How brand communities can contribute to service innovation

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Purpose –
During the last years brand communities have become of interest both within service research as well as among companies as brand communities can create value both for its members as well as for companies (Fournier and Lee, 2009, Muniz and O' Guinn, 2001, Schau et al., 2009). However, as noted by Fournier and Lee (2009), brand communities is a concept which is often misunderstood as companies seem to take a service provider focus to communities rather than the member-centric approach it is based upon. S-D logic literature seem to suggest the member-centric approach through its proposal "Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary"(Vargo and Lusch, 2008a) and through directions for marketing practitioners, that companies should move "from thinking of customers as targets to thinking of customers as resources." (Vargo and Lusch, 2008b). This paper (i) develops proposals for service innovation based on brand communities and (ii) suggests that S-D logic proposals should be interpreted from a customer (Heinonen et al., 2010) and CCT focused view on service.

Methodology/approach –
Qualitative approach. The empirical context is based upon brand community members within car industry.

Findings –
Findings provide insight into service innovation opportunities and deepen the understanding of customer logic. Findings also illustrate the importance of understanding customers' image heritage (Rindell and Strandvik, 2010).

Research implications –
The conducted research offers opportunities for further research. Such research might either focus on deepening the understanding of customers' logic for service innovation, or it might be focused on customers belonging to other brand related groups, like Fan clubs, which do not necessary fall into the definition for brand communities.

Practical implications –
Managers may benefit from service innovation opportunities that brand community members may offer. These service innovations do not necessary only benefit the community members but also other customers or even previous or potential customers. Additionally, listening to brand community members may helps in deepening the understanding of customers' logic.

Originality/value –
Brand communities as resources for service innovation have sparingly been empirically studied within S-D logic research.

Key words (max 5) Brand communities, service innovation, S-D logic, Customer logic, image heritage