

## Review Article

# Reviewing the Concepts of Brand Community, Brand Tribalism and Brand Cult on Relationship Marketing in Sri Lankan Building Material Sector

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**Abstract:** With a complicated, dynamic, and fiercely competitive business climate and consumer culture, firms must address the challenge of sustainable relationship marketing. The concepts of brand community, brand tribalism and brand cult can be considered as most productive business strategy in relationship marketing in the Sri Lankan building material sector to enhance brand equity of the respective brands. By the mid-2010s, the brand community had developed into a major component of the business. Developing a strong brand community is a critical first step toward achieving the objective. Notion of relationship marketing at the dawn of the twenty-first century, "the concept of brand community occupies a critical place" and merits consideration, to return to the beginning. Brand communities are defined as unique, non-geographically oriented social structures centered on a brand. Thus, the brand tribes or tribalism can also derive from the brand communities. People's tendency to make purchasing decisions based on shared brand values is known as brand tribalism. Members of a brand tribe are more than just customers; they are also promoters and believers. Brand tribes are capable of collective activities with postmodern business significance. Brands that build a committed following among a relatively limited group of individuals are known as brand cult. These customers aren't just fans of a brand, they're as committed to it as cultists are to their follower. The majority of industries associated with significant sectors are already in the mature stage of their product life cycles, and gaining new clients is unlikely to increase profitability. Nonetheless, the hunt of new economic development drivers has garnered considerable attention. As a result, these leading firms and sectors make a concerted effort to entice loyal clients to make more purchases, while initially attempting to decrease brand conversion rates and concentrating on non-members. According to the Research Consultancy Beuro Report in year 2018, it shows that cement, cables, tiles, pipes, and paints, products very much significant contributors in Sri Lankan building materials sector. Therefore, the researcher justifies that there is a research gap on impact of brand community, Brand tribalism and brand cult on relationship marketing in the Sri Lankan building materials sector.

**Keywords:** Brand Community, Brand Tribalism, Brand Cult, Industrial Products, Relationship Marketing.

## 1. Introduction of the Study

Differentiation of products and services has long been lauded in marketing theory as a means of gaining a competitive edge. Companies advertise their alleged distinctiveness in execution, the efficiency of their transactions on behalf of clients, their response to inquiries, the clarity and speed

with which their confirmations are sent, and so forth. In a nutshell, the service is one of a kind, while differentiation has long been a basis of marketing, assisting brands in establishing strong market positions. Simply said, a 'Brand' is a sign that is used to identify or differentiate a business, a product, or an individual across several platforms.

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as "a name, term, design, symbol, or any other attribute that distinguishes one seller's goods or services from those of other sellers". Brands are intangible, and they are used to shape how people perceive a firm, its products/services, or its characters. However, the consumer community or businesses did not recognize the relationship between a brand and its consumers for a lengthy period of time. When competition intensifies in a market, only business organizations recognize the need of having a distinct advantage to separate themselves in the market. The author argues that similar notion brand community, brand tribalism, and brand cult are being used in relationship marketing in Sri Lanka's building material business in order to boost brand equity for the relevant firms. Since Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) article formally introduced and defined the concept in the industry, the phrase brand community has received substantial traction in the literature. Muniz and O'Guinn introduced the term brand community to the Association of Consumer Research (ACR) in 1995 at the ACR's 25<sup>th</sup> annual conference in Minneapolis, and were recognized 12 years later with the 2007 Thompson Scientific Impact Award for Brand Community, which was one of the top twenty most cited articles in economics and business. According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), the important first step toward achieving the objective is building a strong brand community. At the advent of the twenty-first century, "the concept of brand community occupies a vital position" and requires consideration (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

### **1.1 Review of Brand Community**

A community is a haven of comfort and friendliness in which all elements come to an understanding with one another (Bauman, 2003). The concept of community has a historical context in modernism critiques. Early sociologists saw nineteenth-century modernity as not simply a threat to community, but as a threat to its destruction. Throughout much of its history, the basic concept of society was defined in opposition to the concept of community, and the two phrases were effectively antonyms. In essence, a community is a social cluster (a collection of living beings) that shares certain characteristics such as norms, religion, values, customs, or individuality. Communities may be based in a physical location (such as a country, hamlet, town, or neighborhood) or in virtual space via communication systems. When we examine Brand and the general community in detail, it becomes evident that there is a unique and substantial relationship between these two factors, with commercial organizations accounting for these two axes in order to maximize revenue and profit.

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) define brand communities as distinct, non-geographically oriented social structures focused on a brand. However, it illustrates the importance of brand community in determining brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001) established four components of brand equity, perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand association. Brand communities have an immediate effect on all four traits, but particularly on brand loyalty behavior in general, which is associated with repurchase (Fournier, 1998; Fournier and Yao, 1997; McAlexander and Schouten, 1998). These communities not only purchase these goods, but also act as advocates and promote them without hesitation because they want to be a part of the brand. Apple product users are some of the classic examples (Muniz and Schau, 2005).

Brand tribes and cults, as a result, are subsets of brand communities. While the two concepts are unmistakably related, they are distinct. A brand tribe is a subset of the brand community that focuses only on a single product category. According to the author, engaging with the brand community is more straightforward for a marketer than considering the focused tribe. Brand communities are made up of individuals who share a common social identity and an interest in a certain brand (Algesheimer *et al.*, 2005; McAlexander *et al.*, 2002).

The usage of brand community methods has become more critical than ever in the modern context of marketing, and it has evolved at a breakneck pace in recent years. Coca-Cola, Apple, Nike, Marlboro, Johnny Walker, Mercedes-Benz, Bob Marley, Michael Jackson, and Cristiano Ronaldo are just a few of the world's most recognizable brands and human personalities that have established trends, values, and millions of followers in their respective industries. As a result, these followers established large-scale communities based on emotional ideals and love. Brand communities have been shown to be critical in understanding brand loyalty (Fournier and Lee, 2009; McAlexander, Kim, and Roberts, 2003), as well as devotion to a specific brand or product. Simply said, a brand community is a group of loyal brand customers who are bound together by their shared passion for the brand and its offerings. A brand community is distinguished from other groups by the fact that it shares not only brand devotion but also certain rituals and a sense of moral obligation (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Additionally, commitment is viewed as a source of a company's long-term competitiveness because it is causally related to cost reduction and profit growth, the word of mouth effect via referrals, and a premium pricing effect (Reichheld and Teal, 1996).

The degree of legitimacy is a critical feature of the Brand community. It categorically excludes passionate brand enthusiasts, marginal brand enthusiasts, and outsiders. True lovers will be extremely dedicated and committed to a particular brand, with a strong sense of ownership. The traditions and rituals of a brand guide community members in tracing the brand's history (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). The legendary history will enrich the brand community, as they will share stories and myths about their connection to the brand in the past. The Land Rover is a classic example of a four-wheel drive vehicle Jeeps have been manufactured since 1948, making them the second-oldest four-wheel drive vehicle in automotive history, behind Jeeps. They were manufactured by Rover at the time, but Land Rover as a company was created in 1978, as part of a rather bizarre period of British mishandling of the automobile industry (Millan, 2014). Businesses establish brand communities largely to obtain beneficial brand outcomes" (Relling *et al.*, 2016).

## **1.2 Review of Brand Tribalism and Brand Cult**

In contrast to traditional communities, brand communities are focused on brands and the community members' interests (Albert, Merunka and Valette, Florence, 2008). Thus, brand tribes or tribalism may have its origins in brand communities (Cova and Cova, 2002). Brand tribalism refers to people's proclivity to make purchasing decisions based on shared brand values. Customers are not the only members of a brand tribe; they are also promoters and believers. Brand tribes are capable of undertaking collaborative business actions of postmodern significance. Additionally, it has long been recognized that brands serve as an extension of the consumer's self-concept (Belk, 2013, Papista and Dimitriadis, 2012; Fournier, 1998), providing consumers with a means of self-expression and self-definition through the provision of value (Belk, 2013; Chernav *et al.*, 2011, Swaminathan and Dommer, 2012).

