchett, even when I don't want to.	5	4	3	2	1
19. When Terry Pratchett dies I will feel like dying too.	5	4	3	2	1
20. I often feel compelled to learn the personal habits of Terry Pratchett.	5	4	3	2	1
21. If I was lucky enough to meet Terry Pratchett, and he asked me to do something illegal as a favour, I would probably do it.	5	4	3	2	1
22. If someone gave me several thousand dollars to do with as I please, I would consider spending it on a personal possession (like a napkin or paper plate) once used by Terry Pratchett.	5	4	3	2	1

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
23. I consider myself to be loyal to the Discworld brand.	5	4	3	2	1
24. To me, Discworld is clearly the best brand on the market.	5	4	3	2	1
25. I recommend buying the Discworld brand.	5	4	3	2	1
26. Discworld is something I rarely even think about.	5	4	3	2	1
27. I would feel a loss if I were forced to give up Discworld.	5	4	3	2	1
28. I really don't have any clear feelings about Discworld.	5	4	3	2	1
29. For me, being a Discworld fan means more than just reading Discworld.	5	4	3	2	1
30. Discworld is an important part of who I am.	5	4	3	2	1
31. I plan to attend future Discworld events.	5	4	3	2	1
32. I plan to become a member of the Discworld community in the future.	5	4	3	2	1
33. I would consider donating time and money to Discworld events.	5	4	3	2	1
34. I have a lot in common with other Discworld fans.	5	4	3	2	1
35. I feel strong ties to other Discworld fans.	5	4	3	2	1
36. I find it difficult to form a bond with other Discworld fans.	5	4	3	2	1
37. I don't feel a sense of being "connected" with other Discworld fans.	5	4	3	2	1
38. I often think about the fact that I am a Discworld fan.	5	4	3	2	1
39. Overall, being a Discworld fan has very little to do with how I feel about myself.	5	4	3	2	1
40. In general, being a Discworld fan is an important part of my self-image.	5	4	3	2	1
41. The fact that I am a Discworld fan rarely enters my mind.	5	4	3	2	1
42. In general I am glad to be a Discworld fan.	5	4	3	2	1
43. I often regret that I am a Discworld fan.	5	4	3	2	1
44. I don't feel good about being a Discworld fan.	5	4	3	2	1
45. Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a Discworld fan.	5	4	3	2	1

To me Discworld is (For example: Good __:__:__ : X :__:__ :__ Bad):

Important	__:__:__ :__ :__ :__ :__	Unimportant
Boring	__:__:__ :__ :__ :__ :__	Interesting
Relevant	__:__:__ :__ :__ :__ :__	Irrelevant
Exciting	__:__:__ :__ :__ :__ :__	Unexciting
Means nothing to me	__:__:__ :__ :__ :__ :__	Means a lot to me
Appealing	__:__:__ :__ :__ :__ :__	Unappealing
Fascinating	__:__:__ :__ :__ :__ :__	Mundane
Worthless	__:__:__ :__ :__ :__ :__	Valuable
Involving	__:__:__ :__ :__ :__ :__	Uninvolving
Not needed	__:__:__ :__ :__ :__ :__	Needed

This section is for categorisation and demographic information.

a. Please indicate how often you participate in the Discworld community related activities, i.e. forums, conventions etc.

Never _____

Less the once a year _____

A few times a year _____

A few times a month _____

Every week _____

Every day _____

b. How many Discworld books do you own? _____

c. How many Discworld related items (not books) do you own? _____

d. How many items do you have signed by Terry Pratchett? _____

e. How long have you read Discworld (to the closest year)? _____

f. Gender: M / F (*please circle*)

g. Age (at last birthday): _____

h. Marital Status:

Single (never married): _____

Married / Living with partner _____

Divorced / Separated _____

Widowed _____

i. Highest education level attained:

Nil _____

Primary only _____

Some secondary _____

Completed secondary _____

Trade qualification _____

University degree _____

Postgraduate degree _____

Other tertiary (inc. prof) _____

j. Employment status:

Full-time work	_____
Part-time work	_____
Student / Training	_____
Looking for work	_____
Not working	_____
Home duties	_____

Thankyou for completing this questionnaire, your responses are greatly appreciated and will be invaluable for my PhD.

Could you please return it to the designated box on the convention registration desk?

Again, thankyou.

Appendix H: Brumbies Community Questionnaire

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. My friends and I like to discuss the Brumbies achievements.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I enjoy watching the Brumbies because it means having a good time.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I love to talk to others who follow the Brumbies.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Learning the history of the Brumbies is a lot of fun.	1	2	3	4	5
5. It is enjoyable to be with others who like the Brumbies.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I like watching and hearing about the Brumbies when I am in a large group of people.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Keeping up with the news about the Brumbies is an entertaining pastime	1	2	3	4	5
8. Who is your favourite Brumbies player?					
The following questions relate to your favourite player that you have identified.					
9. My friends and I like to discuss what my favourite player has done.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I enjoy watching, reading about, or listening to my favourite player because it means a good time.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I love to talk to others who admire my favourite player.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Learning the life story of my favourite player is a lot of fun.	1	2	3	4	5
13. It is enjoyable to be with others who like my favourite player.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I like watching and hearing about my favourite player when I am in a large group of people.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Keeping up with the news about my favourite player is an entertaining pastime	1	2	3	4	5
16. I consider myself to be loyal to the Brumbies.	1	2	3	4	5
17. To me, the Brumbies is clearly the best team in the Super14.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I recommend supporting the Brumbies.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I plan to attend future Brumbies events.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I plan to become a member of the Brumbies in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I would consider donating time and money to the Brumbies.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I have a lot in common with other Brumbies fans.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I feel strong ties to other Brumbies fans.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I find it difficult to form a bond with other Brumbies fans.	1	2	3	4	5

To me the Brumbies are (For example: Good __:__:__:X__:__:__ Bad):

Important	__:__:__:__:__:__	Unimportant
Boring	__:__:__:__:__:__	Interesting
Relevant	__:__:__:__:__:__	Irrelevant
Exciting	__:__:__:__:__:__	Unexciting
Means nothing to me	__:__:__:__:__:__	Means a lot to me
Appealing	__:__:__:__:__:__	Unappealing
Fascinating	__:__:__:__:__:__	Mundane
Worthless	__:__:__:__:__:__	Valuable
Involving	__:__:__:__:__:__	Uninvolving
Not needed	__:__:__:__:__:__	Needed

This section is for categorisation and demographic information.

a. Please indicate how often you attend Brumbies games:

Never ☐
 1-2 times a season ☐
 3-4 times a season ☐
 5-6 times a season ☐
 Every game ☐

b. Please indicate what best describes your membership to the Brumbies?

I am not a member of the Brumbies ☐
 I am a Business Club Member ☐
 I am a Brindabella Member ☐
 I am a Snowy River Member ☐
 I am an Overlander Member ☐
 I am an Interstate Member ☐
 I am a Jillaroo Member ☐
 I am a Foundation Member ☐
 I am a Brumbies Member ☐

c. How many Brumbies signatures have you collected?

d. How long have you supported the Brumbies (to the closest year)?

e. Gender:

M / F (please circle)

f. Age (at last birthday):

g. Marital Status:

Single (never married):	☐	Married / Living with partner	☐
Divorced / Separated	☐	Widowed	☐

h. Highest education level attained:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Nil | ☐ |
| Primary only | ☐ |
| Some secondary | ☐ |
| Completed secondary | ☐ |
| Trade qualification | ☐ |
| University degree | ☐ |
| Postgraduate degree | ☐ |
| Other tertiary (inc. prof) | ☐ |

i. Employment status:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Full-time work | ☐ | Part-time work | ☐ |
| Student / Training | ☐ | Looking for work | ☐ |
| Not working | ☐ | Home duties | ☐ |

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