

COMMUNITY EXPLORER: UNLOCKING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY-ORIENTED MARKETING

David Shiffman, MediaVest USA

Background

People have an innate need and desire to share & connect in meaningful ways around the things that matter most to them. Driven by technology, media proliferation, mass adoption of social media platforms and the corresponding growth in peer influence, plus massive changes in consumer behavior and their expectations, people are forming increasingly powerful social networks – both online and offline - across an array of subject areas. These changes have ultimately made people's commitment to their communities of interest more visible, more identifiable and more influential than ever.

Our connected world is forcing marketers and their agencies to re-imagine marketing communications. In today's consumer-controlled, hyper social world, marketing needs to fuel more compelling connections between people and brands, and create brand experiences that are personally relevant and that generate conversation and sharing within a community by adding real value to members' lives.

This paper will delve into the qualitative and quantitative work MediaVest have done over the past 12 months around communities and community marketing. We will explain and unveil new learning around core community dimensions - community size, amplification, engagement, and member motivations (the why's behind participation and social interaction). We will specifically focus on the relationships between community and media and illustrate how our work provides an innovative means to determine the centrality and importance of different media as sources of information, inspiration and human connection. We will demonstrate how metrics such as community engagement and motivation and community-oriented media behaviors collectively provide the insight marketers need to shape messaging, content strategies, and to guide optimal media selection to build long-lasting and meaningful relationships with their most valuable communities and community members. We will also provide guidelines for publishers to consider as they seek to evolve their thinking, approaches, content and overall brand strategies, to meet the challenges of today's marketplace.

Why Community Marketing Matters

Driven by massive behavioral shifts in terms of how people interact with each other and with brands, ubiquitous technology that facilitates a constant flow of information in a two-way media world, more human connectivity, knowledge and content sharing, plus a dramatic increase in the role that our social networks have in influencing our beliefs and behaviors, it has never been more important for marketers to connect in meaningful ways with their consumers.

In the face of these changes and challenges, marketers' media investments need to help create more compelling and enduring connections between consumers and brands. This requires a new level of consumer understanding that enables marketers to increase the effectiveness of their communications - by making it more personally relevant, better aligning brands with consumer affinity and passion and by fully leveraging the power of peoples' social networks to drive scale and amplification.

This new world requires us to re-think all facets of marketing communications. From how and who we target, the depth of consumer insight we require, and the ways in which we think about media selection and prioritization, we saw both an opportunity and need to evolve our thinking and approaches to help our clients deliver on their business objectives. At the heart of this evolution is a move away from thinking about a brand's target segment as a collection of people with similar characteristics, attitudes and/or behaviors to thinking about the opportunities that lie within a deeply involved, passionate and highly connected group of consumers - *communities*. Through understanding people, their lives and their media through a community lens, we can uncover and leverage the most meaningful bonds - with topics, content, media and with each other - that exist for today's consumers. And through understanding and activating against communities, we can help marketers create meaningful brand experiences that connect people with brands in a powerful way.

Research Overview & Methodology

With this belief in mind, MediaVest completed a 12-month research journey to provide the grounding, understanding and a deep database focused on *community* and to ultimately fuel a new level of community-driven marketing for our clients. This initiative included over 20 hours of interviews with community leaders, sociologists and anthropologists, a deep literature review, focus groups across the country and 8000 consumer interviews, spanning 25 topic areas and more than 150 communities. A series of brand affinity and interaction metrics were also included as a way to isolate the relationship between communities and brands and identify brand-specific opportunities for marketers.

The following outlines the research & learning objectives we set out, broken out into three broad areas:

Community Identification & Understanding

- What types of communities exist today, both online and offline
- What defines or constitutes a community?
- How are communities created and maintained? How do they operate?
- How strong community bonds and what are the nature of member relationships?
- How large (or small) are today's communities and how well can they be scaled for marketing?
- What are the underlying and shared/common motivations of the various communities that exist
- Why do communities form? Why do people join and continue to participate?
- What are the underlying motivations for joining/participating?
- What experiences are people looking for and what needs are being met?
- What does the individual "get" / "give" to the community?

Communities, Communications & Media

- How do community members communicate and what forms and modes of communication & technology do community members use to facilitate interaction?
- How do community members use media and other resources to stay up to date, learn, and stay informed?
- Which media/technologies are most important for any given community? Which media and media content are most central? Which media are most trusted, most valued and most relied upon?
- Which media/sources of information drive community-related WOM and sharing?

