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## **Exploring Consumptive Moments of Value-Creating Practice in Online Community**

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## **Exploring Consumptive Moments of Value-Creating Practice in Online Community**

### **ABSTRACT**

Conceptual blind spots persist when it comes to understanding the value of consumptive dimensions of participation, such as lurking, in online community. This article uses a practice theoretical lens to conceptualize the consumptive moments of online community practices and explores how they shape different value outcomes. Building on a mixed-method investigation through two studies within an online gardening community, findings reveal two specific consumptive moments, direct and vicarious, and their differential role in the creation of community engagement and vitality. These findings suggest that lurking is not adequately described as a unidimensional construct, but is best understood as vicarious consumptive moments of specific online community practices with distinctive value outcomes. Implications for research on online consumption community are discussed.

**Keywords:** ONLINE COMMUNITY, PRACTICE THEORY, LURKING, VALUE CREATION, VICARIOUS CONSUMPTION

*“I was making a wildlife area in memory of my dearly departed dog. I was given loads of advice from members. I created a pond and gained tons of advice and encouragement from a few favourite members. Every time I asked a question I got a good immediate response. Had loads of messages wishing me well and telling me how to do things. Even when I was ill I got lots of sympathy and messages with cures and best wishes. I spend hours on here, it’s always so friendly and you always have a good laugh. If you’re feeling down [the gardening community] is a real remedy”* (Anonymous, critical incident response).

Much extant research on online consumption communities has focused on understanding active participation of community members (Algesheimer, Borle, Dholakia, & Singh, 2010; Füller, Jawecki, & Mühlbacher, 2007; Jeppesen & Frederiksen, 2006; Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009; Wiertz & De Ruyter, 2007). In contrast, consumptive forms of community participation, such as lurking, have so far received little attention. Previous research describes imaginative experimentation, observation of what others do, and lurking as inherent to participation in online consumption communities, making up a large proportion of activity (Kozinets, 1999; Nonnecke & Preece, 2000; Ridings, Gefen, & Arinze, 2006; Schlosser, 2005). According to Ridings et al. (2006, p. 339), 20% of participants can be classified as “lurkers” (non-posters and minimal posters; Nonnecke & Preece, 2000), while Nielsen (2009) states that in most online communities, 90% are lurkers. Previous research has framed this consumptive form of participation in terms of passive social roles in contrast with more productive social roles, as exemplified by Kozinets (1999) colorful distinction between community tourist and insider. Theoretically, lurking and other forms of consumptive participation in online communities are poorly understood.

The opening excerpt illustrates an online community member's reflections on participation in an online gardening community. It illustrates how members' participation is not limited to the production of content. Receiving comments from others and observing what others do are ordinary and ubiquitous elements of community participation. Given its empirical prominence, it is surprising to find little theorization of consumptive participation as integral to online consumption communities and to the creation of valued experiences. Prior research has studied the experience of consumption community membership, but has mainly focused on undifferentiated feeling states like *communitas* (Goulding, Shankar, & Elliot 2001; Kozinets, 2001, 2002; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001; Price, Arnould, & Tierney, 1995), rather than exploring the experiences derived from consumptive participation and their value effects. Thus, there are theoretical blind spots on how different forms of value are created in online consumption communities through consumptive dimensions of community participation.

A more detailed understanding of this value creation process is useful because online consumption communities are used as marketing instruments that help to build brands, increase customer loyalty, act as feedback mechanisms, and aid in new product development and innovation (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Algesheimer et al., 2010; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Fournier & Lee, 2009). Previous research identifies several emergent forms of value in consumption communities: social relationships (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Algesheimer et al., 2010; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001), informational value and social recognition value (Mathwick, Wiertz, & De Ruyter, 2008), and community vitality (Schau et al., 2009). However, commercially-sponsored consumption communities tend to be short-lived; they struggle to attract members, to engage them, and to get them to return (Moran, Gossieaux, & McClure, 2009). In other words, the value created in many online consumption communities seems insufficient for members to stay, participate, and develop community engagement. Hence, the community life cycle may be short and of limited benefit to its

sponsors. Consequently, knowledge that details the ways in which various forms of value are created in online communities and how these forms of value lead to community engagement and vitality is interesting and relevant for both online community scholars and managers.

To better understand how consumption communities create value, Schau et al. (2009) suggest a practice-theoretical approach. Their research asserts that it is through a range of community practices that consumption communities create value. Yet, their analysis focuses entirely on the productive moments of such community practices—for example, writing messages and uploading content to document, welcome, or empathize (Schau et al., 2009). As a result, value creation in consumption communities is presented as deriving from productive participation of its members, with little attention to consumptive dimensions of community participation. Community members do not only write messages and posts, ask questions, or upload images—they also receive messages, read posts, and obtain answers to their questions. Moreover, they browse the community to observe what others do, how other members help each other and how other members comment on each other's posts. In other words, they "lurk." The nature of online consumption communities, through extensive archiving and asynchronous public communication, implies that all content is visible and in fact, members often produce content with an audience in mind (i.e., give advice to someone as part of the empathizing practice, knowing that this advice will remain visible to countless others over time). Thus, different forms of consumptive participation in practices are part of everyday community membership. As such, online communities may be thought of as spaces of dramatic performances (Deighton, 1992).

This article develops a consumptive dimension of online community practices within an online gardening community and presents two studies that foreground the consumptive moments in online consumption community practice performances. Study I uses qualitative material to examine and illustrate two distinct moments of the consumptive dimension of

online community participation and their respective value outcomes. Study II then quantifies the differential value effects of these moments. Finally, the article offers discussion of the findings from both studies and relevant implications.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Practice theory proposes that individuals develop a sense of the world and the self by performing practices (Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005; Woermann, 2012). To understand how online community practices create different forms of value, this article argues that one must take into consideration the different consumptive experiences of participation (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), instead of just focusing on productive experiences. To that end, this article focuses on interpersonal practices, that is, practice performances that take place between members of an online community. While an online community may develop around some shared nucleus, such as a brand, place, interest or practice like gardening, participation in an online community consists of a range of such interpersonal practices. Whereas the performance of gardening is more about handling the right objects in the right way, the performance of interpersonal practices is about human subjects. This article aims to conceptualize those interpersonal practice performances involved in the participation in online community, rather than conceptualizing its gardening nucleus. In contrast to focusing on gardening as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) or as an integrative practice (Schatzki, 2002), this article foregrounds the somewhat dispersed practices involved in online community participation—the more generic sets of activities (e.g., uploading, sharing, commenting, blog writing, asking questions, ‘liking’) that are not necessarily exclusive to the online gardening study community.

This interest configures a specific practice theoretical ontology of online community participation. Practice theory suggests that social order derives through practices, so that the

specific social order of a specific online community is achieved through practices as continuous doings and sayings, that is, online community practices (Schau et al., 2009). Practices are organized, routinized behaviors consisting of several interconnected elements: “forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge” (Warde, 2005, p. 133). Practices are culturally shared templates that guide routinized activities and offer a frame for how to do and understand things (Giddens, 1984; Reckwitz, 2002). In this view, social phenomena, like online consumption communities, are sets of understandings (embodied competences), rules (instructions), and teleoaffective engagements<sup>1</sup> (what is aspired to and why) acted out in local and contextually specific performances (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996; 2001; 2002; Warde, 2005). Conceptually, one deals with practices; but empirically one deals with their localized performance. Understanding how practice performances work is key to elucidating how they create value. For example, in the performance of the community practice of empathizing (Schau et al., 2009), different teleoaffective experiences can result from offering support, receiving support, or observing how someone else receives support.

### **Unfolding Consumptive Moments in Practice Performances**

**Practice performance.** How does a practice performance work? Schatzki’s (1996; 2002) conceptualization of practice performance has two aspects. First, practical understanding (as a verb) guides performance of a practice. That is, an actor who participates in a practice develops and draws on a specific practical understanding. Second, practical understanding (as a noun) highlights that participants understand a performance as an instance of a particular practice; for example, an observer must understand the practice of free skiing in order to

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<sup>1</sup> Thévenot (2001) offers a preliminary suggestion for how these teleoaffective engagements might be further analysed, but these phenomenological reflections are not directly pertinent to this sociologically oriented research.



interpret a video of a spectacular fail as evidence of courage, skill, and panache and not as unschooled ineptitude (Woermann, 2012). Thus, by definition, performances of practices have two moments: first, the performance is enrolled or initiated; and second it is received and understood. Both moments are necessary for the creation of the overall performance. Building on these ideas, the first active moment represents as a *productive moment* in the performance of a practice, the initialization of an episode of conduct. In online communities these productive moments take place when users, for example, actively engage in various forms of the documenting practice (posting blogs, images, status updates, wiki entries, video). In their work on community practices, Schau et al. (2009) treat practice performances as productive moments: everything visible in the community (text, images) is a materialized form of productive moments. Hence, such research implicitly equates practice (performance) with its productive moments.

