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## **An Examination of Automobile Online Brand Communities (AOBCs) in the U.S. and South Korea: Linkages among Motivation, Experience, and Satisfaction**

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Jae Hee Park entitled "An Examination of Automobile Online Brand Communities (AOBCs) in the U.S. and South Korea: Linkages among Motivation, Experience, and Satisfaction." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communication and Information.

Sally J. McMillan, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Dwight L. Teeter, Jr., Margaret A. Morrison, Harry F. Dahms

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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**An Examination of Automobile Online Brand Communities (AOBCs) in  
the U.S. and South Korea:  
Linkages among Motivation, Experience, and Satisfaction**

**A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Jae Hee Park**

**August 2011**

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## **Abstract**

This study explores automobile online brand communities in the different cultural contexts between South Korea and the United States. The core assumption is that members of automobile online brand communities in different cultures have different motivation orientations to visit their online communities and have different community experiences. Hofstede's cultural dimensions were utilized as embedded cultural circumstances in examining relationships between different motivation orientations and community experiences. Two steps of qualitative and quantitative research methods were adopted to determine the relationships among community members' motivation orientations, community experiences, and satisfaction.

The study found that Korean automobile online brand community (KAOBC) members have stronger social, business, and communication motivations than American automobile online brand community (AAOBC) members. These community members' motivations also influenced their community experiences. Both social network motivations and communication motivations are crucial predictors for four community experiences: Community loyalty, trust, membership identity, and word of mouth (WOM). Community members who have a stronger social networking and/or communication motivation are more likely to have a higher level of community loyalty, trust, membership identity, and WOM. Finally, community experiences were the most important indicators of the satisfaction of online community members among nationality, demographic factors, and motivation orientations.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **The Internet as New Communication Channels**

The Internet as a new medium based on advanced technology has penetrated people's daily lives and started to replace and even dominate old communication channels in the process of human communication. The population of Internet users has increased more than five times in the past ten years. The number of online users worldwide increased from 361 million in March, 2000 to 1.967 billion in June 2010 (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2010). In other words, about 28.7 percent of the total world population is internet users in June 2010 (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2010).

The Internet extends a great deal of potential for human communication, interactions, and behaviors. Scholars in the field of communication like McQuail (1983) summarized a variety of uses and gratifications that drive media use. These include seeking information, finding personal identity, integration and social interaction, and entertainment. The Internet seems to fulfill many of these gratifications for users unlike traditional media, such as radio, television, and newspapers that are the basis of one-way communication and limited in time and space.

In addition to the interests of communication scholars and practitioners, business marketers adopted the Internet as a new business strategy tool to communicate with consumers more efficiently. Many corporate managers are aware of the importance and the potential benefits of the Internet and have created corporation websites or online brand communities, which will be defined in more detail below, to provide business information for customers' needs (Pitta & Fowler 2005). Consumers who have a high level of brand loyalty

toward a specific brand also create online brand communities voluntarily to share their identities, values and information (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001). Using online brand communities as advertising and promotional channels has become popular among corporations (Oh & Kim 2004).

This study seeks to gain a better understanding of online brand communities by examining Korean Automobile Online Brand Communities (KAOBCs) and American Automobile Online Brand Communities (AAOBCs). South Korea and the US are good markets to explore and compare because these two countries rank high in Internet infrastructure and automobile production, although the two are very different in cultural and social aspects. South Korea has a 95 percent broadband household penetration rate (David 2009), making it the world leader in Internet infrastructure, and the United States is ranked the second largest internet user in the world. South Korea and the United States are also ranked as the fifth and the third leading countries in the world, respectively, in automobile production (Kim 2009). In terms of cultural perspectives, according to Hofstede (1991), Korea has a strong collectivistic culture while America has a strong individualistic culture. These distinctive cultural differences between Korea and America might lead to differences in the development of online brand communities in the two countries.

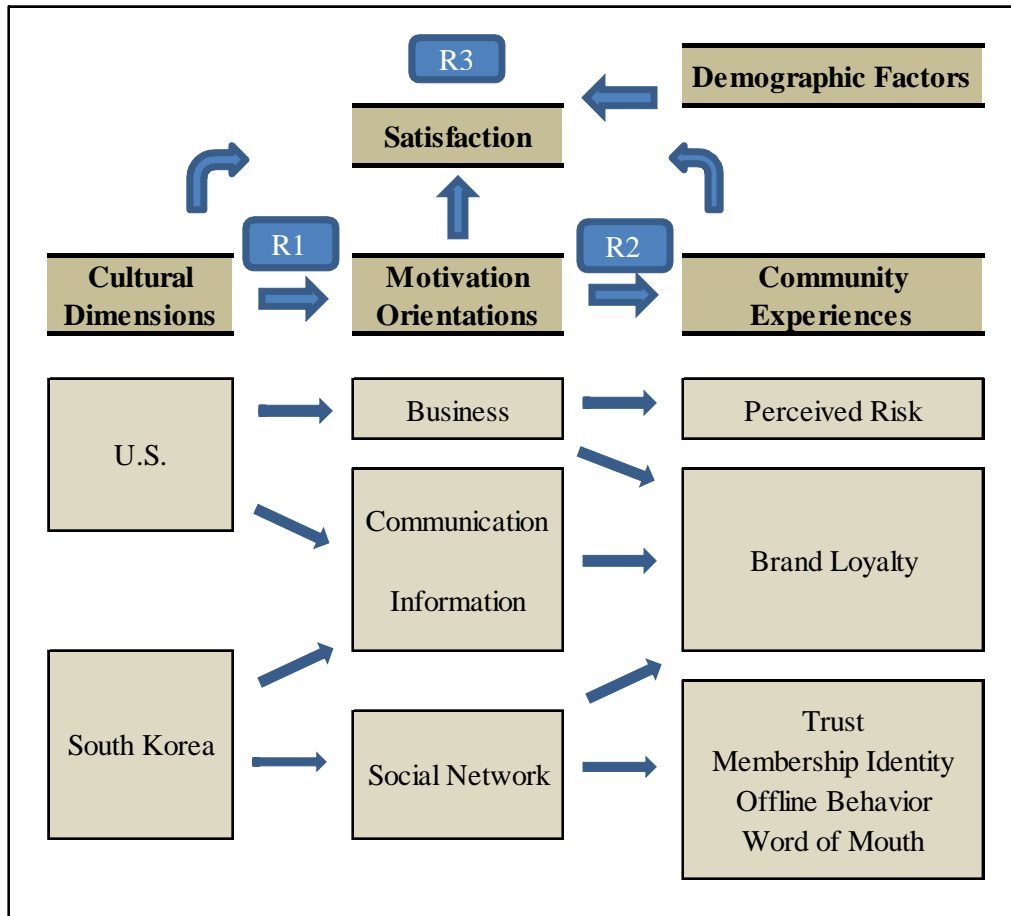
### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the emerging phenomenon of online brand communities by comparing Korean and American automobile online brand communities. This study builds on previous work (Anderson 2005; Madupu & Krishnan 2008; Ouwensloot & Odekerken-Schroder 2008) by systematically examining structures and systems of online communities and then analyzing community members'

actual participation within the given web structures. In addition, an extended application of the different cultural aspects in community members' motivations and behaviors in the context of online automobile brand communities is expected to contribute to constructing a more solid theoretical understanding of international communication in cyberspace and improved practical application of online marketing strategies.