Communities & Brands

- How do communities relate to brands and what are the ways in which brands can connect and inspire a community?
- How does being a member of a community inform the likelihood of talking about a brand, being introduced to a brand by other members, buying a branded product, staying loyal to and/or switching brands? (how much does community association matter for a brand)
- What can brand owners do to facilitate, spark and inspire a community?

Qualitative Research: "Community Immersion"

A three-tiered qualitative approach was employed, spanning consumer research, thought-leader interviews and discussions with leading researchers in our area of interest. In addition to these phases, a lengthy and detailed literature review of academic, sociological and anthropological work on *community* was conducted to aid in our understanding of people and their communities.

Phase I: Exploratory Research with community participants

A total of twelve, 2-hour focus groups were held in three markets with community "participants". All focus group participants were asked to complete a homework assignment prior to group sessions where respondents were asked to bring three to five pictures/photographs/magazine print outs, etc. that visually represent and describe the communities that they are a part of. They were also asked to describe the community, how they learned about it, what they like/don't like about it, some of the core reasons that they participate in it, and what unique experience they get from it. In addition, group sessions included a "connectivity" exercise designed to uncover the types of things that people feel most connected to and why in and around their community and all participants went through a VisualLaddering™ and NeedsMapping™ (Connell + Associates proprietary approaches) to uncover the deep-seated, often unarticulated consumer needs that truly motivate decision-making and community participation.

All respondents were screened to be active community participants. We recruited a mix of male/female participants ages 18-64 across a diverse mix of community interests.

Phase 2: Exploratory Research with Thought Leaders: Community Organizers/Leaders

This phase was designed to understand the key drivers that motivate people to build/organize their respective communities and to get community leaders' views on the reasons people participate in each respective community. A total of 10 one-on-one phone interviews were conducted with organizers/leaders of communities, representing a diverse mix of communities across topic areas (e.g. Professional or Career-based, age-based, cultural/ethnic, lifestyle-based, affinity groups, etc)

Phase 3: Exploratory Research with Leading Researchers

The goal here was to obtain an understanding of the human motivations/gratifications for community involvement from academic experts and to help determine some of the common factors that may lead to one's association with certain communities vs. others. A total of five one-on-one phone interviews were conducted with Anthropologists, Sociologists, and other social science experts in academia that have an understanding of "community".

Quantitative Research – “Community Explorer”

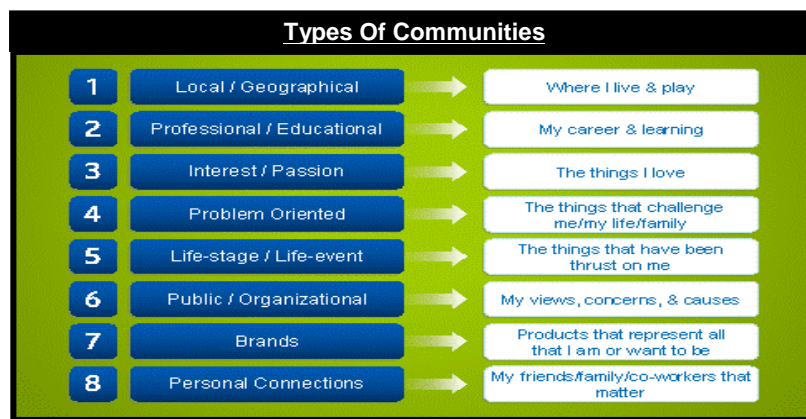
An extensive, online survey was administered to 8000 respondents, aged 18-64. All respondents were screened for community membership and participation and respondents were asked to answer a battery of community-specific questions for up to three of the communities that they personally and regularly participate in. The sample was balanced and weighted to reflect Census data. The survey consisted of a series of community-specific questions, and also captured detailed information on respondents’ demographics, psychographics, media behaviors and other information to aid in respondent and community profiling.

These data were then fused onto the GfK MRI database, which is our core syndicated planning resource, to help ensure seamless application of our learning into our planning and buying process.

Research Findings – Community Immersion (Qualitative)

Our literature review and three phases of qualitative work were illuminating and helped validate our belief in the value and potential of community-based marketing. We also identified a series of important and fundamental community truths to embrace as we seek to inspire and ignite community members.

1. Communities are a powerful reflection of one’s inner core, representing the things – topics, content, and people – that are highly valued and that members are strongly attached and committed to
2. While potentially infinite in number, there are 8 types of communities that help guide our understanding



3. There are four critical pillar or requirements of community (Sources: McMillan and Chavis,1986; Muniz & O’Guinn):
 - Membership - a feeling of belonging and sense of personal relatedness
 - Influence - a sense of mattering, of influencing the group and the group influencing its members
 - Fulfillment - the belief members’ needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group
 - Emotional Connection - members have shared & will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences
4. Community is a powerful resource for “making life better” through the creation of mutually rewarding experiences & meaningful value exchange. This is what community is built around and what helps motivate member participation.
5. Community members welcome brands who act as members and who are willing to create a mutually beneficial and valuable experience for members. Brands need to understand and act in accordance with community rules and expectations.