The second (receptive) moment follows a more consumerist and experiential logic; it is a *consumptive moment* of practice performance. Following Warde's (2005, p. 137) suggestion that consumption is "a moment in almost every practice," the majority of prior practice theoretical studies treat consumptive moments as the consumption of material objects, for example, tools and materials in Do-It-Yourself practices (Watson & Shove, 2008) or iPods in musical consumption (Magaudda, 2011). However, almost all practice performances entail some sort of consumptive experience, for instance, writing a blogpost creates consumptive autotelic experiences for the author, but also offers experiences for readers.

This article focuses on consumptive experiences of interpersonal practices. Here, a consumptive moment occurs when someone is experiencing and consuming a productive moment either directly (e.g., receiving advice from someone) or vicariously (e.g., browsing through community content and reading previous advice given to others).

**Direct consumptive moments.** Performances must have direct consumptive moments in order to be enacted. In Deighton's (1992) terms, people can be active participants as consumers in performances. For example, fans of a team's baseball game or the *loggionisti* at La Scala in Milan participate actively in the overall event by agreeing to behave like fans or *loggionisti* (Cova, 2010; Holt, 1995). That is, producers and consumers co-create the overall performance, both providing crucial, but different, elements. Take, for example, the community practice of empathizing, where consumer A offers support to consumer B (Schau et al., 2009). Empathizing is meaningful only if there is a recipient, someone who benefits from a community-appropriate gesture. Here, direct consumptive moments occur when a member of the community (consumer B) is directly involved in the performance as a recipient of the empathizing practice, and in fact *must be* for the practice performance to be complete.

**Vicarious consumptive moments.** Veblen (1994/1899) originally envisions vicarious consumption as the consummation of wealth through others' consumption, class-based consumption of goods by the wives, servants and domestic establishment of wealthy men. MacInnis and Price (1987) describe vicarious consumption as a meaningful emotional experience resulting from the consumption of imagery that is capable of substituting 'actual' consumption. Building on these ideas of intangibility and the role of others in realizing the consumption process, within the frame of practice performances, all dramatic performances can have vicarious consumptive moments. For example, consumer A helps consumer B by answering her question as part of the empathizing practice, or consumer C uploads a picture of her garden as part of the documenting practice. In both instances, consumer D can observe the exchange between consumers A and B but also admire consumer C's garden and consumes both productive moments vicariously. Thus, if pairing Deighton's (1992) consumption of performance with a practice-theoretical understanding of performance, vicarious consumption emerges necessarily neither as the antidote to 'actual' consumption,

nor as a class-based concept. Rather, vicarious consumption is a constituent moment of practice performances capable of offering valuable experiences to performers. Although most practice performances offer the possibility of vicarious consumption (e.g., watching sports practice performances), this particular consumptive moment is especially important in online community participation. If one were to take away reading and browsing archives and advice given to others, online community participation would be robbed of some of its key features. It is specifically in this online context where consumers spend much of their time browsing, fantasizing, and lurking. This is also true for those members who actively contribute content and participate in productive moments of practice performances. Implicit illustrations of vicarious consumptive elements in performances include Schatzki (1996), who has highlighted that practice learning can result from vicarious exposure; Muñiz and Schau's (2005) study on governance within the Apple Newton community; Price et al.'s (1995) exploration of river rafting socialization; and Holt's (1995) article on spectating socialization. In sum, the framework proposed in this article distinguishes between two different kinds of consumptive moments: direct consumptive moments when consumers are directly involved in the practice performance (a practice is being performed *with* them); and vicarious consumptive moments when consumers are indirectly involved in others' practice performance through observation.

**Value outcomes of practice performance.** Practices have effects on the individuals who engage in practices—on their actions, thoughts, and sense of self (Schatzki, 1996). That is, participating in a practice performance, directly or vicariously, gives rise to some sort of positive or negative teleoaffective experience. As previous research has mostly focused on the experiences of productive actors, this research specifically explores the value consequences of participating in direct and vicarious consumptive moments. The approach to the effects of practice participation taken in this article follows recent social scientific thinking about value

creation (Graeber, 2001), which along with Simmel (2004/1904), holds that value is neither objective nor subjective, but rather a contingent effect of interaction. According to this view, value “does not reside in an individual, independent of his actual actions, nor in a good, independent of the interaction to which it is subjected” (Ramirez, 1999, p. 51), but it resides instead in the actions and interactions that resources make possible or support. Pairing the conception of individuals as ‘carriers of practice’ (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 256) with the notion of practices as ‘carriers of value’ (Schau et al., 2009), value lies not only in the productive moments of practices (I welcome someone; I give directions to a stranger), but also in the consumptive moments within these performances (I am being welcomed; I am given directions). Practices may be ‘carriers of value’, but it is through participation in productive and/or consumptive moments that consumers experience this value.

So far, existing research involving consumption communities has not examined how different moments in practice performances are linked to the creation of differentiated values (Goulding et al., 2001; Kozinets, 2001; 2002; Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001; Price et al., 1995). The proposed framework offers an analytical tool to investigate how different consumptive moments create different value-outcomes. Thus, this article aims at bringing greater attention to the forms of consumption happening in online consumption community and specifically to explore two types of consumptive moments: direct consumption (i.e., active involvement in a performance through consumption); and vicarious consumption (i.e., passive involvement in a performance through consumption). The focus lies on how these moments are experienced by their carriers and how the experience of these moments is conducive to the creation of value. Although practice theory tends to de-center the experience of the actor in favor of attention to practices as the unit of analysis (Giddens, 1984; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996), it is argued here that if the aim is to understand how online communities create value through practices, it is necessary to attend to the experiential aspects of the moments in practice performances.

## RESEARCH SITE

To develop theorizations on the consumptive dimensions of online community practices two studies were conducted in the empirical context of a commercially owned, UK-based, online gardening community. While gardening is an object-focused practice that provides the nucleus for community participation, it is through interpersonal community practices that participation happens. At the time of study, the community was five years old and had 17,500 registered members, approximately 1,000 (6%) of whom participate several times per week. The community is owned and managed by its two founders, who run and maintain it as a for-profit side project. The community is organized as a visually appealing profile-based website with free membership. Members can write blogs, post pictures and comments, ask questions, “like” content and designate each other as “favorites.” It offers a comprehensive wiki-like gardening encyclopedia where community members nominate gardening tips, practices, and pictures; the content is accessible to all via the community’s search function and the encyclopedia. All content is public and archived on the member profile level (blogs, questions, pictures) as well as the community level (A-Z, latest questions, latest images). Particularly for the older generation, gardening is a popular leisure activity in the UK. This is reflected in the demographic profile of the members of the community: the average age is 55, and women constitute the majority of community members (around 65%).

This community provides a good context in which to theorize on moments of practice performance for the following reasons. Unlike previous research on community practices and value creation, which have focused on brand communities, this site presents a multi-brand context that revolves around gardening. The various productive moments of gardening (e.g., planting, pruning, weeding, espaliering) are enacted on non-human objects (plants, seeds, pots, walls, the garden). Due to this, and the online nature of the community, with its utilities described above, the context was expected to be a rich one in which many (interpersonal)

online community practices are manifested. Thus, immaterial representations of productive moments of gardening enter the communal sphere and may become objects of consumption and admiration. Moreover, gardening incorporates varying levels of procedural and tacit knowledge materialized in a plethora of living and inanimate objects, which foster interpersonal practices such as giving and receiving gardening advice.