### **A Proposed Automobile Online Brand Community Model**

In this study, I propose a model that traces relationships among different motivations and orientations in joining online brand communities and actual community experience and behaviors in different cultural circumstances. The cultural dimensions are differentiated by the contexts of automobile online brand communities in the U.S. and South Korea. Park and McMillan (2010) categorized four different motivation orientations of business, communication, information, and social network based on preliminary results of a content analysis of Korean Automobile Online Brand Communities (KAOBCs). The validity and reliability of the four different motivations will be reevaluated by a qualitative method of asking online brand community members in both Korea and the U.S. their motivations in an open question format through email surveys. Dimensions of various community experiences and behaviors will be developed based on established previous scholarly studies. Overall, this model shows how different motivations behind online brand community participation influence community experience and overall satisfaction of community activities in different cultural aspects (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1 A Model of Cultural Dimensions, Motivation Orientations, Community Experiences, and Satisfaction of Automobile Online Brand Communities**



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Community

Before focusing specifically on online communities, it is important to understand how scholars have operationalized the concept of community. Ferdinand Tönnies, the author of *'Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft'* (1887), was the first scholar who distinguished two concepts of community and civil society (Harris, 2001). According to Tönnies, 'Gemeinschaft' is a small-scale community based on kinship and a neighborhood of primitive and agrarian societies, and 'Gesellschaft' is a larger scale society run by the competitive market mechanism of industrial societies (Harris, 2001).

Gusfield (1975) also defined two different types of communities in terms of location and relationship. The first criterion is the level of territorial and geographical notion of community such as neighborhood, town, and city. Location is the core element in the definition of the traditional community because of old societies' physical constraints of community. The second notion highlights the quality of human relationships, especially restricted human interactions and networks within given boundaries of traditional societies regardless of geographical concern. He also noted that those two types of communities are not mutually exclusive.

McMillan and Chavis (1986) introduced a "sense of community" with four different elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. Membership is defined as the sense of belonging or sharing with a group. Membership is a boundary that determines the range of belongings, thus drawing a line between people who are in and those who are not. The second element is influence, a bi-

directional interaction. Community members can influence each other in either direct or indirect ways. The third element is integration and fulfillment of needs, which can also be thought of as reinforcement of the community. Motivation reinforcement is a fuel for maintaining positive participation of community members. The last element is shared emotional connection in time and space. Frequent interactions among members provide more opportunities to share emotional connections and community spirit. This element seems close to Tönnies' concept of '*Gemeinschaft*', which emphasizes common experience in a local community.

About a decade after McMillan and Chavis's study (1986), McMillan (1996) re-explored the elements of community and rearranged and re-conceptualized the four elements as 'Spirit', 'Trust', 'Trade', and 'Art.' Spirit was seen as similar to "membership" and it represents a spark of friendship between members that eventually becomes the spirit of sense of community. Trust replaced the concept of influence from the previous study. According to McMillan (1996), trust is the most important factor in a community as long as the "community has order, decision making capacity, authority based principle rather than person, and group norms that allow members and authority to influence each other reciprocally, then that community has trust that evolves into justice" (p. 320).

In addition, communities must provide their members needed resources in a certain way. Fair trades, a consistent concept of reinforcement among members, are the basis of community role and function. The last principle of community is art. Art is shared values and experiences in history and is expressed by 'shared valent events' among interactive members (McMillan, 1996, p. 322).

## **Online Community**

Many of the traditional elements of community have formed online since the Internet was introduced in the early 1990s. Spirit or membership can be seen in the ways that people use social networks as part of their Internet activities. Trust and influence are seen in the ways that individuals communicate about issues ranging from personal health to purchasing decisions. The notion of fair trade and/or meeting of needs can be seen in the many studies that have explored uses and gratifications of Internet use (Larose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001; Shao, 2009). Finally, the idea of shared values and experience or “art” is extended on the Internet to break the boundaries of time and space that defined both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* communities. People can communicate with others who live around the world and receive valuable information almost instantly with a simple click of the mouse.

People who spend time on the Internet have been called Netizens (Ling 2007) – a term that denotes citizenship in an online community. Williams and Cothrel (2000) defined online communities as “groups of people who engage in many to many interactions online and form wherever people with common interests are able to interact.” A great number of netizens join one or more online communities because of needs for communication, information, or entertainment (Armstrong & Hagel, 2000). Online community members create social networks, which are unrestricted in time and space, based on similar interests (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Online community members keep seeking beneficial returns from their online activities and interactions and those community members’ voluntary participation and contribution are the driving force of the communities (Andrews, 2002; Butler, 2001).

Online community members can leave their communities if their expectations are not met. Therefore, satisfying members’ needs and providing desired information are essential

functions needed to sustain online communities (Williams & Cothrel, 2000). One study found that information posted by netizens in online communities has a high level of credibility and influences other members' decision processes because marketers do not control it (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2003, p.212). This high level of credibility encourages people to keep visiting online communities.

Online community members' activities are not limited to the online environment, but extended to offline environments as well (Norris 2004). Research has found that online community members who also have face-to-face interaction have stronger relationships than do those community members without offline meetings (Williams & Cothrel, 2000). Rothaermel and Sugiyama (2001) found that about 30 percent of online community members communicated with other members by telephone and in person.

### **Online Brand Community**

Brand community refers to groups of people who are linked by their loyalty toward a specific brand. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) define a brand community as "a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (p.412). These authors discussed three core components of brand community in terms of consciousness of kind, rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility. *Consciousness of kind* is the shared feeling that creates a fundamental connection between members. *Rituals and traditions* refer to the community's shared history, culture, and consciousness. *Sense of moral responsibility* refers to obligations that brand community members feel to other members as individuals and as a whole.

Harley-Davidson's Harley Owners Group (HOG) was the first brand community to be examined as a new business managerial strategy (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Since

that time, specific online brand communities have been examined with diverse marketing strategies. For example, car brand communities such as Audi and Volkswagen Golf were regarded as sources of innovation for new product development (Fuller, Bartl, Ernst, & Muhlbacher, 2006; Fuller, Matzler, & Hoppe, 2008). Brand communities can also provide corporate managers with innovative ideas because community members are willing to share personal experience with other community members and corporate managers based on a high level of loyalty toward specific brands (Franke & Shah, 2003; Fuller et al., 2008).