Research Findings – Community Explorer (Quantitative)

While there are many components to this research work, we will focus here on the core dimensions that most directly relate to and inform our approach to community-oriented marketing:

Community size & scale

Community engagement

Community motivations & value

Sources of content and inspiration

Community & Brand Relationships

We will walk through each of these core dimensions in more detail, with the exception of Community & Brand Relationships as that is beyond the scope of this paper.

Community Size & Scale

After testing various questions and research methods and through extensive data analysis, community membership was defined based on a person's overall level of interest and personal involvement with a particular category of interest or subject. This approach successfully identified respondents with a strong sense of membership, influence, fulfillment and emotional connection (the pillars of community belonging), and who exhibited many other behaviors indicative of community belonging. For example, across all measured communities, the average member:

- Communicated with an average of 15 people around their community of interest
- Communicated or exchanged information with others frequently (17% on a daily basis; 35% on a weekly basis)
- Spent an average of 4.5 hours per week engaged in some way with their community topic
- Made a point of staying informed and up-to-date on the topic (over 80% of qualified respondents)

Using this as our basis for defining community, we were able to size of each community in our study. Overall the average size of a community was 37.5MM people but there was great variation in community size, ranging from 9MM people for some of our more niche-based communities to over 90MM people for more broad-based interest communities.

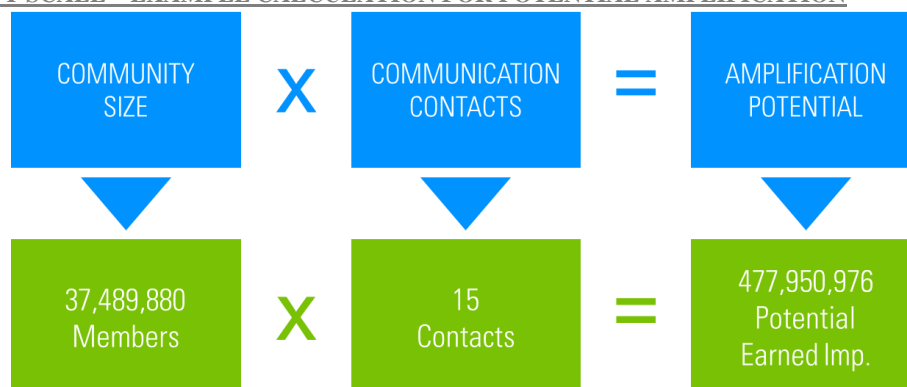
COMMUNITY SIZING – LARGEST AND SMALLEST COMMUNITIES

Top 10 – Largest Communities	Bottom 10 – Smallest Communities
TV Viewing/Shows	Country Club
Cooking at Home	WNBA - Fans
Music	Fraternity/Sorority
Personal Travel	Rodeo - Fans
Film/Movies	Exotic Pets
Local News/ Events/Weather	Pregnant
Reading/Books/Book Clubs	Extreme Sports - Participate
Dining Out	Parents with Special Needs Children
Family Travel	New Parents
Nutrition & Healthy Eating	US Soccer - Fans

While the size of a community is an important element in determining the opportunity that a community presents for marketers, *community scale* recognizes both a community's size plus its ability to amplify brand messaging and branded content. The extent to which a community can truly scale and generate earned impressions is of utmost importance in our hyper social world.

To gauge community scale, we calculated the amplification potential for each community using a simple calculation of community size, multiplied by the average number of contacts each community member regularly shares or communicates with around the topic.

COMMUNITY SCALE – EXAMPLE CALCULATION FOR POTENTIAL AMPLIFICATION



The importance of scale is clear when we compare communities of similar size, but differing amplification potential. Using nearly identical sized Beer and Wine communities, we see that the amplification potential of the Beer community is far greater than our Wine community, suggesting the Beer community is more socially connected and therefore better able to amplify brand messaging than the Wine group.