## **STUDY I**

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Study I explores direct consumptive and vicarious consumptive moments in practice performances and their value outcomes. To understand how such practice moments create value for consumers, this article turns to a research design that can provide insight into consumers' subjective experiences of consumptive moments "beyond the screen." While productive moments are visible in the community through uploads, the consumptive moments are not, as they are experienced internally by community members. Accordingly, in order to tap into community members' lived experiences of different forms of participation in community, in-depth qualitative data was gathered through paper-based consumer diaries (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003). In the summer of 2010 the site owners provided access to all 72 consumers who had joined the community within the previous three months, who were then contacted and invited to participate. Efforts were directed towards recruiting relatively new members as participants, as they were likely to have a less taken-for-granted understanding and fewer experiences in the community and were thus more likely to detail their reports. New members are also only likely to return if their new experiences are potentially value-adding. Twenty-eight members showed interest in the study and requested more information. After explaining the design of the study and the effort required in keeping a diary, 19 members agreed to participate. Blank diaries were mailed to 17 respondents in the

UK, one in France, and one in Belgium. The diary was designed as a visually appealing, gardening-inspired A5-sized book that contained instructions on the first pages and a main body of 50 blank pages. This was to ensure that participants were able to use the diary space as freely as they wanted, allowing for many forms of expression. A cover letter outlining the procedural aspects of the study accompanied the first mailing, and it also included an unannounced gardening gift voucher worth £25 as a token of appreciation. Informants were instructed to use their diaries to report their experiences, activities, impressions, and reflections on each visit to the online community; they were also instructed to record every time they thought about the community, its members, or its content. Thus, through these diaries, members documented their introspective narrative experiences of participation in the gardening community. Sixteen participants kept the diaries regularly and returned them after four to six weeks. To complement the perspectives of these “newbies” with those of more experienced members (i.e., membership longer than three months), an anonymous critical incident study was conducted (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990; Gremler, 2004) via a survey that asked participants to describe their most positive and negative experiences in the community (n=205 see study II below). A total of 125 negative and 133 positive critical incidents provided insights into the most memorable events and experiences of respondents. Excerpts from this data may be found in table 1 and in the discussion of the findings below.

All handwritten diaries were transcribed (amounting to 273 A4 double-spaced pages) and, together with the critical incidents, coded for the emic mention of community practices (Schau et al., 2009), their direct consumptive and vicarious consumptive moments, as well as the value effects of these experiences. NVIVO9 software facilitated a hermeneutic approach to analysis including several stages of inter-researcher comparison, discussion, and re-coding (Thompson, 1997). To analyze consumptive moments vis-à-vis productive moments,

informants' narrative descriptions of consumptive moments were matched with the corresponding productive moments where possible by examining online community archives.

## **Findings**

The qualitative data reveals compelling evidence for the presence of the community practices identified by Schau et al. (2009). However, this research focuses on the consumptive moments of practice performances. Table 1 provides succinct excerpts of the qualitative data, illustrating accounts of direct and vicarious consumptive moments in practice performances, matching Schau et al.'s (2009) productive moments with their consumptive counterparts.

---Insert table 1 about here---

The following findings illustrate and theorize direct and vicarious consumptive moments in practice performances. The results demonstrate that members emically differentiate between experiencing direct consumptive moments in community practice performances and vicarious consumption. After briefly illustrating how direct and vicarious consumptive moments operate, indications of their value outcomes are presented.

**The operation of direct consumptive moments in practice performance.** The analysis begins with unfolding an episode of community practice performance into its productive and consumptive moments. Petra posts an entry ('blog') on her profile and explains that she is 'absolutely delighted' to have spotted 'wildlife' in her pond, which she has designed and planted up particularly to attract 'frogs, toads, newts and dragonflies'. She writes how she was 'jumping up and down like a child' when she saw a stag beetle and a dragonfly coming to her pond. Her post represents a productive moment of the documenting practice as Petra constructs a narrative of her garden experience and shares insights on the status and progress of her garden and wildlife pond project (Schau et al., 2009). Fifteen members indicated they liked the blog and the blog received 23 comments, as exemplified by the ones below:



Jenny: *“Petra where have you been?? I have sent messages and I wondered if your computer was on the blink! Anyway your back now, it’s lovely to see your pond and well done on finding a stag beetle [...] Look forward to having chats on here with you again.”*

Herb: *“Nice to see you back with us Petra! Your pond is looking really good, well done you! I’ve never seen a stag beetle in my life, so thank’s for showing the pic.....:o)”*

Petra: *“[...] Jenny I sent you a [message] a while ago. Lots have been happening not all good I’m afraid but im still here with you all, and still loving it [...]"*

Jenny: *“Have been checking my [messages], so will look again, I have really missed you. [...]"*

Flower: *“Looking brilliant Petra and so pleased that you chilled and watched it grow in front of you. [...]. I have no frogs [in my garden] but I check every night for any wildlife [...]. BUT I WANT A FROG!!!!!! Great to see you back here:o)”*

These comments resonate with productive moments of the community practices of *milestoning*, noting the occasion of Petra witnessing the inaugural wildlife visitors and *empathizing* with her (Schau et al., 2009). In this community, empathizing takes two forms: task empathizing (gardening-related support), and social empathizing (non gardening-related support). While Petra’s entry and the comments it triggered are visible productive moments, they do not illuminate their consumptive counterparts. These are however foregrounded in Petra’s narrative diary reporting about the experience of direct consumptive moments of these practice performances.

Petra: *“Been thinking all evening about Jenny “really missing me,” and wanted to make sure she got my [message] saying why I had not been on the site. Wow since 6:45pm I had 14 comments! Jenny [messed] me saying she missed me greatly. I felt like crying. I*

*didn't know I meant so much to her. Real friendships are made on this site. Even if we live so far away. We can't get to visit each other. Some people have read the blog I did today and have checked out my other blogs which is nice. [...] Wanted to see what my now 15 comments are. It's so exciting. Some members commented on my photos some liking my ideas. Makes me feel good about what I've done. [...]"*

Jenny's, Herb's and Flower's comments represent productive moments of *empathizing* (Jenny) and *celebrating* (Herb and Flower), and are specifically directed at Petra. Thus, through direct consumptive moments of interpersonally targeted productive moments, consumer roles are produced directly as part of practice performance—Petra becomes the object of empathy and with whom empathizing is enacted. The excerpts highlight that such productive moments necessitate a direct consumptive counterpart to complete a performance and to contrive an effect. Petra's reception (and understanding) of Jenny's messages completes the performance of the empathizing practice. Thus, for targeted interpersonal practices, a direct consumptive counterpart completes the enacted performance. As indicated also in table 1, respondents describe mostly desirable teleoaffective experiences with participation in direct consumptive moments ("so exciting," "nice"). Direct consumptive moments appear foundational to participants' lived experiences of community membership.

**Vicarious consumptive moments in practice performances.** In contrast to the emotionally strong experience of direct consumptive moments, vicarious consumptive moments appear more as background, ambient elements:

*Emma: "I've got not so many comments on my photos, which is very disappointing. [...]. Anyway, I had less comments than I had expected, so I feel...a bit sad...But it's good to see other people's plants, pets and gardens and have some new info and ideas..."*

In the beginning part of this diary entry, Emma provides an emic account of direct consumptive moments—receiving comments of some sort—while the later part refers to the positive hedonic experience of vicarious consumptive moments—observation of what other members have documented (“good to see”; “have some new info and ideas”). While first-hand reception of comments, direct consumptive moments, is desired by diary respondents, they note that it is always possible to browse the site to collect information and get second-hand advice, vicarious consumptive moments. Through vicarious consumptive moments of practice performances participants experience and enjoy others’ practice performances without being the direct target of them. Diary entries show that experience of vicarious consumptive moments in online community practice performances makes up a relatively large proportion of activity. Resonant with prior research on lurking (Nonnecke & Preece, 2000; Ridings et al., 2006), vicarious consumption is not as affectively charged as direct consumptive moments. This observation revises earlier accounts of lurking as a residual category. Framing lurking as vicarious consumption in specific community practice performances allows specifying what community members are ‘lurking on’, that is, what specific practice they engage with via their observational role:

*Rebecca: “Logged on at 4-30p/m, noticed [a member] has posted 2 Blogs on her garden so I viewed both [...] she has worked so hard on her garden, especially the pond area. It has been interesting to follow the making of her pond as she had problems and was given excellent advice from other members.”*

The phrase “it has been interesting to follow...” provides an illustration of the vicarious consumptive moment of task empathizing—noticing and viewing a member being helped by other members. Thus, in vicarious consumptive moments some community members indirectly notice or view specific practice performances while other members engage in the

productive and direct consumptive moments of these practices. This offers a more fine-grained approach to lurking than merely noting lurking as a general community behavior. Identifying vicarious consumption of specific community practice performances can help clarify the differential value outcomes of direct versus vicarious consumption, help tease out the differential effects of specific community practices, and shed light on the different forms of value they create. Study II addresses these points.