Two basic types of online brand communities have been identified. One is online brand communities initiated by companies, and the other is consumer-initiated online brand communities (Porter, 2004). Marketers know that product information or evaluations in online brand communities can influence members of those communities (Kozinets, 2002). Therefore, company-initiated online brand communities tend to provide accurate product information and positive opinions and experiences while consumer-initiated online brand communities are more likely to include negative product evaluations without screening from managers. Consumers are not passive marketing targets for business managers because the Internet provides vast amounts of information to consumers to judge marketing messages (Zureik & Mowshowitz, 2005).

## **U.S. and South Korean Cultures**

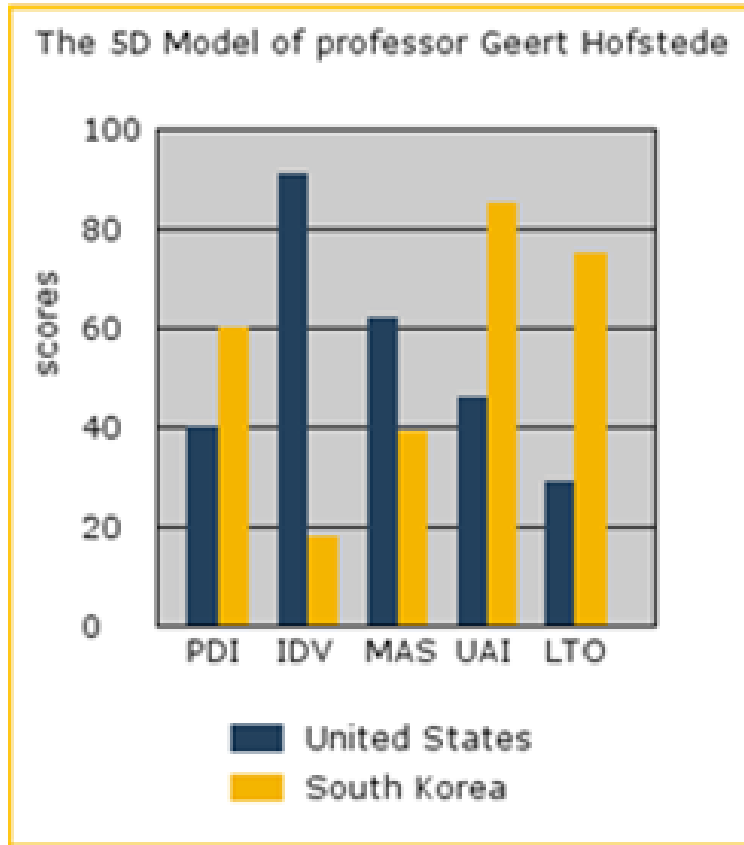
People belong to different groups of families, villages, societies, and nations. Each community has unique characteristics that make it different from other communities. For example, each family has its own family traditions and each country has a distinctive nationality and customs. Community members have created and changed these unique qualities based on common experiences and agreed-on behavior over a long time period. This

uniqueness is an interchangeable approach with culture. As a broad concept, culture is cumulative societal values, beliefs, norms, and behavior patterns (Hofstede, 1980). In other words, culture is a fundamental system based on shared meaning of a specific society and the members of the society learn this shared meaning over time (Hoecklin, 1995). Therefore, each country is continually building its own cumulative culture.

Geert Hofstede (1991) introduced a model of five dimensions based on different national cultures that helped us to understand national value differences. He investigated work-related values of more than 116,000 IBM employees in 53 countries. He suggested five national cultural dimensions: Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism versus Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Masculinity (MAS) versus Femininity, and long-term orientation (LTO).

Among those five cultural dimensions, the category of individualism versus collectivism is the dimension that most distinguishes the United States and South Korea. The United States is one of the most individualistic countries with an index score of 91, whereas South Korea is one of the most collectivistic countries with one of the lowest individual index scores of 18 (See Figure 2).

Individualism can be defined as a social culture where people are more likely to “look after themselves and their immediate family only” rather than a culture with “people belonging to in-groups or collectivities which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty” (Mooij, 2005, p.61-62). Collectivistic cultures are more likely to focus on in-group benefits, harmony, and family while individualistic cultures are more concerned about individual benefits and preferences, personal success, and independence (Han & Shavitt, 1994). In other words, individuals in a high level of collectivism are willing to sacrifice themselves for the greater benefit of society (Yau, 1988) because collectivist societies



Source: [http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede\\_dimensions.php?culture1=95&culture2=82](http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php?culture1=95&culture2=82)

**Figure 2 Cultural Dimensions: U.S. vs. South Korea**

emphasize group obligations and interdependence (Cho, Kwon, Gentry, Jun, & Kropp, 1999). Therefore, people might even accept dishonest behavior as long as it benefits the bigger group in collectivistic cultures, whereas they would get into serious trouble with lying and other violations in an individualistic culture (Triandis, 1995).

Hofstede pointed out that in a strong individualistic country such as the United States, “the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself” (Hofstede, 1991, p.51). In individualistic cultures, “laws, rules and regulations are institutionalized to protect individual rights” (Kim, 1994, p.8). On the other hand, the relationship between members is tighter in collectivistic countries like South Korea, where “one owes lifelong loyalty to one’s in-group, and breaking this loyalty is one of the worst things a person can do” (Hofstede 1991, p.50). This loyalty in a collectivistic culture can be interpreted as the spirit of *Gemeinschaft* because both come from members’ tight relationships like ‘us’ in the community.

The other noticeable different cultural dimension between South Korea and the United States is Long-Term Orientation (LTO). The value of LTO is associated with thrift and perseverance while the short-term orientation value is associated with respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede, 1991). South Korea had a high LTO index score of 75 and the United States scored a low LTO index of 29. South Korea has a long history as an agrarian society, and a short industrial society experience. For example, *Pumahcci* (community labor exchange) is a representative tradition of Korean rural communities. *Pumahcci* is not only labor exchanges. Rather, people treat all laborers-- men, women, adults, boys, and even farming cattle-- as equal. Mutual aid in a small community is an essential spirit of *Pumahcci*. Therefore, South Korean culture shares a great deal of *Gemeinschaft* elements. However, the United States has a short national history but went through a



relatively long industrial society experience. The United States is one of the most economically advanced and industrialized countries in the world. As a result, the United States is very similar to the concept of *Gesellschaft*.

A number of scholars criticize Hofstede's cultural dimensions in that his measures overly simplify cultural differences by constraining them into four or five dimensions (Sivakumar & Nakata, 2001) and using unrepresentative data from IBM employees (McSweeney, 2002). In spite of limitations of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, many scholars adopt this cultural approach to their cross-cultural studies (ig. Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996; La Ferle & Kim, 2006). Barkema and Vermeulen (1997) argued that the Hofstede's cultural distance are consistent and stable over time and thus worked well for their longitudinal study in seventy-two countries between 1966 and 1994.