COMMUNITY SCALE & AMPLIFICATION: BEER AND WINE COMMUNITIES

	SIZE	CONTACTS	AMPLIFICATION
Beer	41,435.8	13	566,014.8
Wine	41,139.4	9	375,598.2

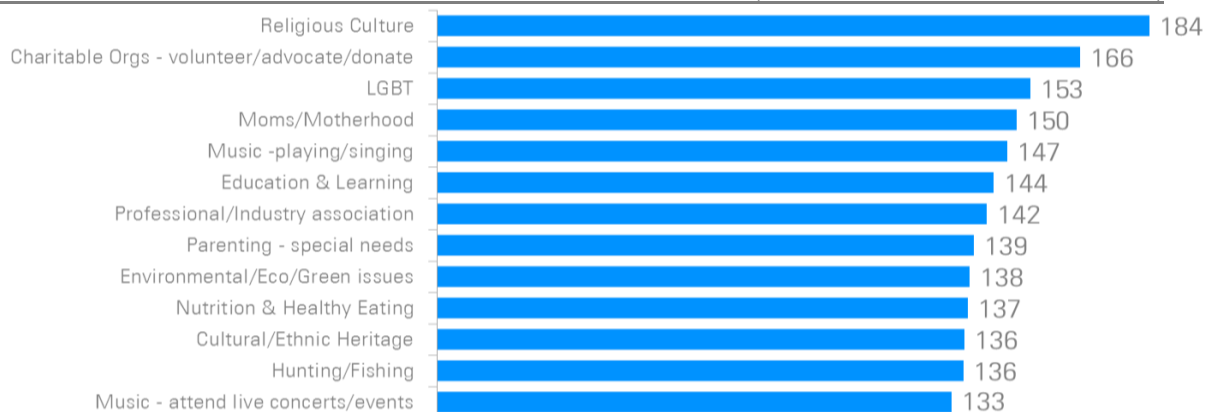
Size/Amplification #'s in 000s

Community engagement

Using the four core pillars of community membership as our basis for community engagement and attachment, we used a battery of eight statements to represent and measure members' overall feelings of membership, influence, fulfillment and emotional connection. Responses to these questions were then used to calculate an overall "engagement" score to represent the strength of each community relative to other communities.

While all communities are characterized by strong levels of attachment, we found meaningful variation in overall community member engagement across the communities studied. Overall, we found the strongest engagement levels in highly personal and "greater good" pursuits with Religious Culture communities, Charitable organizations, LGBT and Mom communities being the most highly engaged of all communities. Below is a list showing the most highly engaged communities in our study.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – MOST ENGAGED COMMUNITIES (INDEXED TO ALL COMMUNITIES)



It is worth noting that the engagement profiles – or the relative importance of each community pillar – varied considerably across communities. This is an important factor in understanding the ways in which a community interacts and provides additional context to these social interactions. As the table below shows, communities around sports were far more tied to feelings of membership; highly information-oriented communities (politics, diets, ailments, professional, and nutrition) were aligned to influence; feelings of fulfillment were at the core of hobby-oriented communities; while artistic pursuits skewed toward emotional connection.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROFILE COMPARISON – BASED ON REALTIVE INDEX

MEMBERSHIP	INFLUENCE	FULLFILLMENT	EMOTIONAL CONNECTION
Summer Olympics	Political/Social Issues	Adventure Sports	Arts & Crafts
Winter Olympics	Personal Finance/Investing	Dogs	Photography
NBA	Diets for Allergies/Restricts	Museums	Art/Painting/Sculpture
World News/Events	Local Politics	Golf	Religious Culture
NCAA Basketball	National Politics	Water Sports	Music - Playing
NCAA Football	Blended Families	Drama/Theater/Opera	Home Design/Decorating
Nascar	Ailment - Issues/Solutions	Charitable Organizations	GLBT
National News	Profession – Issues/topics	Music - Attending Live	Charitable Organizations
NFL	Nutrition & Healthy Eating	Film/Movies	Dance
WNBA	Beauty - Bargain Hunting	Music - Playing	Knitting/Sewing

Community motivations & value

Our qualitative research showed that community belonging provided a sense of “making life better” for its members, through the creation of mutually rewarding experiences & meaningful value exchange, so it was important for us to uncover the underlying motivations behind each community with greater detail and depth of understanding.

We developed a list of 41 motivation statements for our survey, and respondents were asked to tell us how well their communities of interest delivered against each of these 41 motivations – for them, personally. These statements were then analyzed and a factor analysis was conducted to identify the over-arching motivations behind community participation, and how each community performed against these motivations.