**Value outcomes of consumptive moments.** When consumers partake in consumptive moments, practices exert value-laden influences on community members. Specifically, the findings reveal how members assess social recognition value, use value, community engagement, and community vitality from their participation in consumptive moments in practices. Table 2 summarizes and illustrates these outcomes of consumptive moments.

---Insert table 2 about here ----

Social recognition value refers to a person's social position within the community (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Mathwick et al., 2008; Schau et al. 2009). Petra's diary entry related to her wildlife blog at the beginning of this section illustrates how the direct consumptive moments of *milestoning* and *social empathizing* lead to experiences of social recognition ("makes me feel good about what I've done"; "I didn't know I meant so much to her") as well as friendship and camaraderie ("real friendships are made on this site") (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). This suggests one outcome of direct consumptive moments of community practice performances is that members develop a particular identity (Warde, 2005) through other members' appreciation of their membership, competence, and contributions.

The consequences of direct consumptive moments are also evident in negative instances when consumers feel they are denied the benefits of direct consumptive moments. The

following excerpt illustrates Cassia's disappointment and loss of interest in the community after she felt other community members were not responsive to her contributions:

*Cassia: "I was out in my garden first thing and was extremely happy to see that 1 of my passion flowers had opened in full bloom. Of course I just had to take a picture of it to put up onto my blog. Disappointing response, only 5 replies and one of those was me. I have to say that I am beginning to lose a little interest now as I do get down at the lack of responses to any of my blogs or questions."*

In instances of perceived lack of attention by others, consumers' desire to experience community via direct consumptive moments is evident. If they feel neglected in these moments, it evokes sadness and disappointment.

Community engagement refers to members' assessment of their community membership becoming part of their identity and improving their life. This is evident in statements such as "It does make you feel good, and encourages confidence and self-belief", "[my husband] does think that me finding [the community], was the best thing to ever happen to me" and "It feels I have been part of [the community], so much longer than I have—and I even missed going online yesterday!! [This community] has been a revelation to me one way or another, I have gained so much from this [...]." However, Cassia's excerpt above illustrates an effect of direct consumptive moments on the way members assess their engagement with the community ("I am beginning to lose a little interest now"); denial of direct consumption leads to disinterest in and detachment from the community. This data (see also table 2) suggests that social recognition value is decisive for community engagement.

Use value includes the informational value attributed to the community (Mathwick et al., 2008). Members assess the use-value of community through their direct and/or vicarious participation in consumptive moments of task empathizing:

*Olivia: "I'm learning so much of [community name] how to grow, germinate and pests*

*control, if I hadn't learnt about weed killer I would have poisoned the whole garden and had to dig up the bloody lawn, think I will get go get some."*

The passage illustrates how use-value is located not in individual responses, but attributed to the community as a whole ("learning so much of the community"). This echoes the notion of community practices as belonging to the community and as representing a "consciousness of kind" (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). In their assessment of use value, advisees put emphasis on the competence of advisors within the community ("This is so much better than looking it up in a book as you gain advice from people who actually have the plant growing").

Community vitality refers to an assessment of the community's liveliness as a whole. An energetic and vital community is likely to be more attractive to its members. Thus community vitality is one key community value achieved through community practices (Schau et al., 2009). The diary analysis suggests that community vitality is realized through immediacy in direct consumptive moments of *task empathizing* ("Two replies to my question about the log store—amazingly prompt") and vicarious consumptive moments of *documenting* ("Oh my, everyone is blogging today, I've got so much reading to do...Can't believe so many have been added after mine. It shows how popular this site is"). Through these two moments members experience how much is going on in the community: its vitality.

## STUDY II

Building on the finding of study I that direct and vicarious consumptive moments are decisive elements of value creation through community practice performances, the goal of study II is to quantify the differential effects of direct consumptive moments vis-à-vis vicarious consumptive moments on the value outcomes identified above. To do so, study II uses data collected through a survey in the same community to explore the relative importance of direct and vicarious consumptive moments in creating different kinds of value.

## Questionnaire, Measures, and Data Collection

To measure practices, a survey instrument consisting of several sub-sections was developed using standard scale development procedures (Churchill 1979). Two questionnaire sections measured respondents' perceptions of the extent to which they participate in direct and vicarious consumptive moments of community practice performance. These measures developed out of the findings from study I. In addition, Schau et al.'s (2009) definitions and illustrations for each community practice provided an initial set of items to capture participation in community practice performances. To tailor these items to the gardening community context, two authors engaged in eight months netnographic non-participant observation (Kozinets, 2010). This built cultural knowledge of patterns of local practice performances. From this experience, item wordings were developed that reflect the specificity of the gardening community's practices. Then, wordings were adapted for the direct consumptive moment and the vicarious consumptive moment of each practice respectively. For example, to measure direct consumption moments of *task empathizing*, the wording followed Schau et al.'s (2009) description and resulted in the following items: "I've been given useful tips on how to improve my gardening" to measure direct consumption; and "I've observed other members giving each other useful tips on how to improve their gardening" to measure vicarious consumption. This careful wording ensures that the items measure the degree of subjective participation in each community practice from the perspective of different moments. This procedure should tease out the impact of different moments of community practices on the values created.

After developing a draft, several iterations with the two community managers further increased the face validity of the measures. Finally, the survey was qualitatively pre-tested through long interviews via Skype with several community members (who were then excluded from further participation in the study), to ensure that the sample population easily

understood each item, resulting in further improvements. In the end, three items are used to measure each construct on seven-point Likert scales (with totally disagree and totally agree as anchors) and bipolar semantic-differential scales; open textboxes capture critical incidents (discussed in study I).

The measurement of the value outcomes of participation in consumptive dimensions of community practices followed the same procedure. Specifically study I found social recognition value and use value of community membership, as well as community engagement, and perceptions of overall community vitality figured prominently (see table 2). Use value is known to be a feature of online communities (Mathwick et al., 2008) and Schau et al.'s (2009) meta-analysis of brand communities suggests social recognition and community vitality as important value outcomes achieved through practices. In addition, study I found that the consumptive dimensions of participation in online community are related to members' engagement with the community. Measures of these value outcomes were derived from existing scales and adapted to the context of study. Use value items are based on Mathwick et al. (2008); social recognition value items are based on Cohen et al. (1985) as well as Schau et al.'s (2009) description of the operation of status and pride in communities through practices. Overall community vitality is based on Schau et al.'s (2009) description of brand community vitality and Wang et al.'s (2007) scale. Community engagement items are based on Sprrott, Czellar, and Spangenberg's (2009) brand engagement scale and Algesheimer et al.'s (2005) items on community identification. Since neither of the latter scales completely resonated with the indication of community engagement per study I, items were adapted and developed so as to capture members' perception of relationship value of the community based on the insights gathered during the netnography. To illustrate, Sprrott et al.'s (2009, p. 93) item "part of me is defined by important brands in my life" was adapted to the community context



as “part of me is defined by being a member of this community.” Table 3 offers an overview of all item wordings, their origins, and psychometric properties.

The online survey was programmed using Qualtrics, paying particular attention to ease of use, navigability, and visual appeal. Building in clear breaks between different sections of the questionnaire, randomizing the order in which items were presented, and varying response formats, sought to focus respondents’ attention to the survey questions and reduce the risk of common method bias. The survey was accessible through the community’s home page for three weeks, a length of time the owners agreed would not interrupt community life unduly. An introductory page explained the general purpose of the survey, data analysis and storing procedures, and guaranteed participants’ anonymity. In total, 390 self-selected participants opened the survey; 245 of them completed it; and, 205 claimed to be registered members. Since only registered community members had full access to all communication tools in the online gardening community, only these 205 responses were analyzed.

## **Analysis and Results**

**Analysis.** To get a better understanding of the structure of the data, exploratory factor analyses were conducted. Then, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to estimate paths between different consumptive moments of practices and their performative outcomes, by means of the software application SmartPLS (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). The objective of PLS-SEM is maximization of explained variance of endogenous latent variables by estimating partial model relationships in an iterative sequence of ordinary least squares regressions (Wold, 1985). In contrast to covariance-based SEM (used for theory testing), PLS-SEM is prediction oriented and can thus be used for exploratory research and theory development (Wold, 1985). The PLS-SEM approach accommodates relatively small sample sizes and non-normally distributed data. It is best applied to so-called “focused”

research models that feature a large number of exogenous latent variables explaining a small number of endogenous latent variables (Hair et al., 2012). Study II develops a focused model aiming to quantify the effect of different consumptive moments of many community practices on a few value outcomes, without a priori expectations regarding the strength or direction of these effects. The goal is exploration rather than theory testing, making PLS-SEM the most appropriate estimation technique.