### **Motivation Orientations**

The most interesting subfield of community research for practitioners concerns individuals' motivation (Ridings and Gefen, 2004). Knowing consumers' specific motivations to participate in online community activities helps marketers and business practitioners set a clear direction for more efficient strategies to persuade their target consumers. Both researchers and practitioners understand the importance of online communities as an efficient communication tool between consumers and corporations.

The majority of researchers agreed that seeking information is the most frequently cited reason for consumers to participate in online communities (Jan, Oflman, Ko, Koh, and Kim, 2008; Jones, 1995; Ridings and Gefen, 2004). People visit online communities to seek product information and to learn about others' experience with a product, and thus they can reduce uncertainty risk before purchasing products (Rowley, 2000). Dholakia, Bagozzi, and

Pearo (2004) found that online communities provide a set of desirable information for community members who share norms and values. Therefore, information quality is one of the most important factors for communities to successfully attract new members and keep current members (Filipczak, 1998).

Some people use the Internet to find friends who have something in common, and Internet technology provides a way to contact those people easily with lower costs (Igbaria, 1999; Ridings & Gefen 2006). Butler, Sproull, Kiesler, and Kraut (2002) emphasized the importance of interaction with other people rather than interacting with databases online in building or sustaining a strong interpersonal relationship among the online community members. Heavy Internet users utilizing new technology communication such as email and electronic conferencing are more likely to make new friends online (Hellerstein, 1985). According to Parks and Floyd (1996), gender is also an important predictor of online behaviors. They argue that women are more likely to build a personal relationship with others online than men, regardless of marital status.

Some people participate in online communities primarily for business purposes (Figallo, 1998; Hagel & Armstrong, 1997). For example, individuals use automobile online brand communities as an indirect business channel for shopping information such as auto insurance, auto repair shops, automobile price estimation, and auto-part prices (Park & McMillan, 2010). These people actually purchase or sell auto related products in online through the routes of cooperative purchasing and members' personal trades within the automobile online brand communities. Those online purchasing behaviors are influenced by consumers' cultures. For example, La Ferle and Kim (2006) found that the American consumers had a stronger motivation to shop online than Korean consumers.

Internet technology makes it possible for online community members to engage in real time interactions. Internet users are able to express and share their opinions on specific topics and get quick feedback from other community members instantly. According to Armstrong and Hegal III (2000), a need for intensive interpersonal communication in online communities is one of consumers' motivations for joining communities. Such easy and fast computer-mediated interaction and communication encourages and accelerates members' participation in online communities (Koh, Kim, Butler, & Bock, 2007). In addition, communication in online environment became a more efficient marketing strategy over offline communication because the Internet provides a many-to-many communication environment (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998).

Park and McMillan (2010) categorized Korean Automobile Online Brand Communities (KAOBCs) into four different types: business, communication, information, and social-network orientation based on content and structure of the communities. They also found that the social-network type is the most popular among KAOBCs, while business type is the least. The strong tie of social networking with other community members is an important element for the lasting effect of online communities (Baym, 2000; Park & McMillan, 2010).

## **Community Experiences**

### ***Perceived Risk***

The concept of *Perceived Risk* was originally adopted as two dimensions of uncertainty and adverse consequences by Bauer (1967) and Ross (1975). They found that consumers repurchase the same brand product and trust the brand if uncertain and adverse consequences of their purchasing decrease. Later, Dowling and Staelin (1994) defined the

concept of *Perceived Risk* as "the consumer's perceptions of the uncertainty and adverse consequences of buying a product or service" (p.119).

Since early scholars introduced the idea of perceived risk, many scholars have used the concept to examine the relationship between consumers' risk perception of their behavior in both offline and online. For example, studies found that higher levels of perceived risk negatively influenced consumers' willingness to purchase (Kim, Ferrin, & Rao, 2008; Shimp & Bearden, 1982), and experts' opinions can reduce perceived risk and increase purchasing intention (Aqueveque, 2006). The negative relationship between perceived risk and willingness to purchase is extended and applied to the online environment (Bhatnagar, Misra, & Rao, 2000; Tan, 1999). Scholars found that online shopping has higher perceived risk than in-store shopping when people purchase non-digital products (Samadi & Yaghoob-Nejadi, 2009; Biswas & Biswas, 2004). However, online shoppers tended to have a lower level of perceived risk than non-online shoppers (Frag, Schwanen, Dijst, and Faber, 2007; Huang, Schrank, and Dubinsky, 2004).

*Perceived Risk* is multidimensional concept in the context of online marketing. Bhatnagar, Misra, and Rao (2000) categorized two types of perceived risks, product category risk and financial risk, in online shopping. Forsythe and Shi (2003) also examined four types of perceived risks such as financial, product performance, psychological and time/convenience loss. Garbarino and Strahilevitz (2004) specifically discussed loss of privacy, transaction, delivery, online fraud, and credit cards as perceived risks online. Other studies argued that among perceived risk online, users are mainly concerned about financial risk (Lee, 2009; Salam, Rao, & Pegels, 2003) and privacy risk (Miyazaki & Fernandez, 2005; Ratnasingham, 1998). Boyd (2002) explored eBay case and suggested how to improve security system in order to build trust in the community.

Scholars in the field of online marketing also found that a consumer gender is an important demographic factor in determining the level of perceived risk toward online shopping. For example, women tend to have a higher level of perceived risk about online purchasing than men (Comegys, Hannula, & Valsanen, 2009; Garbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004) and women are also more concerned about their personal privacy than are men when they need to give out personal information online (Sheehan, 2000).

Other studies examined perceived risk in online purchasing utilizing cultural differences (Ko, Jung, Kim, & Shim, 2004; Park & Jun, 2003). For instance, Japanese consumers have a lower level of perceived risk than Spanish consumers (Martin, Camarero, Hernandez, & Valls, 2009). In addition, people who live in a high uncertainty avoidance culture are not willing to take risks because of stronger fear of loss (Bontempo, Bottom, & Weber, 1997). Some cultural studies have mixed results. Park and Jun (2003) found customers in South Korea and the U.S. have significantly different levels of perceived risks toward online shopping while Ko et al (2004) found a similar level of perceived risk toward online shopping among consumers from those two countries.

### ***Brand Loyalty***

Loyalty can be defined as a positively attached feeling toward a certain set of brands and company (Kotler, Armstrong, & Frank, 1989). Marketing practitioners and academic scholars have tried to find ways to improve consumer loyalty for long-term business success (Keating, Rugimbana, & Quazi, 2003) because customers who have a high level of loyalty help corporations have competitive advantages in the market by reducing marketing costs, increasing sales, and performing positive word of mouth (Griffin, 1996). Therefore, Oliver defined customer loyalty in the context of business as “commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future” (1999, p. 34).

Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) emphasized relationships between consumer brand loyalty and successful brand community. Their definition of brand community – a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand – implies that brand community members already have a certain degree of brand loyalty. In order to observe a more apparent relationship between brand loyalty and participation in brand community, the current study explores automobile online brand communities. Automobile brand communities are seen as likely to generate high product involvement. Coulter, Price and Feick (2003) defined product involvement as “the personal relevance or importance of a product category” (p.152). Other studies also argue a positive relationship between product involvement and brand loyalty (Beatty, Kahle, & Homer, 1988; Iwasaki & Havitz, 1998).

A group of scholars further focused on the relationship between brand loyalty and consumer behavior in the online environment. These studies found that consumers are more likely to visit a familiar website even though other websites offer better deals and the switching cost is low (Figueiredo, 2000). Brand loyalty also affects the frequency of website visits to brand communities (Thorbjornsen & Supphellen, 2004; Supphellen & Nysveen, 2001). In addition, prior online experiences with products determine the level of consumers’ brand loyalty (Chandrashekar, Rotte, Tax, & Grewal, 2007).

## ***Trust***

### ***Trust in Multiple Dimensions***

Like any other definition of a concept, trust can be defined and interpreted in different ways by different scholars for different circumstances. Coleman and Putnam understood trust as a cognitive process of moral commitments and expectations (Baier, 2000; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000), and Cook defined trust as a positive expectation of others

doing particular things based on belief or knowledge rather than as a category of action and behavior (Cook, 2001, pp. 7, 10). Rousseau, Bitkin, Burt, and Camerer defined trust as “a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behaviors of another” (Rousseau, Bitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998, p.395).

A couple of scholars defined trust more specifically by saying that “A trusts B to do X” (Braithwaite & Levi, 1998, p.78). In other words, people trust other individuals in a certain context. Braithwaite and Levi suggested “trust sources include familiarity, reliable information, and generalizations based on experiences with similar actors, on-going interactions, and confidence in the constraints provided by institutions” (Braithwaite & Levi, 1998, p.376). Trust has been used both as a broad and specific concept in its academic approach depending on the contexts of trust. As there are multiple dimensions of trust it needs to be flexibly applicable to different studies and contexts.

### *Trust in Online Communities*

Trust in online environments is often related to different issues, such as security, safety, reliability, community features, and survivability (Bart, Shankar, Sultan, & Urban, 2005; Schneider 1999). When we discuss trust toward brands on the web, it is highly related to familiarity (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Urban, Sultan, & Qualls, 2000). Jarvenpaa, Tractinsky and Vitale’s study (2000) focused on trust when looking at the relationships between sellers and buyers online, assuming that trust in personal interaction is very similar to interaction online. The eBay’s community model of trust well represents the importance of relationship among members through individual identities, emotional connection, reciprocal influence, and shared experience for successful business (Boyd, 2002).

Trust is a necessary element in building a long-term relationship between consumer and marketers. Trust is a more important element when it comes to online community activities because it helps to build a reliable relationship among online community members by abating uncertainty toward other members and compensating anonymity (Ridings, Gefen, & Arinze, 2002). An unavoidable context of online communities is that members may lack face-to-face relationships. This anonymity among online community members might decrease the levels of trust. Therefore, trust between community members and between community members and managers is a crucial factor in maintaining online communities and activities.

The current study explores two layers of trust: one is trust among community members and the other is community members' trust toward the community information and content. The relationship among people is the main mechanism of online communities because trust toward any information and product within communities is initiated from the relationship among community members. As Friedman, Kahn and Howe (2000) expressed it, "People trust people, not technology". When this approach is applied to cyberspace, it is still cognitive reliance on people in the context of technology. Interactivity and trust among members are the key factors to enhance the transaction intentions of members in online travel communities (Wu & Chang, 2005). Marketers strategically build trust with consumers gradually through the value exchange process; attraction, user-driven personalization, marketer driven personalization, and trust-based collaboration (Dayal, Landesberg, & Zeisser, 1999). Therefore, the current study primarily focuses on interpersonal relationships within online communities.



### ***Membership Identity***

Membership is one of the identification factors for individuals' group affiliation and it is closely associated with sense of belonging to certain communities. Community members became a part of the community with their membership, and it provides some privileges for the members in terms of accessing information, participating in community events, or expressing their opinion in the community. You, Suh, and Lee (2002) found that the sense of belonging has a positive relationship with participation in online communities. Therefore, membership draws an important distinction between members and non-members of a community.

Community members have different levels of sense of belonging toward their communities based on their cultural and social backgrounds. Individuals who live in Western cultures are more likely to be autonomous when they interact with others in a group because of their independent and competitive cultural orientation. On the other hand, individuals who live in Eastern cultures tend to be cooperative and actively engage in group activities when they interact with others in a group because of their interdependent and group harmony orientation (Mario & Buchholz, 2009). For instance, such strong sense of belonging is an important determinant for long-term participation in online communities in China (Jin, Cheung, Lee, & Chen, 2007).

A key difference between online communities and offline communities is anonymous personal identification. According to Azehei (2005), anonymity is a hierarchical structure of three different levels of communication. Visual anonymity is the lowest level of anonymity. For example, internet users do not use their photograph in email communication. The next level of anonymity, dissociation of identity, is possible because of communication through online users' nicknames or avatars. The highest level of anonymity can be sustained by

complete anonymous communication online. Like most other studies on online research, this study understands online communication at the second level of anonymity because community members use nicknames or real names for their community activities and communications.

### ***Offline Behavior***

The numbers of online communities have increased rapidly since the Internet was introduced in 1990s. People can access the Internet anytime and do community activities in cyberspace without boundaries of real time and physical space. The Internet breaks and broadens boundaries of communities due to unlimited space and unconstrained time for members to meet other members online. The smaller costs of time and space to perform community activities accelerate the expansion of online communities. Thus, more people have more easily joined diverse online communities based on their own needs and motivation.

In the early stage of online community research, a number of scholars discussed the advantages of offline (real) communication compared to online communication. Because people can get information about other people within communities from face-to-face interaction through verbal and nonverbal expression, the impact of interaction and impression about others in offline communities are stronger than online communities (Ekman & Keltner, 1997). These stronger interpersonal networks increase efficiencies of offline community activities such as communication (Etzioni & Etzioni, 1997). These early researchers focused comparisons of characteristics and advantages of online and offline communities (Wellman & Gulia, 1999).

Recent studies have still focused on differences between online communities and offline communities; however, they extend the scope of community. For example, researchers

see online and offline communities in a linear connection and argue that the face-to-face offline interactions actually help building stronger and more intense relationships between members in online communities (Williams & Cothrel, 2000; Xie, 2008). In addition, offline interactions among online community members are more likely to reduce problems of anonymous interactions among the members (problems of sociability) in only online community interactions. This study also found that combined online and offline community interactions boost trust among members and discourage free riders (Matzat, 2010).