Our analysis showed that community participation could be explained through 7 distinct motivations:

1. Outward – a desire or need to understand and connect with others (27%)
2. Inward – improving self esteem, self-sufficiency (21%)
3. Fun & Adventure – providing feeling of fun, living the good life, being entertained (15%)
4. Traditions – connecting people to their past or broader customs/traditions (8%)
5. Self-expression – helping to express oneself, feeling or becoming more stylish, trendy (6%)
6. Challenge – providing intellectual or creative challenges/stimulation (5%)
7. Habit – done mainly out of habit (4%)

Looking across communities, we found that each community delivered against a unique mix of member needs and motivations. For example, communities around Cooking (at home) were motivated by a desire and need to connect to traditions and past customs, whereas the Nutrition/Healthy Eating community was aligned to Inward motivations and a need for improving self-esteem and self-identity.

Media - Sources of content and inspiration

We hypothesized that media is a conduit for community participation and that our focus on communities would enable us to better prioritize media selection by identifying the media that most powerfully align to a target community. We believed that we would find a meaningful relationship between community and media, that different media would play a more (or less) dominant role in inspiring community participation and that we could use a community-centric approach to establish media rankings and prioritization.

To accomplish this, we investigated the relationships between media and community on two unique but important dimensions:

1. The media, sources and methods regularly relied upon and used to stay up-to-date and informed about a community topic or group
2. The media, sources and methods which are most likely to inspire community members to talk about or share with others

These two media dimensions were then brought together into a single metric to provide a media/channel score for our evaluations.

A total of 25 media/sources were included in our investigation spanning traditional media channels, digital media, word-of-mouth, and social media.

LIST OF SOURCES MEASURED IN COMMUNITY EXPLORER

Twitter	Info on search engines like Google, Yahoo!, Bing, etc
Facebook	The printed version of a magazine
Google+	The printed version of a newspaper
LinkedIn	The digital version of a magazine
Pinterest	The digital version of a newspaper
Blogs/message boards	Apps on a tablet or other mobile device
Websites related or dedicated to this	Newsletters or emails
Other websites that you visit	Emails or (IM) from a friend/family member
Online video clips	Radio (online or on the radio)
Streaming audio / video content or podcast	TV shows (live or recorded)
Read online reviews/recommendations	VOD from your cable/satellite provider
Books	Attended a meeting, conference or event
	Talking with friends family in person /on the phone

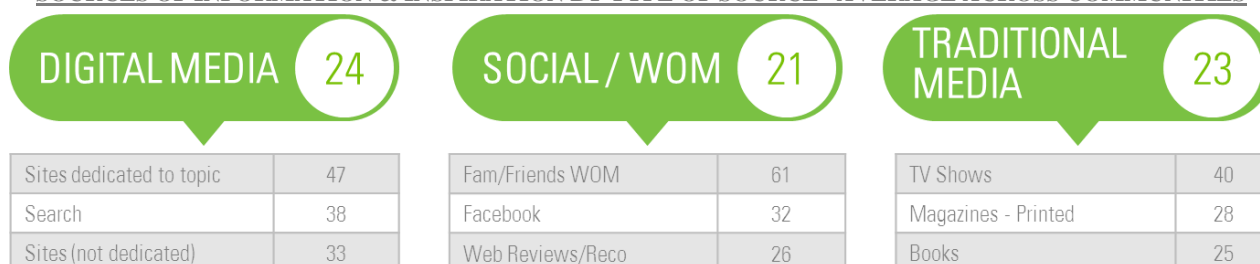
As expected, we found that communities use many sources in their quest to stay informed, connected and to facilitate content and information amongst members. This further underscores the centrality of community in peoples' lives in that they actively seek out information and content in and around these subjects.

Looking across all communities, we created a media/source ranking based on the likelihood of community members to use each source to stay up to date and informed and whether this source was able to regularly inspire WOM and content sharing. We further classified each source into three buckets – digital media, social/word-of-mouth, and traditional media.

Across the grouped digital, social/WOM and traditional media classifications, the data shows that there is considerable parity across sources, with digital media holding a slight edge on our cumulative score. While digital, as defined, has a slight edge, when we factor in what are predominantly digitally-based social media, digital's centrality in communities is quite evident. Still, the reality is that all forms of media and communications – digital, social media, traditional media, face-to-face communications – do and will continue to play an important role in motivating, inspiring and connecting today's communities.