**Preliminary Exploratory Factor Analyses.** The underlying structure of the data was examined through exploratory factor analysis. Due to the relatively small sample size, the variables were split into two sets and analyzed separately. The first set included all items that measured perceptions of direct and vicarious consumptive moments of all practices, while the second set included all value and outcome measures (i.e., use value, social recognition, community engagement, and community vitality). Ten factors, representing the direct and vicarious consumptive moments of the community practices—task empathizing, social empathizing, governing, badging, and impression management (a combination of justifying and evangelizing items)—emerged as clearly distinct; these were kept for further analysis. The remaining practices previously catalogued by Schau et al. (2009) were deleted from our analysis as distinct factors for them did not emerge. Deleted practices include welcoming, milestone, staking, and commoditizing practices. This means either that the measurement instrument did not succeed in cleanly measuring participation in these practices; that they do not in fact represent distinct practices as perceived by the members of this particular community; or, that these practices are spurious. In the second analysis, use value, social recognition value, community engagement, and overall community vitality also formed distinct factors.

**Measurement Model Evaluation.** To further validate the psychometric properties of the remaining latent constructs identified in the exploratory factor analysis, a measurement model was estimated using SmartPLS. The factor loadings of all items are significant ( $p < .05$ ) and range from .60 to .99, ensuring indicator reliability (see table 3 for items and factor loadings). Composite reliability is an indicator of internal consistency. It refers to the reliability of all measures across a factor while average variance extracted (AVE) is an indicator of convergent validity that estimates the amount of variance captured by a construct's measures relative to random measurement error. The recommended cut-off values for estimates of composite reliability are above .70 and for AVE above .50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Per table 3, all constructs' values significantly exceed these cut-offs and therefore indicate good internal consistency.

----- Insert table 3 about here -----

To evaluate the model constructs' discriminant validity, this study followed Fornell and Larcker's procedure (1981), which is a demanding test (Grewal, Cote, & Baumgartner, 2004). The AVE for each of the 14 constructs is compared to the highest variance that the construct shares with other model constructs. As Table 3 shows, the AVE extracted for each construct is always greater than the highest shared variance, indicating discriminant validity. As this criterion is satisfied here, an inference error due to multi-collinearity is also unlikely (Ramani & Kumar, 2008). Nevertheless, the variance inflation factor (VIF) of all exogenous variables was inspected. All VIFs are well below the critical level of 5 (Hair et al., 2006). Table 4 provides the correlation matrix for all latent constructs.

----- Insert table 4 about here -----

**Structural Model Results.** Next, a structural model was specified based on the qualitative insights derived from study I. Direct and vicarious consumptive moments of task empathizing, social empathizing, governing, badging, and impression management lead to

social recognition value and use value. These, in turn, should impact engagement with the community and overall community vitality. Members' assessments of their community membership becoming part of their identity and improving their life (community engagement) and of the community's liveliness (community vitality) are rooted in experiences of social recognition and use value ("I have gained so much from this"; "two replies to my question [...] amazingly prompt"). If members believe they are valued in the community and receive hands-on advice, this suggests, first, that it is more worthwhile to invest resources in the community as a whole; and second, that they experience the community as being more vibrant. This research model is summarized in figure 1.

----- Insert figure 1 about here ----

A nonparametric bootstrapping procedure was applied (500 subsamples, 205 cases, no sign change) to evaluate the significance of the path coefficients (Davison & Hinkley, 1997; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). Mediation was tested using the procedure outlined in Hair et al. (2013), bootstrapping the sampling distribution.<sup>2</sup> Table 5 shows the path estimates. The percentages of explained variance (adj. R<sup>2</sup> values) for social recognition value, use value, community engagement, and community vitality are .43, .46, .55, and .25, respectively.

----- Insert table 5 about here ----

The most notable results show that different consumptive moments of different community practices indeed create different types of value. The direct consumptive moment of social empathizing has a significant positive effect on social recognition value ( $\beta = .31, t = 3.74$ ). Not surprisingly and as shown in study I, personally receiving emotional support that goes beyond gardening advice makes members feel socially recognized ("I read another msg, that [a member] sent me. I'll be honest I cried"; "so much encouragement and support for me

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<sup>2</sup> Given the non-normal nature of the data, the variance accounted for (VAF) was calculated to detect mediation. VAF determines the size of the indirect effect in relation to the total effect. VAF bigger than 80% indicates full mediation, VAF in between 20-80% indicates partial mediation, and finally, VAF smaller than 20% indicates no mediation.

[...]. It really made me quite choked”). Similarly, members whose contributions have been “liked” or “favorite-ed” by others experience consumptive moments of badging, which expectedly, also leads them to feel recognized ( $\beta = .35, t = 4.28$ ).

The experience of governing (being governed) also positively affects social recognition value ( $\beta = .17, t = 3.07$ ), as members feel that their participation in the community is recognized. This result is surprising, insofar as being governed has potentially value-destroying qualities, lowering one’s appreciation of community membership as indicated in table 2 (“Okay I got it wrong but kind of feel put out by this one response. Don’t think I will bother again”). This opposing result can be explained by the fact that governing takes many forms. For example, another informant in study I described receiving unsolicited correction of a productive moment when she mislabeled a plant: “a kind member pointed out it is not the variety I thought it was; she also suggested which it might be and is correct.” This suggests that governing is a sensitive practice when it comes to the experience of *how* one is being governed; not merely *that* one is being governed. Interestingly, if governing happens the “right way,” it can actually be value-adding, rather than value-destroying.

Turning to the effects of vicarious consumptive moments, vicarious involvement in both task empathizing and impression management has significant positive effects on social recognition value ( $\beta = .28, t = 2.85$  and  $\beta = .29, t = 3.38$ , respectively). In the case of task empathizing, an “I-knew-it effect” could explain this: when someone observes others receiving answers to their gardening questions it creates a confirmatory effect much like when people “get” quiz show answers, which might lead them to a perceived increase in social recognition. Observing impression management involves vicarious participation in discussions about why members love gardening. An observer who shares similar opinions and recognizes herself in these discussions can feel socially valued by the group.

The vicarious consumptive moments of social empathizing and badging have significant negative effects on social recognition value. The interest of this finding is that the effect was exactly opposite for the direct consumptive moments of the same practices. When members observe how others are being emotionally supported, they can become more aware that they themselves are not receiving as much support, as the following negative critical incident description illustrates: “Occasionally being snubbed by other members when sharing a blog or photo. I can understand that we can’t review all the wonderful blogs and photos all the time, but when a regular reviewer ignores your post, it becomes a little disheartening at times.” As a result, members seem to feel more isolated and less valued by the community ( $\beta = -.20, t = 2.24$ ). Similarly, observing that others’ contributions to the community are being “liked” and “favorite-ed” might draw attention to the fact that one’s own contributions are not (“I’ve got not so many comments on my photos, which is very disappointing”). Again, members who find themselves in this position might feel less appreciated by the group ( $\beta = -.24, t = 2.49$ ). Offsetting findings for the direct and vicarious consumptive moments of social empathizing and badging show how important it is to draw a distinction between the different moments of practice performance to fully comprehend the effects of engaging with these performances.

The perceived use value of the online community is strongly positively influenced by the direct consumptive moment of task empathizing ( $\beta = .55, t = 6.94$ ) and the vicarious consumptive moment of task empathizing ( $\beta = .21, t = 2.33$ ). As study I demonstrated, receiving gardening advice from other members in direct response to a question is useful to members (“I’m learning so much from [the community]”; “This is so much better than looking it up in a book as you gain advice from people who actually have the plant growing.”) In addition, the accumulated knowledge that is accessible in the online community provides value to members as they browse the knowledge resource and consume advice vicariously.

The usefulness of the community is not impacted by the consumptive moments of any of the other practices.