Tribes, on the other hand, are formed within brand communities where individuals adhere to certain spiritual or religious notions that are likewise generated within ethnocentric perspectives (Taute and Sierra, 2014). In other words, Taute and Sierra (2014) stated that a tribe is defined by its defense, social structure, segmentation and sense of community. As is the case here, brand tribes are conceptually similar to the denied terms of basic tribalism, in which individuals are permitted to express their ideas and thoughts about the brands they admire, and in which the individuals' extensive expressions are frequently homogeneous, creating a common platform for exchanging ideas, values, and emotions. Brand advocacy and word of mouth are two significant effects of brand tribalism, which has propelled numerous businesses and brands to greater profitability (Taute and Sierra, 2014). Consumer tribes that support brands are regarded as important assets for brand managers (Goulding *et al.*, 2013).

Brand tribalism is still a relatively new concept in both the public and corporate worlds, and it has had little impact on the relevant sector. Consumer tribes are distinct from historical tribes in that they

have developed a new social order in which position within a tribe is determined by distinct and specialized values (Cova and Cova, 2002). They are grouped together for emotional reasons rather than intellectual ones (Cova and Cova, 2002). Consumer Tribes are distinct from subcultures in that their ties are much tighter, with shared ideas, values, and rituals that distinguish them from the dominant society culture (Schiffman, Bednal, O'Cass, Paladino, Ward, and Kanuk, 2008). Additionally, the term 'brand community' is an inadequate way to describe a tribe. A brand community is formed for the purpose of promoting a specific brand or product (Brownlie, Hewer and Treanor, 2007; BurghWoodman and Brace-Govan, 2007). This is in contrast to consumer tribes, which in some cases may erode brand equity, akin to when a consumer activist takes a stand against mainstream customers (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004). This group affiliation is motivated by the desire for positive differentiation from other social groups (Madrigal, 2002), and one of the most significant aspects of this identification is the rituals members share, such as pilgrimages, club behavior, and the consumption of certain brands (Dionsio, Leal and Moutinho, 2008).

In today's marketing environment, the concepts of brand tribes and brand communities are very much less addressed area in branding strategies, and before, people believed that these types of communities could mostly exist on online platforms such as websites and social media. While these novel concepts are being debated critically in the modern era, brand tribes and communities have existed for more than two centuries. Olympic sports events, antique vehicle collectors clubs, and sports clubs are just a few of the communities, and even certain mafia gangs, that may be traced back to their origins. While online platforms are not essential to create and maintain these groups, they may be beneficial as a mode of engagement and a means of connecting them. The current concept of brand tribes was initially identified in the late 1980's, and classic examples include vintage vehicle collectors and opera music enthusiasts. They collect automobiles of various makes and models as long as they are vintage. These are referred to as brand communities. Brand tribes, on the other hand, are not centered on a broad product category, but on highly specific brands, such as Apple-related Mac User Groups. Sharing a shared language, adhering to a specified set of conventions, and engaging in informal market exchanges all contribute to the development of a stronger level of trust and access to information within these ethnic communities from a sociological standpoint (Galbraith, Rodriguez and Stiles, 2007). Additionally, this tribal conduct is related to club behavior, which refers to the formation and features of optimal production and consumption groups, as well as their persistence under a variety of competing settings (Hochman, Pines and Thisse, 1995).

It is which all commands extremely high customer loyalty and nearly evangelical followers who are devoted to them; similarly, these devoted followers identify with it and demonstrate their dedication in a variety of obvious ways (Ragas and Bueno, 2002). Furthermore, despite the fact that many of these brands are not industry leaders (Koay and Hernandez Eriksson, 2006), they not only impact purchasing decisions, but also become an integral part of their customers' life (Ragas and Bueno, 2002). Brands that develop a cult-like following among a relatively small group of people are referred to as brand cults. These customers are not merely brand enthusiasts; they are as devoted to the brand as cultists are to their leader (Belk and Tumbat, 2005). Other brands can only dream of the level of brand loyalty enjoyed by this cult brand. Their products are in high demand, fans wait months, if not years, for the release of the next product, and in the interim, they go online to share their love for the brand and recruit new evangelists. Harley-Davidson (McAlexandra *et al.*, 2002). Apple, Star Trek, WWE, IKEA, Starbucks, Crossfit, Krispy Kreme, Red Bull, Volkswagen, and Beetle are just a few of the world's most recognizable brands that serve as the gold standard for cult brands. The author underlined that brand cults crave belonging, and when religion does not supply it, they resort to more materialistic pursuits, which is why hardcore vespa fans gather in Manhattan every Sunday for breakfast and a spin on their funky Italian scooters. For the moment, take the concept of belonging a step further, and they will discover themselves in the realm of theology. Harley-Davidson epitomizes the cult brand. The century-old Milwaukee-based motorcycle business did not completely take off until unhappy World War II troops returned home and rode the robust, macho motorcycles on wide highways. The aggressive group was formed by the most devoted

clients. The outlaw organization aided in increasing the bike's exposure, its members were difficult to overlook on highways and occasionally made headlines for criminal conduct. Nonetheless, the group's image as a bad boy resonated with the middle class in the United States of America. Harley-Davidson is one of the few brands that has maintained a cult following while growing in popularity, with \$2.9 billion in sales and a 25% market share in the United States ([www.harleydavidson.com](http://www.harleydavidson.com)).

The brand cult is distinguished from the tribe or community by the brand's apparent holiness and the cult members' religious devotion. According to Acosta and Devasagayam (2010), cults are groups that have greater relationships between members and a higher level of brand loyalty, as well as cultural conformity forced on members as a result of their shared social identity. These findings imply that cult members are younger, better educated, and more prosperous (Acosta and Devasagayam, 2010). According to Acosta and Devasagayam (2010), brand cults are groups with strengthened member connections and increased brand following, as well as members who are forced to conform culturally as a result of their collective social identity. Moutinho *et al.*, (2007) distinguish between sports fans and sport cult members based on the cult members' awareness of hallowed sites, ritual involvement, and unique dedication to the sport. The author suggested that when developing a measure of these phenomena, it is necessary to refer to "brand communities or tribes" (Veloutso and Moutinho, 2009). According to Cova and Pace (2006), Western authors "transition easily within the same text" between the designations and then continue to use the two terms interchangeably throughout their writing, but Cova and White (2010) employ all three brand connection descriptors in the same phrase. Thus, this literature suggests that communities, tribes, and cults are not theoretically distinct constructs; rather, the constructs may be distinguished only by their degree of following (Belk and Tumbat, 2005), connectedness (Acosta and Devasagayam, 2010), and social identification (Algesheimer *et al.*, 2005; Acosta and Devasagayam, 2010).

## **2. Industry Overview in Sri Lankan Building Material Sector**

The majority of industries associated with significant sectors are already in the mature stage of their product life cycles, and gaining new clients is unlikely to increase profitability. Nonetheless, the hunt of new economic development drivers has garnered considerable attention. As a result, these leading firms and sectors make a concerted effort to entice loyal clients to make more purchases, while initially attempting to decrease brand conversion rates and concentrating on non-leaders. All of their efforts are directed toward growing client loyalty, as this results in favorable behaviors such as customers purchasing positive word of mouth to influence competitors' client bases and cross-selling. According to the Sri Lanka Central Bank's (2019) report, the industrial sector provides 28% of the country's GDP and accounts for 8% of the construction industry (CBSL, 2019). According to the Capital One Equity Report (2019), the Colombo Exchange's construction and building materials section is predicted to provide an average rate of return of 29 percent annualized rate of return. Increased affordability of middle-income housing, interest rate reductions, and urbanization are regarded to be the primary drivers of this sector's growth ([www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com](http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com)). Modern industrial plants manufacture a variety of products, including cement, cables, pipes, paints, and tiles. According to the Research Consultancy Beuro Report in year 2018, it shows that cement, cables, tiles, pipes, and paints, products very much significant contributors in Sri Lankan building materials sector. However, everything are manufactured in Sri Lanka, and the bulk of them operate in an oligopolistic market. As a result, the majority of manufacturing firms focus their efforts on growing their market share through various marketing techniques such as brand communities and brand tribes while also developing brand equity.

### **2.1 Factor Condition of the Cement Industry**

The industry of Cement is the most important and fundamental material in this sector and there are only three main players in the market. When comes to the three main brand available in the market and those are name as X Cement, Y Cement and Z cement. Leading brand who is having highest market share in Cement which is 33% and closest follower is having market share in Cement 31% and challenger is holding a 10% market share in cement products. They dominate about 74% from

the total market share, (Research and consultancy Bureau Market Findings Report, 2018). The balance portion of the market share is segregated amongst other brands; they were also able to compete shoulder to shoulder with the big player in the market while securing healthy profit margins. However, there are some regulations to obtain the Sri Lanka Standards certification for the product and hence all suppliers maintain the required quality of their products. Despite the fact that the government regulates the price of cement as a commodity, producers and suppliers compete for market share through various sales and marketing activities. As users and influencers of their products, masons are extremely important to this sector. As a result, most businesses prioritize their stakeholders by reinforcing brand tribalism. For instance, according to an industry analyst the companies have been building brand tribes to expand their interconnections with the users, for knowledge transformation and also to gather feedback about the product performance. Together, all these companies have over 75,000 tribal members island-wide and allocate approximately Rs. 110 million towards brand tribes building programmers. However, there are no proper and effective mechanisms to measure the outcome of these investments (Research and consultancy Bureau of Market Report, 2018). By looking at the findings, we can see the strategists in the cement still haven't realized the importance of their masons' tribe in terms of capitalizing on sustainability and profitability factors. Since there is no sign of a potential threat that they see in near future still the companies are using outdated marketing and brand strategies to maximize company revenue and profits. The industry of cement has still not identified the potentials of their tribe of masons and what they have budgeted on this tribe was also not properly configured and integrated for future plans.

## **2.2 Overview of Tiles Industry**

When it comes to the tile industry, there are three major companies, with the majority of their goods being produced and supplied locally, while others are being imported and marketed locally. The Lanka Tiles Group of Companies, Royal Ceramics Lanka, and Macktiles Lanka are among the companies involved. This sector's contribution is Rs. 45 billion per annum (Royal Ceramics Annual Report, 2019; Lanka Tiles Annual Report, 2019). They use prominent figures to reach out to new clients and large-scale projects, and they also provide their clients advice on the look and feel of their projects. Architects and expert tile layers frequently influence the clients' decisions. They are significant links in the building industry's value chain and play an important part in the country's design trends. These manufacturers frequently approach architects through the Sri Lanka Association of Architects, understand their worries about their goods, and make every attempt to remedy any difficulties. In restorations and modest building projects, tile layers have a big impact. As a result, they engage with them through brand tribes such as Tile Layers' Clubs that they establish, which provide them additional support coupled with their progress through technical programmers to promote skills development, offer discounts, and related information about their products and value added services and thus influence them to recommend their products to the customers (Lanka Tiles Annual Report, 2019). There are also a few areas that they mainly focus upon to enhance their revenue, such as customer satisfaction which is 78%, interacting with key influencers and supporting their growth, attracting new customers while retaining existing customers, providing support to the construction industry through dedicated brand tribe like the Tile Layers' Club with a membership of 3,885 persons (Annual Report of Lanka Tiles PLC, 2019).

Royal Ceramics Lanka Plc was founded in 1990 with the goal of creating a brand that is defined by design, creativity, integrity, and quality. Since then, it has acquired the "Lanka Tiles" trademark, which was eventually bought by the Rocell Group of enterprises. They rely on better manufacturing capabilities to transform these innovative ideas into high-quality product series, and meet international quality standards (Annual Report of Royal Ceramic PLC, 2019). They rely on their influencers to market their products while building a brand tribal members of over 7,000 members, in addition to maintaining a strong presence in the ceramic tile market. Meanwhile, Munasinghe and Disanayaka, confirmed that Lanka Tiles and Rocell are the two main brands in the ceramic tile category which have gained a competitive advantage as an idea of service differentiation (Munasinghe and Disanayake, 2017). According to the insights revealed by Munasinghe and

Disanayake (2017) during semi-structured interviews with Sri Lankan ceramic tile industry experts, Rocell and Lanka Tiles are the two main local manufacturers since they have established showrooms in many places to increase availability and visibility, thereby distinguishing their brands. However, customers can purchase their products through distribution channels and such distributors have hardly any influence on brand choice. The role of buying influence is important in the field of industrial and durable products, (Kotler, Keller, Koshy and Jha, 2009).

In the Sri Lankan context, ceramic tile manufacturing companies also implement different promotional strategies to differentiate a particular brand from among the various brand stakeholders, including designers and intermediaries. Anyway this industry has also not deeply considered their brand tribes as a potential platform for their strategic maneuvers and plans. Conducting awareness programmes, reward schemes, recognition are some of the key activities done by the particular companies just to keep their relevant tribal members happy and alive. Going forward the companies need to build a strong loyal set of groups to defend and promote their product portfolio even without company involvement or not on any manipulation. It is also important to extract vital findings and information from tribal members behavior and its communications. Since there are investing considerable many on brand tribes development activities but there is no such a system to measure it, hence better to have scientific method to identify important areas to invest to improve the brand tribalism in order to achieve relationship marketing objectives.

### **2.3 A snapshot of the Pipes Industry**

According to the industry experts the researcher spoke with, despite the fact that the pipes and accessories business has a large number of competitors, just a few companies, such as KLM Pipes Limited, LMN Pipes Limited, and MNO Pipes Limited, control 72 %. They divide their markets into three categories, institutional, government projects, and retail. According to industry analysts, they contribute more than Rs. 30 billion to the national GDP each year. As a result, the market is price sensitive and competitive. To increase their market share and brand equity, all of the businesses employ various branding and communication methods. Influencers, opinion leaders, and customers are also important main stakeholders in the industry. As a result, most manufacturers devote a significant percentage of their marketing resources on strengthening connections with the aforementioned critical stakeholders.

Industry Leader and closest follower are having their own brand tribes, such as Plumbers' Circle and Skills Circle, each with around 7,000 and 2,700 active members. They are very particular on transformation of new technology, knowledge and future direction. Moreover, most of the plumbers do not possess even qualifications such as the NVQ Level 3 certificate as skilled plumbers. However, the brand tribes that they join to participate in knowledge sharing programmes guide them along the correct path to obtain the technical qualifications in their respective fields (Munasinghe and Disanayake, 2017). As mentioned by Keller (2003), both have become the leading category through the importance of brand distinctiveness in developing customer-based brand equity. The researcher agree that there is problem on measuring, impact of return on investment of brand tribalism activities. Thus some of the organization less confidence on this novel concept.

### **2.4 Electrical Material Industry in Sri Lanka**

Indeed, Sri Lanka's cable industry is claimed to be very competitive, with five well-known businesses supplying the market, including ACL Cables, Kelani Cables, Sierra Cables, Ruhunu Cables, and Orange Cables (Munasinghe and Disanayaka, 2017). The market's major brands are ACL, Kelani, and Sierra, with Kelani and ACL accounting for over 68 percent of the market and both being listed on Sri Lanka's Colombo Stock Exchange (Government Imports Statistics "Data One," 2020). Currently, the total market share is approximately Rs. 40 billion every year (Government Imports Statistics "Data One," 2020). On the other hand, the government safeguards this industry through import controls, and such product categories are subject to a 28 percent Customs levy when imported (Sri Lanka Customs, 2020). Additionally, the intermediates' and

opinion leaders' (such as consultants, engineers, and electricians) influence on the cable procurement process is deemed significant (Disanayake, 2015). Due to the fact that all manufacturers are required to conform to Sri Lankan quality standards, they seek to differentiate their brands and dedicate greater attention to brand building efforts through a variety of strategies that involve spending more money above the line than below the line (Disanayake, 2015).

Developing brand loyalty in the business-to-business and business-to-consumer sectors is a difficult task. The corporation seeks to earn loyal customers by assuring the organization's long-term viability and by launching a number of operations aimed at building a group of loyal customer organizations or brands through brand equity (Keller, 2003). While there are studies that shed light on industrial products in Sri Lanka, there are very few that examine brand behavior and performance (Dissanayake, 2015; Gunawardane, Munasinghe and Dissanayake, 2016). Kelani Cables is one of the leading producers in Sri Lanka, according to Dissanayake (2015). Their brand is defined by their commitment to safety, and the corporation's strategy must be strategic and capable of differentiating the safety value through the highest degree of quality. Electricians play a significant role in the cable procurement procedure associated with house building (Kelani Cables PLC Market Evaluation Report, 2018). Distributors or dealers also play a decision-making role, though not in the same way that electricians, plumbers, or tile layers do (Kelani Cables PLC Market Evaluation Report, 2018). While interviewing public opinion leaders in Sri Lanka's sector to ascertain their influence on purchasing managers, electrical engineers, and consultants about the project owner's purchase decisions, it was observed that their influence was extensive. Electrical contractors, plumbers, and tile layers were also included, albeit with significantly less influence than the previous three groups (Munasinghe and Disanayake, 2017).

Dalrymple, Shaw, and Brossard (2013) conducted an empirical investigation and discovered that opinion leaders influenced other people's personal behavior statistically significantly. Additionally, they demonstrated that opinion leaders influence how opinion seekers behave in markets when purchasing goods, services, and commodities. Cables are purchased through technical consultations as a result of their high-tech background. For example, an electrician makes reference to the size, variety, and length of the cable, and thus wields some influence, similar to dealers. According to the study, 38% of electricians convinced clients to purchase their favorite cable brands (Research and Consulting Bureau, 2018). Thus, cable manufacturing organizations report on a variety of promotional initiatives and tactics used to solicit product recommendations from electricians and distributors. To increase the success of their brands, the majority of cable producers have developed brand tribes such as Electricians' Clubs. ACL's Electricians' Club has over 18,500 members, while KCL's brand tribes has over 16,400 members and other follower also are having their brand tribes with over 14,500 members. However they do not have correct idea about the measurement of the investment on brand tribes in marketing perspective. It is a disadvantage for them to continue the tribal branding in their respective marketing activities.

### **3. Discussion**

When comparing this industry to others, it is clear that greater obligations and accountability have been placed on the corporations involved in this company in terms of developing effective plans and implementing them on their individual brand tribes. To a certain extent, the company's top management anticipated the critical role of brand community or tribal branding in achieving its futuristic goals. They are making every effort to establish strong ties with their respective groups. The most of the building material supplier has been developing brand tribes in order to achieve their marketing objectives. The plus side of these exercises is that they can identify sparks of brand tribalism strategy in this sector; but, cannot conclude that the power cable industry is a success tale for brand tribalism. There are fundamental and communication deficiencies that need to be addressed and expanded. Currently, firms such as ACL cables PLC and Kelani Cables PLC operate extremely effective and active electricians clubs around the country. Continuous regional-wide seminars, enticing incentive programs, vocational training with top local colleges, and welfare activities



[Insurance] are only a few of the primary activities in action. However author argue that there is no such a measurement tool to identify which element to be focus on investments. When comes to the cable sector, annual estimates, 70% of revenues originate from the retail sector [hardware stores], where electricians play a critical role in connecting various sectors. While these activities are ongoing and live, there is much more to plan and execute with these brand tribes in order to maximize the benefits of this marketing strategy.

A Powerful brand tribes committed, actively diehard, and most trustworthy brand fanatics may propel the company toward their corporate target and toward achieving the ultimate vision and goal while preserving the organization's core values. When analyzing all these locally developed brand tribes it is clear that perception of the companies has changed on capitalizing their growth and other objectives. Rather than going for costly product development, price war, unbearable promotions budget, the perceptions and look forwards have reshaped itself for a new strategy. As we discussed from the ancient eras, ethnocentric groups, subcultures and various diehard loyal groups have made history and impacted the world in many ways and the same theory can be used for companies' growth and prosperity and continuous profits. Most of the companies' prime objective is to secure and retain their value customer base without being intercepted by their competitors. So the most suitable way is to build customer oriented tribes who are very diehard and loyal to the brand itself. The tribal members will protect, promote and believe in the brand. The most unthinkable fact that will arise within the community is the birth of evangelists where they outspread the brand and defend the brand where it matters. The communication ways in the tribal members will enhance the product or the brand image in many ways. This will come to a point where companies should also react in certain ways creating value, encouragement and benefits in return.

The behavior and perception of the cult or the community will automatically create a brand identity and a personality and this never can be created artificially. The brand, affection, loyalty are some of the great outputs of the brand communities which are priceless to any company. Through these communities, tribalism or Cult concept will move the brand across the globe while creating visibility and the product will meet the most wanted target audience effectively and these achievements will lead other companies to make business associations with the particular brand or company. Brand tribalism will provide valuable data and information about the latest trends, behavioral patterns which can be very useful for strategic planning in future.

In the context of the local building material industry we can see that most of the companies have realized the importance of the concept of tribal branding. There some basic initiatives are taken to build these sets of groups and the findings just reflect on very basic communities with minimum activities which have taken place. It is doubtful whether any of these companies were involved in this stream, whereas they were really aware of the core purpose or the objectives of brand community, tribalism or cult factor. While companies are able to identify or build true tribalism and unique cults. When they found the correct tribes, Even if they have a strong brand tribes. They will be able to extract and gather the sensitive data and information related to their brand. They have quantified and evaluated the outcome of the brand tribalism in terms of revenue, turnover contribution or profit impact. These are some of the troubling and burning questions which they don't have justified answers. These issues can come up very easily and frequently and most of the companies still have not realized that building and maintaining a healthier relationship with their tribes are not key components of a successful marketing and branding strategy.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Brand community is a group of people who have a common positive perception towards an ideology, product or service. These kinds of groups are non-geographical and may sometimes reflect on ethnocentrism as well. Brand tribalism or cult brand show similar characteristics of brand community but can be identified as a sub community of brand community and the characteristics can be perceived as an extraction of the main community. Elements of tribe brand or cult brand can be seen

as more specific, orthodox and extraordinary behavior which is very unique for each group. In the context of the modern business world the term brand community, brand tribalism and cult brand has been taken into consideration from a strategic point of view and many companies have made their journey successful and prosperous while making a distinction amongst the competition.

Many business organizations gets the concept of brand community or brand tribalism as a concept under the regular marketing functions. It is a fundamental and every common mistake done by repeatedly practiced by many companies. This could be identified as a main frame strategy to extract the yield of profits and core objectives of a business organization. Sometimes companies perceive it incorrectly and think that the brand tribes are developed by themselves and they are bound to serve the company and make profit maximizations. In the context of the building material sector the companies need to identify their brand tribes and its behavior and perceptions. The organizations should be able to engineer the brand tribes to strengthen the brand rather than constructing the brand and letting the tribes to follow.

Competitions and conflicts neither shouldn't be discouraged nor neglected by the companies these politics will thrive the companies for better positions and helps understand the trending events thoughts of the tribes. Also it may be useful to evaluate and measure the outcome of the brand tribalism related activities conducted by the relevant companies. On the other hand companies use popular and professional figure heads to build such tribes and to convey valuable messages to the groups. In the local context of the building material sector, rather than spending on unnecessary brand development activities, it is important to develop each person as a key stakeholder where everyone can act as brand advocate or a brand tribal member.

In the local marketing context it is high time to make a diversion of orthodox strategies and think of a new maneuver. Companies need to look at the concept of brand tribalism in a very strategic way. Understanding the pulse of such stakeholders and improvising the emotional bond and making key performance indicator evaluating methods will deliver a much greater outcome.

### **5. Future Research Direction**

As discussed above, within the Sri Lankan building materials sector, most of the key suppliers have developed their brand tribes to enhance their brand relational outcomes in order to achieve repurchase and retain their existing customers. In fact, though they allocate a sizable budget and invest substantial money on brand tribes building activities, they do not have any proper evaluation and measurement on the results of their investments. Therefore, the researcher justifies that further empirical research should be carried out on the impact of brand community, Brand tribalism or brand cult on relational outcomes in the Sri Lankan building materials sector.

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