Within the digital media category, websites dedicated to the topic, search and non-endemic websites garnered the highest scores across communities. Within social/WOM, talking to family/friends (in person or by phone) was the dominant source across communities, followed by Facebook and Reviews/Reco online. For traditional media, TV, printed magazines and books were the leaders.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION & INSPIRATION BY TYPE OF SOURCE– AVERAGE ACROSS COMMUNITIES



Across all sources, Family/Friends WOM outperformed all otherS by a sizeable margin. Websites dedicated to the subject matter ranked 2nd, followed by TV, Search, Other Websites (non-endemic) and Facebook. Printed Magazines ranked 8th, Printed Newspapers was 11th, and Digital versions of both Magazines (19th) and Newspapers (17th) were well below their traditional printed counterparts.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION & INSPIRATION – RANKING ACROSS ALL SOURCES/COMMUNITIES

SOURCE	SCORE	RANK
Talk Fr/Fam InPer/Ph	61.3	1
Websites dedicated to topic	46.8	2
TV Shows	39.6	3
Search	37.7	4
Other Websites	32.9	5
Facebook	32.1	6
Newsletters and email	28.9	7
Magazines - Printed	27.6	8
Read Web Review/Reco	26.2	9
Books	25.0	10
Newspaper - Printed	24.2	11
Web Video	23.5	12
Friends/Fam email or IM	23.0	13
Attend Mtg/Conf	17.7	14
Blogs/Msg Boards	17.6	15
Radio	16.5	16
Newspaper - Digital	11.9	17
Streaming Audio	10.8	18
Magazines - Digital versions	10.1	19
Apps on Tablet/Mobile	9.9	20
Twitter	8.4	21
Google+	8.2	22
Pinterest	7.6	23
VOD	5.8	24
LinkedIn	5.6	25

Community Explorer also allows us to look at the strengths of various media across each community in our database. We will now discuss the strengths of a few specific media sources across communities, focusing on Magazines, Websites (devoted to the subject), Facebook and Twitter.

Printed magazines show a number of noteworthy strengths across community topics including Celebrity Enthusiasts, Home Design/Decorating, Auto and Motorcycle Enthusiasts, Designer and Vintage Fashion, Nutrition/Healthy Eating, Hunting & Fishing, Golf Fans and a number of others. Not only do Magazines show strong performance in these areas, in many instances, Magazines are the #1 resource for these communities (Celebrity Enthusiasts, Home Design/Decorating, Auto Enthusiasts and Designer Fashion).

For Websites (devoted to the community topic), it is interesting to note that where these sites perform best is markedly different from Printed magazines' strengths (with the exception of Nutrition/Healthy Eating). These sites perform best in a mixture of areas, ranging from Computer/Tech, Gaming and Consumer Electronics communities, Politics, Finance and News, House Hunting/Real Estate and several sports oriented communities (Fantasy Sports, Nascar, NCAA Football, NHL).

Facebook relationship and strengths amongst today's communities could be a study of its own. Generally speaking, it appears to perform best among highly engaged, connected communities that thrive on consistent information exchange and sharing. It also tends to skew toward younger communities, though not exclusively by any means. As expected, it scores best for the Blogger/Social Network community, but it also shows strengths for LGBT, Hometown/Local, Music & Film/Movies, Parenting, Gaming, Clubbing/Nightlife.

Twitter's community influence profile, while somewhat similar to Facebook's, is also quite unique, earning high marks across mostly niche interest communities such as Blogger/Social Network, LGBT, Country Club, Competitive Fitness, Clubbing/Nightlife, Rodeo, European Soccer, Extreme Sports and Self-help/Enrichment Communities. While there are some overlapping strengths with other media/source, the data suggests that Twitter lives in a unique space when it comes to today's communities.