The social recognition value and use value created through participation in community practices should positively impact how strongly community members feel engaged with the community, as well as the vitality of the community overall. In addition, it is possible that some of the direct and vicarious consumptive moments of community practices might influence community engagement and vitality directly and/or through use and social recognition value. Indeed, the analysis shows that social recognition value, but also use value enhance community engagement ( $\beta = .37, t = 5.86$  for social recognition value; and  $\beta = .28, t = 4.53$  for use value). The direct consumptive moment of social empathizing also influences community engagement directly ( $\beta = .35, t = 6.24$ ), and this relationship is partially mediated by social recognition value (Variance Accounted For (VAF) = 20%). Similarly, the vicarious consumptive moment of task empathizing has a direct impact on community engagement ( $\beta = .10, t = 2.09$ ), but this relationship is partially mediated by both social recognition value (VAF = 43%) and use value (VAF = 22%). Receiving social support from the community and gleaning insights into gardening problems and solutions shared by fellow members thus directly affects how members relate to the community. Especially the latter finding, that mere lurking can have such a strong impact on community engagement, again highlights the value of the vicarious consumptive moments of practices. Finally, the direct effects of the direct consumptive moments of task emphasizing and governing are fully mediated by use value and social recognition value respectively. Community vitality, in contrast, is only directly impacted by use value ( $\beta = .25, t = 2.75$ ), and not by social recognition value ( $\beta = .08, t = 1.31$ ). The direct consumptive moment of social empathizing, and the vicarious consumptive moment of badging also directly impact community vitality ( $\beta = .25, t = 3.09$  and  $\beta = .22, t = 2.50$ , respectively), and these relationships are not mediated by use value. The community's

perceived vibrancy seems to very much depend on its value for gardening advice and inspiration, as was also evident from member quotes (e.g., “Oh my, everyone is blogging today, I’ve got so much reading to do.” See table 2). In addition, receiving social support and seeing other members being recognized for their efforts also directly impacts the perceived liveliness of the community. It is interesting to note the positive impact of the vicarious moment of badging here, given that its effect on social recognition value is negative. So while community members feel personally less appreciated when they see others being recognized, they do acknowledge that these practices contribute to the overall vitality of the community.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Previous research on online consumption communities has largely ignored consumptive dimensions of participation. This research examined consumptive dimensions of community participation through a practice-based approach. It identified and theorized direct and vicarious consumptive moments of online community practices and their different value outcomes. It suggested that lurking is not adequately described as a residual observational construct, but is best understood as a particular form of vicarious consumption (MacInnis & Price, 1987; Veblen, 1994/1899): as vicarious consumptive moments of specific online community practices with concrete value outcomes. The article offers a granular understanding of how community engagement and vitality are created through direct and vicarious consumptive moments of online community practices. By foregrounding the consumptive moments of community practices rather than the production of content, the two studies add theoretical and empirical specification to the value-laden nature of community practices (Schau et al., 2009). Metaphorically speaking, productive moments represent value offerings that are translated through consumptive moments into value experiences. By distinguishing direct and vicarious consumptive moments in practice performances and their



performative effects on social recognition value, use value, community engagement, and community vitality, this research shows how experiences of consumptive moments matter to community members.

This research presents a first effort to measure consumptive moments in practice performances as well as to assess quantitatively their effects on value creation. Not all practices create all types of value and not all types of participation in the practices are equally important in the creation of different types of value. For those practices that could be measured effectively and those values that could effectively be discriminated, this research reveals exactly which consumptive moment of which practice creates which type of value. Because this analysis yields precise insights into how consumptive moments of online community practices create value, it asserts that consumptive moments of practice performance matter in value creation; and further, that direct and vicarious consumptive moments of practice performances are distinct and can be measured as such.

This research suggests that the community creates itself (community vitality), its participants (community engagement) and its objects not only through productive moments, but critically also through consumptive moments. This creates a localized community-bound understanding of first, what this community is; and second, a localized understanding of its nucleus: gardening. As such, the localized understanding of community and gardening is created and shaped in and through different consumptive moments of community practice performances. Community members consume the community nucleus as well as community through direct and vicarious consumptive moments.

This has specific implications for the understanding of lurking. According to Slater (1997, p. 15) “Consumer culture seems to emerge from the production of public spectacle, from the enervated and overstimulated world of urban experience, so powerfully captured in Baudelaire’s image of the flâneur: in modernity all the world is consumable experience.”

There are striking similarities between online community and the production of public spectacle and the flâneur. Online community is consumable experience, a quasi-public spectacle produced through interpersonal practices and experienced through direct and vicarious consumptive moments of such practices. The flâneur, a figure of leisure, strolling around the city streets plays both a vital role for urban city life, but at the same time remains a detached observer of it (Benjamin, 1999; Simmel, 1971). Similarly, the digital flâneur is a figure of leisure browsing the contents of online community. In the practice theoretical perspective, interest in the flâneur as a figure fades into the background; rather it stimulates interest in *flânerie*. In interpersonal practices, *flânerie* translates into participation in vicarious consumptive moments. Like *flânerie*, vicarious consumptive moments are at the same time part of and apart from online community participation. Through the concept of vicarious consumptive moments, this research shows how *flânerie* is an integral part of online community participation and creates value-laden experiences; it is part of the public community spectacle, but remains detached from it. Vicarious consumptive moments are ambient drivers of the creation of communal value and community. Without vicarious consumption, many productive moments reach a dead end, socially speaking, in their value-generating capabilities and communal value is barely created.

This insight contributes to theorizing lurking. If one understands community participation as carrying productive, direct and vicarious consumptive moments of practice, then one can say that in their participation in online community members alternate between being carriers of these different practice moments. In this understanding, individuals are not only “carriers” of practices (Reckwitz, 2002), but they become carriers of *different moments* within *specific* practice performances. Thus, lurking should not be treated as a residual, unidimensional construct. Rather, lurking unfolds into vicarious consumption of *specific* community practice performances (e.g., empathizing, badging). This allows teasing apart differential value

outcomes of specific forms of ‘lurking’ (e.g., of task empathizing versus documenting) and enables analysis of the differential value effects.

A provocative insight from the analyses is that community engagement is rooted in experiences of social recognition value and use value, which in turn spring from consumptive moments of certain community practice performances but not others. This invites attention to the topography of value creation in particular contexts. Extrapolating from the particular localized constellations of practice performance moments that drive value in the online community studied in this research, different localized practice-value topologies may be discerned in different contexts. Because this research aims to foreground the experiential value effects of consumptive moments of community practice performances, it also shows the importance of selecting research designs in the future that are capable of getting ‘beyond the screen’. Here, this article operationalized core community metrics that can inform not only survey but also experimental and modeling research involving online social metrics.

This research presents opportunities for community managers. An understanding of which practices and their moments are important to community members offers insights for managers striving to foster community engagement and vitality. For example, insights from an analysis of which consumptive moments of what practices are important in a particular community could imply using moderators who answer members’ questions, reward positive governance, mark milestones, or merely comment on blogs/photos, if no one else does, in order to avoid members’ feelings of disappointment, and resultant detachment from the community. Other interventions are possible depending upon which productive and consumptive moments of performance loom large in the community in question.

This study invites more qualitative research into the realm of experiences of online consumption community, value, and practice. Future research is needed to investigate value creation through community practice performances in other communities to identify

commonalities and differences. Further, a focus on conventions and competences (Thévenot, 2001) provides an interesting complement to practice theoretical approaches as these deal with the acquisition and demonstration of competences on the one hand and the distribution of practices across domains of fields of practice. By focusing especially on the processes and dimensionality of emotional engagements (embodied familiarity, practical and moral value), such an approach offers a different way to further detail the operation of online community practices and value. Study II identifies a need for further quantitative and semantic refinement of sensitive practices, for example, governing, which may produce positive or negative value, and paying special attention to how productive moments are achieved. Related to this is the need for further empirical specification of the various dimensions of lurking and value outcomes as well as of practices that were measured ineffectively. Because practice performances are local, however, future researchers interested in experiential effects of practices should embrace a wide palette of methodologies for study within different community contexts.