### ***Word of Mouth & eWOM***

Word-of-mouth is an efficient communication method to influence consumers' buying decision (Richins & Root-Shaffer, 1988; Silverman, 2001). Westbrook (1987) defined Word-of-Mouth as informal communication about the characteristics of business or a product which occurs between consumers. The boundaries of scholarly research about WOM have been extended to eWOM since the internet technology was introduced. A number of scholars argue that the effects of eWOM referrals are stronger and stay longer in people's minds than traditional marketing events (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). As more people are using the Internet as a communication method with others, business or marketing practitioners try to utilize the new communication channel to access their consumers. Therefore, eWOM referrals could provide marketers successful marketing opportunities if the contents of communication are favorable, but such referrals could be unavoidable threats if the powerful messages were negative (Stauss, 1997).

Many marketing scholars and practitioners confirmed the effect of eWOM on consumers' purchasing decision in various areas of online marketing. For example, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) found that positive online book reviews increase book sales. Another empirical study confirmed that online hotel bookings were increased over five percent as

traveler review ratings increase by ten percent (Ye, Law, Gu & Chen, 2010). On the other hand, negative eWOM also can significantly affect people's purchasing behaviors. For example, Luo (2009) investigated the financial impact of negative eWOM on stock price in the long term.

Anderson (1998) examined both positive and negative WOM communications in different countries and found that both very satisfied and very dissatisfied consumers are more willing to engage in WOM in the U.S. and Sweden. Positive WOM is more common than negative WOM (East, Hammond, & Wright, 2007), and negative WOM referrals tend to have a stronger impact than positive WOM referrals to consumers (Assael, 2004). However, Chiou and Cheng (2003) emphasize that the consensus of eWOM messages toward certain objects or target is more persuasive than inconsistent messages for customers.

EWOM communications occur through diverse types of online activities such as online communities, individual web-blogs, discussion forums, news groups, and consumer opinion platform. Consumers' purchasing decisions or behaviors are influenced by other peoples' online reviews or comments about personal experiences with products or services. More importantly, the source of information determines the levels of positivity and popularity of products and services online. For instance, online consumer-generated reviews about products have more positive impacts on people's purchasing decision than editors' inputs, and editors' comments tend to be negatively associated with people's purchasing intention (Zhang, Ye, Law, & Li 2010). A study dealt with gender issue confirmed that women are more influenced than men by eWOM (Garbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004).

More extended scholarly research on eWOM even explored consumer behaviors in the context of cultural difference. A number of academic scholars paid attention to Hofstede's cultural dimensions in order to examine different WOM communication patterns and

behaviors in different cultural contexts (Cheung, Anitsal, & Anitsal, 2007; Money, Gilly, & Graham, 1998). Lam, Lee, and Mizerski (2009) found that each of four Hofstede's cultural dimensions have significantly effects on WOM engagement across different countries. In addition, people who live in a high level collectivistic culture tend to have stronger WOM effects within in-groups than people in the individualistic cultures (Money et al., 1998).

## **Satisfaction**

Consumer satisfaction is an important factor for strategic directions of business marketers. Marketing scholars and practitioners have recognized the importance of consumer satisfaction and have studied satisfaction for several decades; however, there is no agreed consensus on definition (Giese & Cote, 2000; Rogers, Peyton, & Berl, 1992). Because satisfaction is not an agreed concept, the level of satisfaction can be interpreted differently in the same contexts and experiences (Oliver, 1980).

Tse and Wilton (1988) defined satisfaction as “the consumer's response to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectation (or some norm of performance) and the actual performance of the product as perceived after its consumption” (p.204). Similarly, Kotler (2000) considers satisfaction as an overall feeling of pleasure or disappointment that is different from personal expectations of product. Overall, satisfaction can be interpreted as an outcome based on personal experiences of product or service that has changed from prior expectation.

Many scholars have tried to measure consumer satisfaction in diverse online contexts. For example, some scholars examined the relationship between online consumer satisfaction and online purchasing experience such as a cheaper deal, quality, attractiveness and useful website information (Arnott & Bridgewater, 2002; Vijayarathy & Jones, 2000). Chang,

Wang, and Yang (2009) found that consumers' perceived quality of e-service and product have a positive relationship with consumer satisfaction. Upgraded technology capability of online service (Ba & Johansson, 2008) and convenience, web site design, and financial security (Szymanski & Hise, 2000) also influenced the level of consumer satisfaction. Kim (2005) provided a ten-factor index of consumer satisfaction in e-commerce context; product information, product attractiveness, site information, log-on convenience, payment method, site design, customer service, process convenience, purchase result and price attractiveness, and delivery and after service.

Interpersonal relationships in online communities are a new and rarely explored area for both communication scholars and online marketers because online users' anonymity, the most distinctive characteristic of online usage, made it difficult for scholars to trace theoretical findings with specific individuals. However, a number of scholars in new communication and online community research have started to pay attention to the relationship among community members. They found that online community members can build strong relationships with other community members when community members perceive similarity with others (Jensen, Davis, & Farnham, 2002). According to Ma and Agarwal (2007), online community members' satisfaction tends to increase when the communities enhance the importance of identity verification. Kim, Baker, and Song (2007) suggest that using avatars, which is still an anonymous but graphic representation and identification of online community members, can increase community members' satisfaction.

## CHAPTER 3: INITIAL QUALITATIVE STUDY

Park and McMillan's content analysis research of online brand communities (Park and McMillan, 2010) categorized KAOBs into four types of orientations business, information, communication, and social network community, based on the general features and characteristics of the online communities. They operationalized automobile online brand communities as consumer-initiated free online communities, based on social interaction triggered by interests on specific automobile brand. However, before further examining the consumer experience in online communities, it is important to be sure that these operational definitions that emerged from content analysis are also consistent with the actual experiences of brand community members both in Korea and in the United States. Thus, an initial exploratory qualitative study was conducted.

### Method

This study was only focused on member-initiated automobile online brand communities because members of corporation-oriented automobile online communities could be influenced by all the benefits and sponsors outside of automobile communities (Porter, 2004). All selected automobile online brand communities indicated that the automobile online brand communities were not associated to the brand of automobile manufacturers and automobile corporations. For example, automobile communities published like '\*\*\*.com is not in any way associated with \*\*\* Corporation' (e.i. URL < <http://www.i-club.com/>>) or 'we are the group of \*\*\* enthusiasts' (e.i. URL < <http://www.jeepez.com/forum/>>).

In addition, some of automobile online brand communities required annual membership fees for their communities' activities when community members join the community as a new member. However, charging annual membership fee could restrict community members' participation in the automobile online community. Therefore, this study excluded automobile online communities which required annual membership fee for the members' community activities.