RANKING OF COMMUNITY SOURCES INFORMATION & INSPIRATION – SELECT SOURCES

Magazines (Printed) - Top 20 Communities			Websites on Topic - Top 20 Communities			Facebook - Top 20 Communities			Twitter - Top 20 Communities		
SOURCE	SCORE	INDEX	SOURCE	SCORE	INDEX	SOURCE	SCORE	INDEX	SOURCE	SCORE	INDEX
Celebrity Enthusiast	90.4	328	Computers/Technology	92.9	198	Blogger/Social Networks	128	398	Blogger/Social Networks	40	478
Home Design/Decorating	74.3	269	Fantasy Sports	87.4	187	LGBT	82	255	Celebrity Enthusiast	31	369
Auto/Truck Enthusiast	73.3	266	Gaming - Console-Based	86.9	186	College Alumni	70	217	LGBT	24	294
High-End/Designer Fashion	69.7	253	Professional/Industry Assoc	82.2	175	from	69	214	Country Club	24	283
Hunting/Fishing	62.5	227	Nascar	78.9	168	Fraternity/Sorority	68	212	Competitive Fitness Training	22	263
Nutrition/Healthy Eating	57.7	209	House Hunting/Real Estate	75.8	162	live	67	209	Clubbing/Nightlife	22	261
Fragrances/Perfumes	57.4	208	LGBT	75.4	161	Celebrity Enthusiast	55	172	Nascar	21	248
Professional/Industry Assoc	55.8	202	Profession- issues/topics about	75.1	160	Clubbing/Nightlife	53	166	US Soccer	21	247
Motorcycle Enthusiast	52.4	190	Political/Social Issues	74.7	160	Music (Listen/collect, etc)	53	164	WNBA	20	241
Auto Repair/Restoration	52.3	190	Nutrition & Healthy Eating	73	156	New Parent	53	163	Fraternity/Sorority	20	239
Golf Fan	50.8	184	Personal Finance/Investing	72.8	156	Social	51	158	Blended Families	19	231
Competitive Individual Sports	49	178	NCAA Football	72.7	155	Professional/Industry association	51	158	College Alumni	18	212
Dining Enthusiast	48.1	175	Consumer Electronics/Home Audio/Video	72	154	Parent of Special Needs Children	51	158	Rodeo	16	196
Knitting/Sewing	48	174	Budget Travel	71.7	153	Motherhood	50	157	Computers or Other Technology	16	193
Comics & Collectibles	46.7	169	NHL	70.8	151	Film/Movies	50	156	Amateur Video	15	180
Gardening	46.5	169	Issues/Solutions Around Allergies	69.2	148	Country Club	50	156	European Soccer	15	177
Arts & Crafts	44.9	163	Specialty Diets Due to Beliefs	68.3	146	Attending Live Music Concerts	49	151	High-End/Designer Fashion	15	174
Specialty Diets Due to Beliefs	44.8	163	Comics & Collectibles	68.3	146	Competitive Individual Sports	49	151	Professional/Industry association	14	169
Profession - Issues/topics about	44.7	162	Environmental/Eco/Green Issues	68.1	145	US Soccer	48	149	Extreme Sports	14	167
Vintage Fashion	44.5	161	World News/Events	68.1	145	Bargain Hunting for Beauty Items	48	149	Self-help/Enrichment	14	167

Summary, Applications & Implications for Publishers

We found that community fundamentally changes how we need to think about marketing communications. Community and our understanding they dynamics of social connectivity in today's world, also holds the key to our ability to create meaningful brand experiences. By knowing the strength and nature of community bonds (how they connect), community motivations (why they connect), their sources of influence and inspiration, we are able to craft content and marketing strategies that are most inspiring to our target communities. Equally important in today's social world, where peer influence is central in the formation of brand beliefs, evaluations and ultimately, purchase decisions, community is at the core of social amplification in its broadest and truest sense.

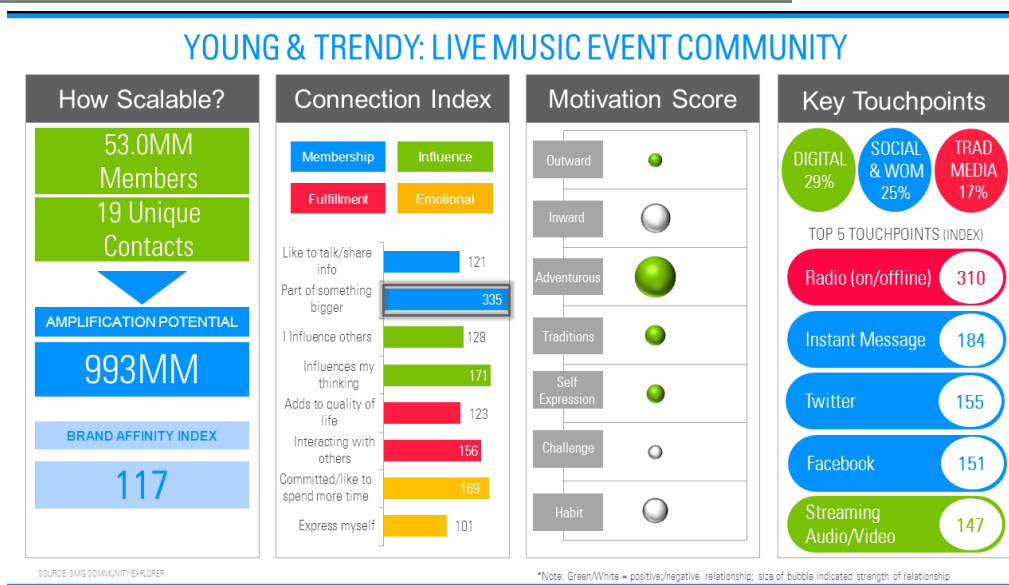
Community Explorer is being embraced and used in a multitude of ways within our agency and is helping us to prove the value of community-oriented marketing. It is helping inform our targeting strategies and the opportunities that a given or collection of communities offers for our clients' brands. Our community size and scale metrics help ensure the targeted community is large enough to drive the desired business results but ultimately helps locate the communities that can best fuel message amplification and earned impressions. Engagement and motivation data guides the creation of content and brand experience strategies that motivate a target community and ensure the powerful alignment between our strategies and community member motivations and needs.