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Table 1. Empirical Illustrations of Direct and Vicarious Consumptive Moments of Community Practices

<b>Practice</b>	<b>Consumptive Moment</b>	<b>Empirical illustration</b>
Welcoming	<i>Direct</i>	“My initial welcome into the community was surprisingly friendly & inclusive.”
	<i>Vicarious</i>	“It’s good to know that when people have been missing from the website for a bit they’re always missed and welcomed back.”
Social Empathizing	<i>Direct</i>	“I received support from the community with a family problem. I felt that their kindness to a stranger was so uplifting.”
	<i>Vicarious</i>	“I’ve observed when certain members’ pets have died, others pour out their sympathy and kindness.”
Task Empathizing	<i>Direct</i>	“6:41am, just popping on to see if anyone knows my plant. And they do [a member] says it’s ACHILLIA and my Samboca is black lace [...].”
	<i>Vicarious</i>	“The creation of a pond in a garden belonging to [a member]. She struggled with it at first, so many members gave her sound advice, kept her spirits up and eventually she has a beautiful pond! To me, this was a [community] success to remember.”
Governing	<i>Direct</i>	“Logged on 1pm to post some photos of plants to be added to my garden page. On an Aquilegia one, a kind member pointed out it is not the variety I thought it was, she also suggested which it might be and is correct.”
	<i>Vicarious</i>	“A lady had written a blog about an invasive weed, she lives in the USA, and because it is not invasive here she was slayed by a number of members, shameful really.”
Commoditizing	<i>Direct</i>	“Someone send me some cuttings from their garden and it made me feel part of the community”
	<i>Vicarious</i>	“Recently, I received some cuttings of a dwarf Liliac from one of my ‘favourites’, and this can happen a lot, as gardeners tend to be more than happy to share plants and information. [...]”
Staking	<i>Direct</i>	“To be included as one of someone’s ‘favourites’...It makes one feel a connection with at least some members of the group.”
	<i>Vicarious</i>	“I love it when someone says they grow the same plants as myself as hints and tips are gained.”
Evangelizing		N.A.
Justifying	<i>Direct</i>	N.A.
	<i>Vicarious</i>	“I like to hear and read that other people are also so addicted to gardening.”
Milestoning	<i>Direct</i>	“The comments inspire me to do more and more to my garden; it means so much to me as no one else really comments on what I have achieved.”
	<i>Vicarious</i>	“When [a member] had a disaster with her first attempt at building a pond. She was distraught when it went wrong and the support she received from all of us on [the community] to encourage her to keep going, was amazing to witness. The sense of community within this site was incredible. I felt honoured to be part of it, and very proud to be a part of [the community] that could offer such support to a fellow member.”
Badging	<i>Direct</i>	“When my little piece of advice on orchid growing was nominated for [encyclopedia], I felt happy to make a difference to people.”
	<i>Vicarious</i>	“People often put ‘like’ on each others’ images.”
Grooming	<i>Vicarious</i>	“Got a good idea from a member about using height and a drain pipe to plant bedding plants in. I love the ideas people have on here. It’s always nice to see people’s photos as you can imagine the ideas in your own garden. [...] Nice to see other members with small gardens and seeing how they utilize the space.”
Customizing	<i>Vicarious</i>	“It is very easy to find information about gardening, also about quirky ideas in gardens, or about handmade tools or other solutions from inventive members.”
Documenting	<i>Vicarious</i>	“I looked at a lot of photos from other members and downloaded those that I found of special interest, the ones that I want to keep in mind as an idea for my own garden.”

Table 2. Empirical Illustration of the Relationship between Consumptive Moments and Value Outcomes

Value Outcome	Explanation	Empirical Illustration
<b>Social Recognition Value</b>	Members assess their social position in the community from their participation in consumptive moments of community practices.	<u>Direct consumptive participation in badging/milestoning</u> "I had lots of comments on my photos today and I'm very glad. [...] It's always nice to receive comments from anybody but I feel proud of myself when people post positive comments on my photos!"; "Received some lovely comments on my photo's and blogs [...], made me feel valued"
	Participation in direct consumptive moments of badging/milestoning and social empathizing fosters positive emotions of pride, affection, positive self-esteem, and delight.	<u>Direct consumptive participation in social empathizing</u> "I am so touched today [a person] who is from Sidney, has created a 'good luck' card for me for Wednesday when I take my exam [...] There has been quite a few comments posted from various members, and so much encouragement and support for me for Wednesday. It really made me quite choked."
	Direct consumptive moments of governing are tied to lower social recognition in the community and foster negative feelings of being "put out"	<u>Vicarious consumptive participation in social empathizing</u> "When [a member] had a disaster with her first attempt at building a pond. She was distraught when it went wrong and the support she received from all of us on [the community] to encourage her to keep going, was amazing to witness. The sense of community within this site was incredible. I felt honoured to be part of it, and very proud to be a part of [the community] that could offer such support to a fellow member."
	Vicarious consumptive participation in governing can increase the perceived social recognition within the community.	<u>Direct consumptive participation in governing</u> "I tried to answer a question by googling it but was told that it was absolutely not a Titum Arum why do some people come across so aggressive and arrogant? Okay I got it wrong but kind of feel put out by this one response. Don't think I will bother again." <u>Vicarious consumptive participation in governing</u> "[...] during an unpleasant series of attacks on my biological information, many members came to my aid and flagged the nasty comments and reassured me that my views were valued. It made me realise that I did have something to offer the site."
<b>Use Value</b>	Participation in consumptive moments of documenting and task empathizing shapes performative outcomes in form of the perceived use value of the community.	<u>Direct consumptive participation in task empathizing</u> "Today, [my husband] and I went to a nursery and bought 5 plants [...], one of which was a eucalyptus [...]. I looked it up in my [...] book and wondered if I'd made a mistake when I saw the height they can reach! This is where [the community] came in useful as I put a photo of all 5 plants and asked the question on the eucalyptus. Within minutes, [X], a member who has a lot of garden experience answered clearly with 2 options to control its growth. 2 other members added helpful comments plus one suggested I look at his photos page for his gum tree. This is so much better than looking it up in a book as you gain advice from people who actually have the plant growing."
	Through direct and/or vicarious consumptive moments of documenting and task empathizing, members derive informational value.	<u>Vicarious consumptive participation in task empathizing</u> "I do recognize that if I need to find out anything new about gardening I do log onto [the community] rather than look online or in a text book. [...] I learned from [conversations in the community] about growing cucumbers - so now I know to remove the male flowers or I will get bitter cucumbers." <u>Vicarious consumptive participation in documenting</u> "Then I looked at a lot of photos from other members, and downloaded those that I found of special interest, the ones that I want to keep in mind, as an idea for my own garden."
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Members' assessment of their community membership becoming part of their identity and improving their life.	"It does make you feel good, and encourages confidence and self-belief - it certainly can make you a better gardener, and it provides an incredible support system for the ups and downs of life, all this in one social networking site - pretty good eh?" "It feels I have been part of [the community], so much longer than I have—and I even missed going online yesterday!! [This community] has been a revelation to me one way or another, I have gained so much from this [...]."
<b>Community Vitality</b>	Members' assessment of the liveliness of the community.	"Oh my, everyone is blogging today, I've got so much reading to do. Left a few comments on blogs. Can't believe so many have been added after mine. Its shows how popular this site is." "Two replies to my question about the log store—amazingly prompt. Some people are seriously monitoring that site closely."

Table 3. Item Wording, Psychometric Properties of Latent Constructs and Measurement Model Results

Construct	Description of Items	Item Loading	Mean	Standard Deviation	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Highest Shared Variance	Origin
Direct Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing	<i>During my time with [community]...</i>							Developed based on study 1 and Schau et al.'s (2009, 43) empathizing taking the form of brand-related support (e.g., product failure), which translates into gardening tasks.
	I've received helpful answers to my gardening questions.	.92*	6.08	1.05	.94	.84	.39	
	I've received useful tips on how to improve my gardening.	.94*						
Direct Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing	<i>During my time with [community]...</i>							Developed based on study 1 and Schau et al.'s (2009, 43) empathizing taking the form of lending emotional support on "general life issues (e.g., illness, death, job)."
	I've received support for non-gardening problems.	.94*	4.41	1.76	.95	.86	.38	
	I've received advice on issues that have nothing to do with gardening.	.94*						
Direct Consumptive Moment of Governing	<i>During my time with [community]...</i>							Developed based on study 1 and Schau et al.'s (2009, 43) governing as the articulation of "the behavioral expectations within the [brand] community."
	Someone's told me about the principles by which the community abides.	.90*	2.67	1.39	.86	.69	.09	
	I've been informed that I didn't behave according to community rules.	.60*						
Direct Consumptive Moment of Badging	<i>During my time with [community]...</i>							Developed based on study 1 and Schau et al.'s (2009, 44) badging as the translation of seminal events and milestones into symbols. In the study context, badging occurs via 'favouriting', 'liking' and 'nomination'.
	My pictures or blogs have been "favourited" by other members.	.92*	5.29	1.63	.91	.78	.32	
	My pictures or blogs have been "liked" by other members.	.90*						
Direct Consumptive Moment of Impression Management	<i>In my conversations with other [community] members...</i>							Developed based on study 1 and Schau et al.'s (2009, 44) impression management as justifying: "deploying rationales" for "devoting time and effort" to gardening including "jokes about obsessive-compulsive" behavior.
	I've been told how much they love gardening.	.95*	5.84	1.23	.92	.79	.54	
	I found that they talk and joke about how involved they are with gardening.	.93*						
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing	<i>While spending time on [community] (e.g., browsing through discussions, pictures, blogs, etc.), I have observed other members...</i>							Developed based on the items for direct consumptive moments and the subsequent adaptation to capture the observational dimension.
	Assist each other in finding solutions to their gardening questions.	.98*	6.33	1.03	.98	.95	.56	
	Give each other useful tips on how to improve their gardening.	.97*						
Vicarious Consumptive	<i>While spending time on [community] (e.g., browsing through discussions, pictures, blogs, etc.), I have observed other members...</i>		5.44	1.55	.95	.87	.40	Developed based on the items for direct consumptive moments and the

Moment of Social Empathizing	Support each other with regards to non-gardening problems.	.99*						subsequent adaptation to capture the observational dimension.
	Advise others on problems that have nothing to do with gardening.	.94*						
	Lend each other emotional support.	.91*						
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Governing	<i>While spending time on [community] (e.g., browsing through discussions, pictures, blogs, etc.), I have observed other members...</i>							Developed based on the items for direct consumptive moments and the subsequent adaptation to capture the observational dimension.
	Remind someone else of the principles by which the community abides.	.86*	4.19	1.56	.89	.73	.25	
	Inform someone else that s/he didn't behave according to community principles.	.79*						
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Badging	<i>While spending time on [community] (e.g., browsing through discussions, pictures, blogs, etc.), I have observed other members...</i>							Developed based on the items for direct consumptive moments and the subsequent adaptation to capture the observational dimension.
	"Favourite" pictures or blogs of other members.	.97*	6.09	1.27	.96	.88	.56	
	"Like" pictures or blogs of other members.	.95*						
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Impression Management	<i>While spending time on [community] (e.g., browsing through discussions, pictures, blogs, etc.), I have observed other members...</i>							Developed based on the items for direct consumptive moments and the subsequent adaptation to capture the observational dimension.
	Emphasize the benefits of gardening.	.88*	5.73	1.28	.92	.79	.54	
	Talk and joke about why they are so involved with gardening.	.89*						
Social Recognition Value	My gardening know-how is valued by other community members.	.93*						Based on Cohen et al. (1985) and Schau et al.'s (2009, 38) notion of community practices as offering "opportunities for individual differentiation" and a source of status and pride.
	Other members appreciate the quality of my contributions to the community.	.94*	4.69	1.35	.95	.87	.40	
	I am well respected in the community.	.93*						
Use Value	<i>Generally, I think the [community]...</i>							Based on Mathwick et al. (2008).
	Is full of useful information.	.93*						
	Is a great place to get gardening advice.	.89*	6.48	.73	.93	.83	.39	
Community Engagement	Is a great place to get gardening inspiration.	.90*						Developed based on study 1 and the adaptation of Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg (2009) and Algesheimer et al. (2005).
	Because of [community], I generally feel better about myself.	.93*						
	Being a member of [community] has improved my life.	.94*	4.75	1.49	.95	.86	.40	
Community Vitality	Part of me is defined by being a member of this community.	.92*						Developed based on study 1 and the adaptation of Wang et al. (2007).
	<i>To what extent do these characteristics describe the community best?</i>							
	Boring – Interesting	.92*	6.31	.97	.94	.84	.15	
	Dull – Vibrant	.93*						
	Inactive – Active	.90*						

\*p &lt; .01

Table 4. Correlation Matrix of Latent Constructs

	Direct Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing	Direct Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing	Direct Consumptive Moment of Governing	Direct Consumptive Moment of Badging	Direct Consumptive Moment of Impression Management	Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing	Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing	Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Governing	Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Badging	Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Impression Management	Social Recognition Value	Use Value	Community Engagement	Community Vitality
Direct Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing	1													
Direct Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing	.36*	1												
Direct Consumptive Moment of Governing	.10	.28*	1											
Direct Consumptive Moment of Badging	.29*	.47*	.11	1										
Direct Consumptive Moment of Impression Management	.35*	.51*	.24*	.56*	1									
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing	.35*	.33*	.09	.45*	.51*	1								
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing	.30*	.59*	.21*	.45*	.56*	.55*	1							
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Governing	.19*	.37*	.30*	.24*	.35*	.29*	.50*	1						
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Badging	.30*	.37*	.09	.57*	.55*	.75*	.55*	.34*	1					
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Impression Management	.35*	.42*	.15*	.46*	.74*	.54*	.63*	.42*	.59*	1				
Social Recognition Value	.29*	.50*	.29*	.51*	.46*	.41*	.36*	.24*	.34*	.43*	1			
Use Value	.62*	.29*	.01	.28*	.36*	.44*	.24*	.05	.39*	.26*	.27*	1		
Community Engagement	.40*	.61*	.25*	.33*	.44*	.43*	.45*	.18*	.39*	.40*	.63*	.43*	1	
Community Vitality	.30*	.36*	.14*	.26*	.37*	.27*	.22*	.15*	.35*	.34*	.30*	.39*	.38*	1

(\* indicates  $p < .05$ )

Table 5. Structural Model Results

Path		Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Mediation
<b>Direct Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing</b>	Use Value (UV)	<b>.55</b>	<b>6.94</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	Not applicable
Direct Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing		.05	.78	n.s.	
Direct Consumptive Moment of Governing		-.06	1.14	n.s.	
Direct Consumptive Moment of Badging		-.05	.74	n.s.	
Direct Consumptive Moment of Impression Management		.19	1.67	n.s.	
<b>Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing</b>		<b>.21</b>	<b>2.33</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing		-.06	.70	n.s.	
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Governing		-.11	1.57	n.s.	
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Badging		.14	1.64	n.s.	
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Impression Management		-.16	1.54	n.s.	
Direct Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing		Social Recognition Value (SRV)	.01	.06	
<b>Direct Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing</b>	<b>.31</b>		<b>3.74</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
<b>Direct Consumptive Moment of Governing</b>	<b>.17</b>		<b>3.07</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
<b>Direct Consumptive Moment of Badging</b>	<b>.35</b>		<b>4.28</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
Direct Consumptive Moment of Impression Management	-.05		.60	n.s.	
<b>Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing</b>	<b>.28</b>		<b>2.85</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
<b>Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing</b>	<b>-.20</b>		<b>2.24</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Governing	.01		.16	n.s.	
<b>Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Badging</b>	<b>-.24</b>		<b>2.49</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
<b>Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Impression Management</b>	<b>.29</b>		<b>3.38</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
Direct Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing	Community Engagement (ENG)	.04	.50	n.s.	Mediated by UV
<b>Direct Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing</b>		<b>.35</b>	<b>6.24</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	Partially mediated by SRV
Direct Consumptive Moment of Governing		.06	1.11	n.s.	Mediated by SRV
<b>Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Task Empathizing</b>		<b>.10</b>	<b>2.09</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	Partially mediated by SRV and UV
<b>Use Value</b>		<b>.17</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
<b>Social Recognition Value</b>		<b>.37</b>	<b>5.86</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
<b>Direct Consumptive Moment of Social Empathizing</b>	Community Vitality (VIT)	<b>.25</b>	<b>3.09</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	Not mediated by UV
<b>Vicarious Consumptive Moment of Badging</b>		<b>.22</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	Not mediated by UV
<b>Use Value</b>		<b>.25</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>&lt;.05</b>	
Social Recognition Value		.08	1.31	n.s.	

Adj. R<sup>2</sup> (UV) = .46; Adj. R<sup>2</sup> (SRV) = .43; Adj. R<sup>2</sup> (ENG) = .55; Adj. R<sup>2</sup> (VIT) = .25

(Significant relationship indicated in bold)



Figure 1. Research Model