This stage of the study adopted a qualitative interview method, in the form of open-ended questions, in order to investigate diverse real motivations of both Korean and American automobile online community members, and thus to reevaluate the previous motivation orientations and propose a model of motivation orientations for the new pattern of online brand community activities. The interview questions are listed below:

1. Why did you join the automobile online community?
2. In what ways do you like or dislike your automobile online community?
3. What kinds of activities were you involved in the automobile online community?
4. Are there any differences between your initial motivation and current motivation to visit the automobile online community?
5. How familiar are you with other community members of the automobile online community?

### ***Automobile Online Brand Community Selection***

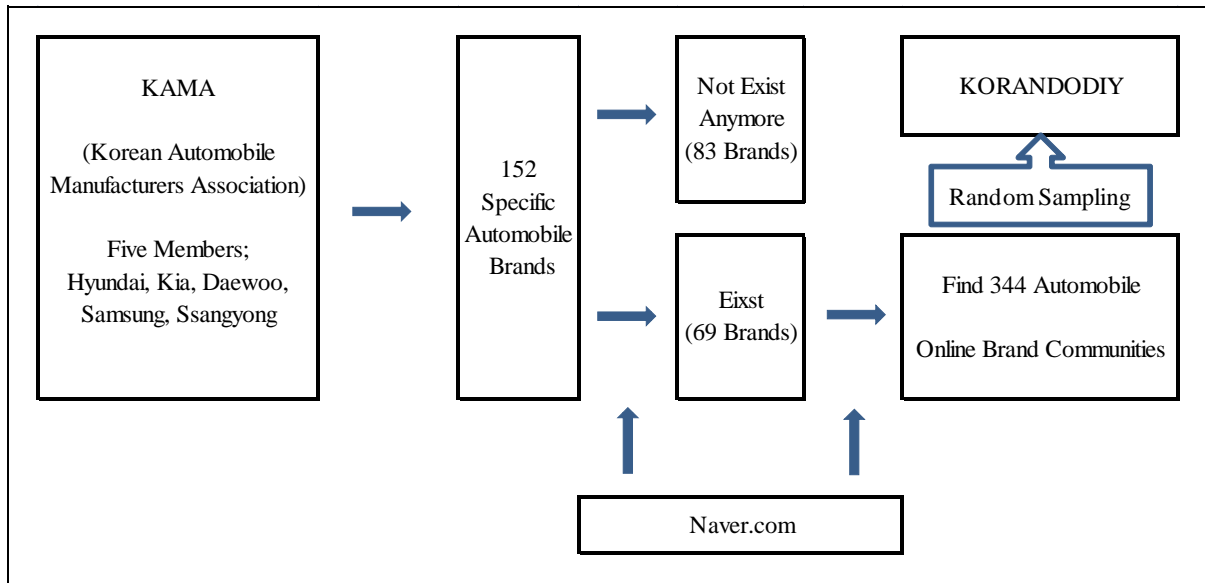
These questions were sent through email to automobile online brand community members in both countries. For Korean automobile online brand community samples, the Korean Automobile Manufacturers Association (KAMA) where all Korean automobile brands were listed was used. The KAMA has five automobile manufacturers - Hyundai, Kia, Daewoo, Ssangyong, and Samsung – who have been members of the association since 2001.



The five members of the KAMA held more than 95 percent of the Korean automobile market share in 2009 (Park, 2010). In order to represent the large market share and more general realistic activities of online brand community members, Korean automobile brand communities within KAMA member's brands were used as a pool for random sampling.

A total of 152 specific Korean automobile brands were listed under the five automobile manufacturers. Among 152 specific Korean automobile brands, Samsung is the only automobile manufacturer among Korean automobile manufacturers which used series name of SM3, SM5, and SM7. Samsung produced only four models included SM series. However, in general Korean automobile manufactures tend to use specific brand names for their automobiles. For example, Korean automobile manufactures created unique names or independent brand names for each of their new vehicle such as Kia Spectra, Hyundai Sonata, Ssangyong Korando, Daewoo Matiz, and Samsung QM5.

Regarding the facts, the most popular Korean portal website, the Naver.com which covered more than seventy percent of the market share in Korean search engine (Jung, 2008), was used to find Korean automobile online brand communities. The currently existing KAOBCs of the 152 specific Korean automobile brands were explored. A total of 344 KAOBCs of sixty-nine specific automobile brands were found via the portal website. The rest of eighty-three automobile brands do not have online brand communities because the manufacturer stopped producing them before internet technology was widespread. Finally, KORANDODIY.com was randomly chosen out of 344 specific Korean automobile brand communities (See Figure 3a).



**Figure 3a The Sampling Process and the Korean Automobile Online Brand Community**

As the world's largest automobile market, the U.S. automobile manufacturers had less than 50 percent market share within the U.S. (Tierney, 2010). Thus this study included all the domestic and foreign automobile manufacturers and automobile brands traded in the U.S. for target samples. Considering that, the automobile maker list in Kelley Blue Book seemed an appropriate route and was used as a pool of random sampling (<http://www.kbb.com/>). A total of fifty-one automobile makers were listed from Kelley Blue Book excluding Oldsmobile category which has a small number of automobiles from various old or antique brands (See Table 1).

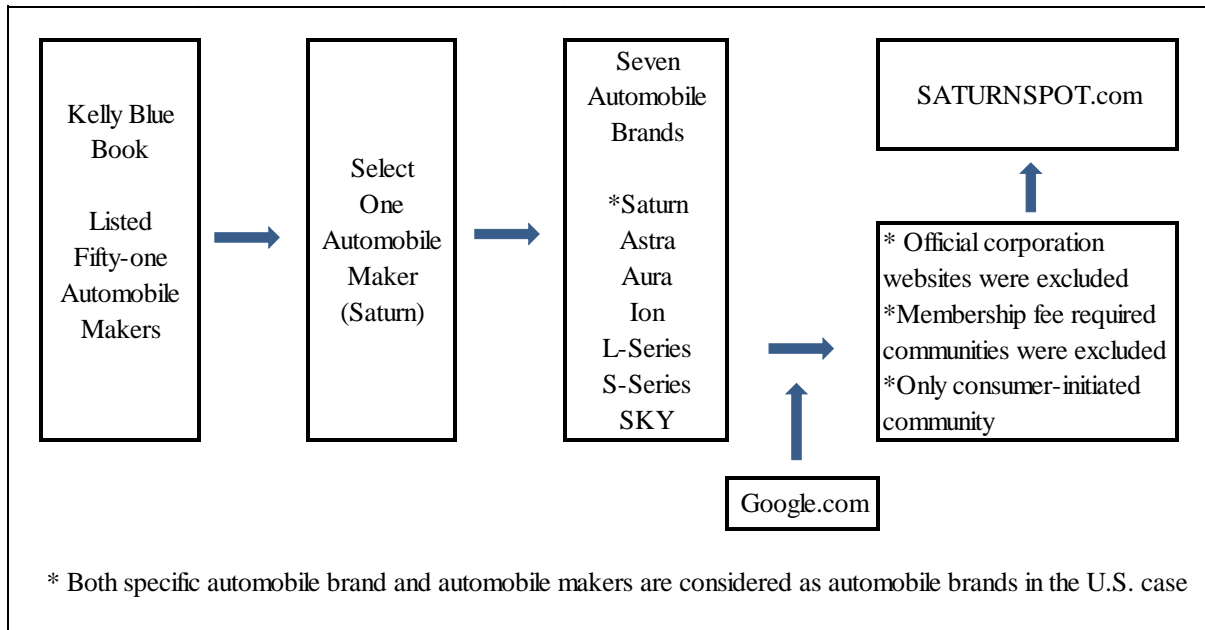
**Table 1 Automobile Producers in the U.S.**

| <b>Automobile Makers in the U.S. (Kelley Blue Book)</b> |              |    |               |    |             |
|---|--------------|----|---------------|----|-------------|
| 1   | Acura        | 18 | Honda         | 35 | MINI        |
| 2   | Alfa Romeo   | 19 | Hummer        | 36 | Nissan      |
| 3   | Aston Martin | 20 | Hyundai       | 37 | Peugeot     |
| 4   | Audi         | 21 | Infiniti      | 38 | Plymouth    |
| 5   | Bentley      | 22 | Isuzu         | 39 | Pontiac     |
| 6   | BMW          | 23 | Jaguar        | 40 | Porsche     |
| 7   | Buick        | 24 | Jeep          | 41 | Rolls-Royce |
| 8   | Cadillac     | 25 | Kia           | 42 | Saab        |
| 9   | Chevrolet    | 26 | Land Rover    | 43 | Saturn      |
| 10  | Chrysler     | 27 | Lexus         | 44 | Scion       |
| 11  | Daewoo       | 28 | Lincoln       | 45 | Smart       |
| 12  | Daihatsu     | 29 | Maserati      | 46 | Sterling    |
| 13  | Dodge        | 30 | Maybach       | 47 | Subaru      |
| 14  | Eagle        | 31 | Mazda         | 48 | Suzuki      |
| 15  | Ford         | 32 | Mercedes-Benz | 49 | Toyota      |
| 16  | Geo          | 33 | Mercury       | 50 | Volkswagen  |
| 17  | GMC          | 34 | Mitsubishi    | 51 | Volvo       |

In the U.S., some automobile manufacturers tend to create specific automobile brand name or used manufacturers' name on the specific automobile as a brand name. For example, some automobile companies used series with manufactures' name on the specific vehicle brand such as BMW' 3-series and Mercedes-Benz's C-class while other automobile companies used unique brand name for a new line of a production such as Ford Mustang and Nissan Altima. Therefore, specific automobile brand and automobile manufacturer as automobile brand itself were combined in the sample. To be comparable to one specific Korean automobile sample, one of automobile makers was randomly selected from the auto makers' list, and then its specific automobile brands and auto mobile makers were listed as the pool of the target automobile brands. One specific automobile brand was randomly selected from the list of automobile brands and automobile company brand.

In the case of the U.S. online brand community, the largest portal website, the Google search engine, which had over 72 percent of the search engine market share (McGee, 2010), was used to select automobile online communities by the most searched frequencies by listed on the first page of the Google search result by the keyword search of 'auto brand owners club.' SATURNSPOT.com was randomly selected as American automobile online brand community (See Figure 3b). The researcher registered as a member of the automobile online brand community, SATURNSPOT.com, in order to ask community members' motivation and community experience. The five interview questions were asked to community members who have their email contact information in public through email requests. Limited community members' contact information were available since some community members did not share their personal information with the other community members.

This step of research is designed to confirm the reliability and validity of the four types of online brand community orientation found in the previous content analysis study and



**Figure 3b The Sampling Process and the U.S. Automobile Online Brand Community**

thus to propose a model to explore the actual motivations of automobile online community members. In order to achieve the minimum level of understanding about online community member's different motivations to participate in brand communities in two different cultures, in South Korea and the U.S., this study was aimed for at least ten respondents from each brand community in each country.

## **Findings**

A total of twenty-one online community members' responses out of 240 email requests to the members of the two automobile online communities in the U.S. and South Korea were received. Eleven South Korean online community members and ten American online community members responded via emails. For the purpose of data analyses, all of community members' responses were categorized into four motivations of business, social network, communication, and information based on the relevance of responses: For example, if community members responses were related to automobile information such as auto turning, DIY, general automobile information, automobile evaluation, and repair information, those responses were coded as the information seeking category. Monetary involved activities such as auto part trade, buying / selling, price information, Flea market, and auto insurance were categorized as the business motivation. If community members mentioned build relationships with other members such as friendship, brotherhood, and offline meetings, those responses were put into the social network category. Lastly, if community members discussed person to person interactive experience in online, those were categorized into the communication motivation.

According to the data analysis results, information seeking is the most common motivation for community members to join and participate in their online brand communities

in the U.S. and South Korea (See Table 2a & 2b). In other words, the respondents wanted to know more about their cars and sought additional information, such as evaluation of other owners, maintenance, repairs, upgrades, and turning.

For instance, an American automobile online brand community member stated that “*I joined several sites to learn how to fix any issues w/ my car(s) that might pop up that I really didn't need to take it to a mechanic for. Other reasons were to see how other people hooked up their cars because I wanted to upgrade mine.*” A Korean automobile online brand community member stated that “*if I need to get A/S or my car repair, auto shop is the only option in South Korea. Therefore, I want to attain automobile related knowledge such as oil change and simple DIY tasks. I hope I can maintain my car under a good condition.*” They seemed to be interested in the knowledge of ‘do it yourself (DIY)’ and to share other community members’ ‘know-how’.

Some respondents from both countries also indicated their communication motivation to participate in the automobile online brand community. For example, a member of KAABC noted of the swiftness of responses that “*you can get a response in less than ten minutes if you posted any question on the community. If I know the answer of someone else's question, I also respond immediately.*” Another member said, “*I do not have enough time to participate in offline meetings these days. I am still posting some useful information and fun stuff for other members. I believe that if community members have too much experience of offline meetings, they want to go back to online activities and stay online only because online activities help to save time and costs.*” A member of AAABC also expressed the communication experience in the following manner, “*you have so many different people from so many different backgrounds that have found a way to come together under a common banner. Being a car guy myself I like to see the variety that such a community can bring.*”



**Table 2a Summary of American Community Members' Responses**

| United State |                                  |                               |                                |   |  |                              |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|------------------------------|
|              | Initial Motivation               | Like                          | Dislike                        | Activities                                | Current Motivation                                   | Relationship                 |
| 1            | To find problems, Information    | Information                   | Jerks                          | Information seeking<br>No offline meeting | Information  | No personal contact          |
| 2            | Information                      | advice/help                   |                                | Auto events<br>No specific activities     | Same as initial motivation                           | Contact A few member         |
| 3            | To meet other owners information | Information                   |                                | Posting / