How Brand Community Practices Create Value: Evidence from Maternal Disaster

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Abstract-This study examines how brand community practices create value within Maternal Disaster, an independent Indonesian fashion brand rooted in underground music and subcultural aesthetics. Drawing on the theoretical framework of value-creating practices (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009), this research employs a qualitative case study approach based on secondary data collected from digital sources, including social media content, online publications, and event documentation. The analysis identifies three key community practices, social networking, community engagement, and impression management, that collectively sustain the brand's cultural vitality. These practices enable consumers to co-create symbolic, social, and emotional value through shared creativity, collaboration, and expressive participation. The findings reveal that Maternal Disaster functions as more than a commercial entity, it operates as a living cultural community where meaning and identity are collectively produced. Symbolic value emerges from the shared construction of artistic and ideological meanings, social value from collaborative participation and belonging, and emotional value from affective bonds among members. These interwoven dimensions generate outcomes such as strong brand attachment, voluntary advocacy, and the accumulation of cultural capital. The study contributes to the literature on brand community and co-creation by illustrating how independent brands in emerging markets can leverage cultural participation to build authenticity and resilience. Practically, it highlights that fostering organic, participatory communities can serve as a sustainable strategy for cultural and commercial differentiation in the contemporary creative economy.
Keywords: Brand community, value co-creation, cultural branding, community engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

Pendahuluan memaparkan tentang latar belakang Marketing thought has changed a lot over time, moving away from transactional exchanges and toward relational and community-based engagement [1]. Historically, the notion of community was regarded as being undermined by modernity and consumerism, wherein the emergence of industrial capitalism supplanted collective belonging with individual consumption [2]–[4]. However, recent research contests this narrative by demonstrating that brands can, paradoxically, function as focal points for the reconstruction of social connections. Consumption has become a way for people to show who they are, where they belong, and what they mean to each other, instead of destroying community [5], [6]. Brand communities are new types of social groups that bring back community ties in systems of value that are based on the market.

Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, [7] define a brand community as a distinct, non-geographically constrained community, founded on a systematic framework of social relationships among brand enthusiasts. Their framework says that shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility are what turn individual consumers into a group. According by [8] expand on this idea by putting the customer in a network of changing relationships with the brand, the company, the product, and other customers. From this customer-focused point of view, brand loyalty is not just a behavior; it is a process of social integration based on shared experiences and identity work.

This relational understanding aligns with the broader shift in marketing toward service-dominant logic and value co-creation [9]. In contrast to the traditional view of firms as the sole producers of value [10], emerging perspectives assert that consumers actively collaborate in creating, interpreting, and circulating value. Research in consumer culture theory reinforces this shift, showing how communities organized around brands or cultural symbols become fertile sites of collective value production [11], [12]. This is supported by various empirical studies across lifestyle and subcultural contexts. For instance, Harley-Davidson riders collectively construct symbolic identity through customization and ritualized gatherings [13], while sneakerhead communities transform consumption into cultural distinction through collecting and showcasing practices [14]. Similarly, Chinese skateboarders create localized meanings of authenticity and creative agency within a rapidly commercialized industry [15], and blind box collectors generate hedonic and social

value through shared anticipation and display [16]. As summarized in Table 1, these diverse forms of engagement demonstrate that value co-creation is not confined to managerial design but emerges organically from the shared practices, emotions, and meanings embedded in consumer collectives.

Table 1. Examples of Collective Value Creation in Brand Communities

Study	Key Practices	Type of Value Created	Source
Harley-Davidson Riders	Customization, group riding, storytelling	Emotional bonding & symbolic identity	[13]
Sneakerhead Culture	Collecting, trading, online showcasing	Cultural capital & group identity	[14]
Chinese Skateboarding	Authentic expression, peer mentoring	Creative agency & local meaning	[15]
Blind Box Collectibles	Collection sharing, anticipation loops	Hedonic & social value	[16]
Maternal Disaster *(current study)*	Art collaboration, live events, online sharing	Co-created meaning & emotional solidarity	

Source: Author own work

In this theoretical context, the Maternal Disaster brand serves as a pertinent example for examining how brand community practices generate value. Maternal Disaster is an independent Indonesian fashion brand that is based on dark aesthetics, underground music culture, and social commentary. It has built a strong sense of community among its fans. The brand's cultural impact goes beyond just buying things; it includes shared identity, working together on art, and standing up to society [17], [18]. Local events, digital engagement, and co-created projects are all examples of community activities that show how consumers and the brand work together to create symbolic, emotional, and social value. This situation gives us a chance to look at how community-based practices create brand meaning and improve relationships with customers.

Accordingly, this study examines how brand community practices generate value within the Maternal Disaster ecosystem by focusing on the processes, meanings, and interactions that sustain community vitality. The research specifically highlights how social networking, community engagement, and impression management contribute to the creation of symbolic, social, and emotional value that strengthens consumer–brand relationships and collective identity. By doing so, this study extends current discussions on brand community and value co-creation, particularly within the context of cultural and independent brands in emerging markets,

and demonstrates how community-oriented practices function as mechanisms of consumer empowerment and brand differentiation in contemporary marketing.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand community offers a fundamental schema for studying how consumers create collective value through shared identity and use. According [7] define it as a non-geographically bounded community structured by relations among brand fans that demonstrates consciousness of kind, ritual, and moral responsibility. It renders consumption a social and symbolic practice wherein meaning and belonging are created through interaction. Elaborating on this, McAlexander et al., [8] view brand community as a network of dynamic relationships among the consumers, the brand, the product, and the firm. Loyalty is then an outcome not only of product use but of membership in a social system of shared experience and meaning.

Pushing the argument further [12] conceptualize value-creating practices as the mechanisms that guarantee the liveliness of brand communities. These include social networking, impression management, community engagement, and brand use, practices in which consumers co-create symbolic, emotional, and social value. In this framework, brand communities are co-creative ecosystems whereby practice and identity are intimately tied together to forge value regardless of firm control. Applying this logic, the Maternal Disaster brand illustrates how community-based initiatives build value that enhances consumer attachment and brand differentiation.
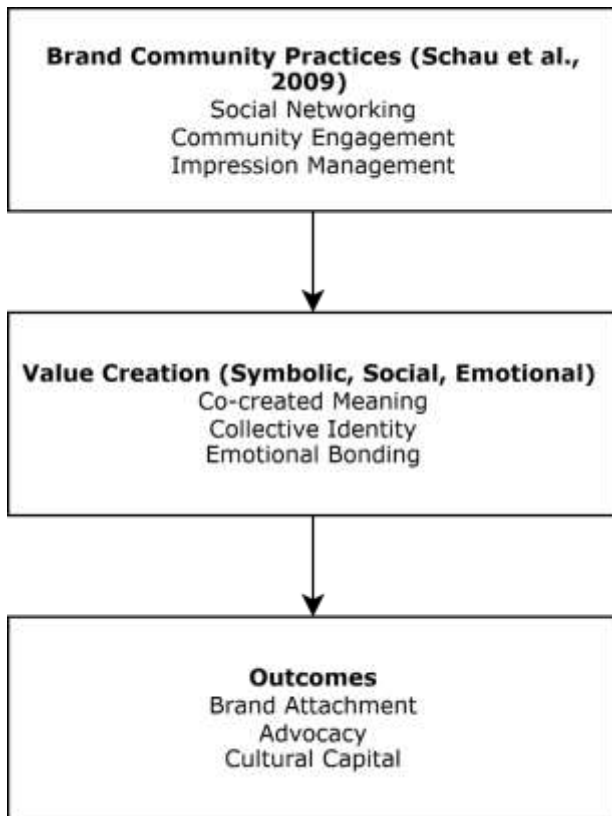
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework Brand Community Practice, Value Createon on it's outcomes
Source: Author own work

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach of case studies [19] to explore how brand community practices create value in the Maternal Disaster ecosystem. The data analyzed is secondary and is taken from uploaded internal sources and public digital (official websites, social media accounts, media coverage, online stores, and related articles) taken with coverage up to October 10, 2025. The selection of materials is purposive, focused on that illustrate community practices (events, collaborations, issue launches, community interactions), to ensure relevance to the research question.

Data analysis was carried out qualitatively using thematic content analysis and the value creator practice framework [12] as the initial guide for the code. The analysis process includes source inventory, deductive-inductive coding, cross-source triangulation, and the preparation of mechanism narratives (practice → member response → value outcomes). Validity is enhanced through source triangulation and documentation trail audits, ethical

aspects are met by analyzing only public materials and anonymizing individual citations when necessary.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

4.1 Overview of the Maternal Disaster Community

Maternal Disaster emerged as an independent Indonesian fashion label deeply rooted in underground music, dark aesthetics, and subcultural expression. Established in Bandung, the brand has cultivated a devoted following that extends beyond clothing consumption into a shared cultural and artistic movement. Its community consists of musicians, artists, designers, and fans who collectively identify with the brand's anti-mainstream values and symbolic narratives surrounding existentialism, rebellion, and creativity. Across social media platforms transforming the brand's digital presence into a lively cultural space. Offline, gatherings such as local gigs, exhibitions, and pop-up collaborations reinforce face-to-face connections and sustain the sense of belonging that binds members together.
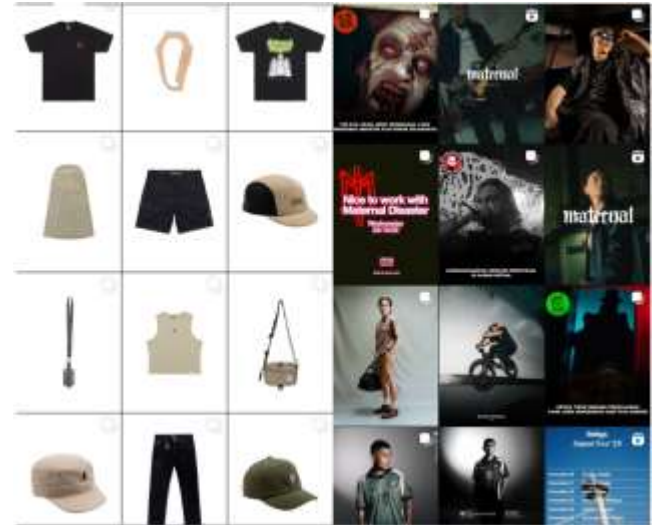
Figure 2. Maternal Disaster Catalog Page and Main Account Social Media.
Source: Maternal Disaster Instagram

This dual marketing (online and offline) enables Maternal Disaster to act as both a lifestyle brand and a cultural hub. The community exhibits strong affective attachment to the brand's visual and ideological identity, visible through fan-produced artworks, reinterpreted logo usage, and collective participation in product "issue" launches that often carry social or philosophical messages. Rather than

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being a top-down marketing construct, the Maternal Disaster community evolves organically through shared creative practices and peer recognition. These collective expressions illustrate how brand meaning extends beyond the firm's control, manifesting as a living, co-created culture among consumers.

4.2 Brand Community Practices

The analysis found three main forms of brand community practices in the Maternal Disaster ecosystem, namely social networking, community engagement, and impression management. All three become social mechanisms that maintain the vitality of the community and form cultural cohesion around the brand. These findings are in line with the framework of value-creating practices from Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould [12], who explain that community interactions, shared meanings, and symbolic actions are the basis for collectively constructed value creation.

Social networking serves as a relational infrastructure that connects community members. Members actively interact through social media by resharing content, creating visual narratives, and using brand official hashtags to express themselves. Maternal Disaster's strategy of frequently reposting fan works and maintaining informal communication creates a mutual connection that reinforces a sense of belonging. This phenomenon is in line with the findings of [20] and [21] that social exchange in the online realm builds trust, solidarity, and a sense of inclusion. Meanwhile, [22] call this form of emotional connectedness as linking value, which is the value that arises from the feeling of being part of something bigger. This social networking practice makes social media not just a promotional channel, but a living archive of collective creativity and mutual recognition between members in Maternal Disaster.

Community engagement expands online interactions into offline experiences that strengthen shared consciousness and moral responsibility [7]. Activities such as local music concerts, art collaborations, and social initiatives become community rituals that affirm collective identity and bring brand ideology to life. In the Maternal Disaster ecosystem, these offline activities blur the boundaries between consumers and producers, community members are not just spectators, but also active participants who display the brand's distinctive "dark"

aesthetic and philosophy. These results are in line with [8] who stated that brand communities are formed through shared experiences between consumers and brands. According [23] also emphasized that direct involvement in subcultural events maintains authenticity and a sense of belonging; two things that are very prominent in the Maternal Disaster community.

Impression management reflects the collective efforts of the community in maintaining the symbolic and aesthetic consistency of the brand. Through photography, illustration, and visual reinterpretation, community members play the role of co-creators in building the brand's image and narrative. Maternal Disaster's campaigns, which often raise themes of existentialism and cultural resistance, provide space for fans to reinterpret the brand's message according to their personal expression. This process reinforces the symbolic value and authenticity of the brand as explained by [12], that aesthetic and ideological practices in the brand community play a role in maintaining the meaning and vitality of the community. Community members even act as guardians of the moral values of brands, keeping the "underground" ideology from being reduced to mere commercial trends, in line with the concept of moral stewardship from Thompson and Coskuner-Balli [24].

Overall, these three practices show that the strength of the Maternal Disaster community does not lie in the managerial control of the company, but rather in the collective participation spread across various cultural spaces. The boundaries between the brand and its followers become fluid; The members act as writers, curators, and custodians of the brand's meaning. Thus, Maternal Disaster represents a paradigm shift from corporate control to community ownership, where brand value is created through social practices, rather than marketing instructions.

Discussion
4.3 Value Creation

The value generated in the Maternal Disaster brand community is formed through three interlocking dimensions: symbolic value, social value, and emotional value. These three dimensions do not exist in isolation, but rather emerge through community practices that have been outlined previously through social networking, community

engagement, and impression management. The results show that the value creation process is not the result of a top-down brand strategy, but comes from co-creation between community members, subcultural cultures, and the brand itself. These findings reinforce the view that service-dominant logic [25] that value is created through social interaction, not simply through economic exchange.

Symbolic value arises when community members come together to build meaning around typical themes of Maternal Disaster such as darkness, existentialism, and resistance to the mainstream. The products, visuals, and narratives produced by the brand become a medium of expression of identity and ideology for its followers. Through user-generated content such as illustrations, posters, and photography, community members participate in expanding the brand's meaning in line with the concept of co-created meaning [12]. In this context, consumption is no longer just an economic activity, but also a symbolic activity that contains cultural value [26]. This process of reinterpretation and adjustment of meaning is what makes Maternal Disaster not just a clothing brand, but a symbol of cultural resistance and self-expression.

Furthermore, social values are formed through a network of relationships between members that create a sense of belonging and collective solidarity. Participation in local events, musical collaborations, or charitable activities creates a shared consciousness where each member feels part of something bigger than himself [27]. The social relationships that are formed are reciprocal, where recognition and collaboration are the main sources of community cohesion. As stated by Cova and Cova [28], linking value arises from shared experiences that bind individuals emotionally in brand-based social networks. This involvement gave birth to a subcultural network that extended the brand's influence beyond the commercial realm, making it central to creative and cultural communities.

Meanwhile, emotional value is manifested from affective bonds formed through shared experiences, both online and offline. Community members express pride, nostalgia, and a sense of connectedness through everyday interactions, creating an emotional atmosphere that reinforces loyalty and commitment to the brand. This process is in line with research by [28]

who showed that involvement in the brand community generates emotional satisfaction that strengthens the intention to continue participating. In the Maternal Disaster community, this emotional atmosphere is seen in the way members support each other, collaborate, and affirm the values of freedom and authenticity that are at the core of the brand. This emotional value not only strengthens the relationship between members, but also forms an affective commitment to the brand that goes beyond the functional dimension of the product.

Overall, the process of value creation within the Maternal Disaster community shows that brand meaning is the result of social and emotional negotiations between the company and its consumers. Brands are no longer the sole center of value creation, but play a role as facilitators in a dynamic cultural ecosystem. Symbolic values strengthen identity, social values foster solidarity, and emotional values deepen attachments and three dimensions that together build the foundation of community loyalty. Thus, Maternal Disaster shows how the brand community functions as an arena where consumption turns into a cultural act full of meaning, emotion, and social connection.

4.4 Outcomes

The results of community practices and value creation processes in Maternal Disaster are reflected in three main forms (brand attachment, brand advocacy, and cultural capital). All three show how the relationship between brands and communities is not only emotional, but also cultural and performative. The value generated from the participation of community members does not stop at the satisfaction of consumption, but rather evolves into a form of loyalty and identification rooted in social and symbolic meaning.

First, brand attachment in the Maternal Disaster community grows through shared experiences that are full of emotions and symbolic meaning. Community members not only love the product, but feel a personal attachment to the brand's values and narrative. Designs that represent existential themes and rebellion become a mirror of the member's self-identity, so that the brand functions as an extended self [29]. This attachment is strengthened by the intensity of social interaction both online and offline, where collective experiences give rise to a deep sense

of community. As a result, loyalty to Maternal Disaster is not transactional, but rather emotional and ideological, as McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig [8] affirm that brand community loyalty arises through social integration and shared experiences, not mere functional satisfaction.

Second, brand advocacy emerges as a tangible expression of member attachment and participation. Fans are not only consumers, but also cultural ambassadors who actively promote, defend, and expand the brand's meaning through everyday actions. On social media, they share personal experiences, display visual works, and write narratives about what Maternal Disaster means for their lives. This activity is in line with the concept of community engagement [30], [31] where identification with the community encourages advocacy behaviors that support brand sustainability. In this context, advocacy is not the result of a marketing campaign, but an organic diffusion of meaning, which is the natural diffusion of meaning through horizontal interaction among community members. This phenomenon shows that the Maternal Disaster has gone beyond the limits of commercial function and has turned into a symbol of a cultural movement guarded by its own followers.

Third, the long-term result of these symbolic and advocacy interactions is the formation of cultural capital, which is a cultural status that provides credibility and social recognition for brands and their members. The Maternal Disaster community produces and maintains a form of subcultural capital through dress styles, visual language, and affiliation with underground music and art. Participation in events such as gigs, art exhibitions, and cross-disciplinary collaborations became a way for members to strengthen their position in alternative cultural networks. Brands and communities reinforce each other: brands gain cultural legitimacy from authentic communities, while members gain symbolic status from affiliation with "credible" brands. Thus, Maternal Disaster functions as a cultural intermediary which connects the creative economy with cultural expression, shows that the value of a brand is no longer determined by the market alone, but by the position and meaning negotiated in the cultural realm. Using the framework of value-creating practices developed [12].

Overall, these three outcomes show how brand communities can create a mutually reinforcing value ecosystem between emotional, social, and symbolic dimensions. Brand attachment builds the basis of affective attachment; Advocacy expands the reach of meaning through active participation; and cultural capital provides long-term legitimacy and durability for brands. In the context of Maternal Disaster, the community is not just a passive supporter, but a producer of meaning and a guardian of cultural identity. This confirms the view of [32], [33] that community practices serve as a vital mechanism that transforms the consumption experience into a sustainable and authentic source of value.

V. CONSLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study examines how brand community practices create value in the Maternal Disaster ecosystem, and finds that community-based engagement plays a key mechanism in the process of symbolic, social, and emotional value creation. The analysis shows that the vitality of this brand arises from the interaction of three main practices, namely social networking, community engagement, and impression management. Through these participatory practices, community members collectively build meaning, strengthen a shared identity, and foster the emotional bonds that make Maternal Disaster more than just a fashion label, but a vibrant cultural community.

These findings confirm that value in a brand's community is not created through top-down managerial control, but rather through participatory creativity and social collaboration among its members. The case of Maternal Disaster shows how community members play the role of co-authors of the brand narrative, sustaining and extending it through everyday activities such as story sharing, design reinterpretation, and social interaction. These engagements result in tangible forms of value in the form of strong brand attachment, voluntary advocacy, and cultural capital accumulation that make these brands not only culturally authentic, but also economically resilient. Thus, the study expands the understanding of co-creation in the context of emerging markets, while affirming that in the post-transactional era, sustainable brand value is sourced from the social energy and emotional solidarity that grows within the community.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the enrichment of the discourse of service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory by highlighting how the process of value creation takes place in subcultural contexts and local markets. In practical terms, the results of this study emphasize the importance of strategies that empower communities, encourage creative collaboration, and maintain authenticity as the main foundation of brand sustainability. For independent and cultural brands, the Maternal Disaster experience provides a lesson that building a participatory ecosystem that gives audiences space to contribute creatively can be a long-term strategy to maintain relevance and resilience in a competitive creative economy.

While offering rich insights, this study has limitations because it relies on secondary data and public sources that may not fully capture the personal motivations and affective experiences of community members. Further research is recommended to use an ethnographic or netnography approach through in-depth interviews and participatory observation to gain a deeper understanding of the emotional dynamics and involvement of members. In addition, comparative research across brand communities can also be conducted to assess whether similar co-creation mechanisms occur in different industry or cultural contexts. Future quantitative research can also operationalize variables such as emotional bonding, advocacy, and cultural capital to empirically measure their impact on brand equity and loyalty

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