As an agency charged with media allocation and optimization decisions and who are looked upon by clients to bring new and innovative approaches to the evaluation of media opportunities and media value, Community Explorer is helping to re-shape how we think about media, by helping to pinpoint where and when community and media come together and to find the channels that are most important and inspiring to community members. Each community has a unique media profile, shaped by those sources that are most often relied upon for community information/entertainment and the extent to which these sources are able to propel content sharing and WOM. Aligning media placement to those channels that are most relevant and engaging for a target community means putting marketing messages and content into environments where communities will be most attentive and where you are most likely to generate the earned amplification that is so important today.

Each of the core community dimensions we have discussed are being factored into the decisions we are making for and with our clients. All key elements are easily captured in a single page community summary, as depicted below for a one of our brand's target and high-business-potential Live Music Event community.

(Note that a more detailed brand case study overview will be covered in the PowerPoint presentation of this paper)

COMMUNITY EXPLORER DASHBOARD – LIVE MUSIC EVENT COMMUNITY



A community-centric approach is changing how we and our clients are thinking about marketing communications. There are similar and equally important lessons and implications for publishers. Based on our extensive work in this area, here are some thoughts and guidelines for publishers to consider:

1. Community is a proxy for people's involvement and affinity in a topic, and community creates value in people's lives. When thinking about your readers and potential new readers, think of your consumers as a highly connected collective and apply a community lens to help provide a means for understanding how to best connect with them. Consider asking: What communities are you winning with today and why? How are you connecting with them and helping community members connect with each other? What other communities could you be leveraging and delivering meaningful value to? Are there communities being under-served by the publishing world that present an opportunity?
2. In today's socially connected world, success is contingent upon how well publishers, and all content providers generate earned media impressions and whether they are able to become part of the consumer conversation. Consumers want content they can talk about and share with others (sharing is also indicative of relevance), and marketers are looking for media partners who can help infuse their brands into the social world. Community is what drives social scale and amplification. As you evaluate your current success and the opportunities you can offer to marketers, think beyond audience size and possible subjective definitions of audience 'quality' and whether you are maximizing the amplification potential that your reader communities can generate. Are you driving the community conversation? Are you part of the conversation? How are you leveraging the WOM and social media activity around your brand and content for the benefit of your brand and also for the benefit of your marketing partners?
3. Community engagement and attachment provide guidance to the nature of community relationships, the ways in which your readers want to interact with each other, as well as what they may expect from you. If your current or targeted audience belongs to a community that is strongly rooted in a sense of "Membership", your role is to facilitate a sense of belonging and to help members feel part of something bigger than themselves. Where "Influence" is a core community dimension, consider how you can be a source of guidance and an arbiter of the valuable information that helps make your readers' lives better. Or consider how you can foster connectivity across your reader base for the peer to peer information exchange and sharing that they're craving.

4. Members are motivated by meaningful and gratifying experiences that add to their pursuits, interests and overall quality of life. Each community has a motivation profile that can help inform your marketing, and shape the content that you produce across all platforms. For example, there are communities that are about “connecting with traditions” – this presents an opportunity for publishers to provide and facilitate experiences that connect members with past traditions. Similarly, a community built around members’ desires for learning, self-esteem and self-sufficiency, means publishers should consider how they can help build members’ sense of self, through content, events, or creating other opportunities and products that help people achieve this goal. Or for communities that are about Fun & Adventure, consider how you can use your assets to create the kind of adventure that readers in these communities are looking for.
5. Community can also inform publishers’ media strategies – both in terms of content delivery and marketing strategies. Are you offering compelling content on the channels and platforms where communities are most active? We know that community members seek out content across many platforms and devices – this presents huge opportunities for publishers. How well are you leveraging social media to connect with the communities you are targeting? When considering your own marketing programs, are you intercepting potential new readers in the channels that are most relevant and most engaging for your targeted community?

In today’s world, successful media companies and marketing companies will be those that have a true and intimate understanding of people, their lives and their communities. Community creates meaning in people’s lives. It is where passion, emotion and human experience and fulfillment live. Community provides a powerful framework for understanding and the foundational insights that marketers, agencies and publishers need to create the compelling and enduring connections with consumers that are required to drive business success.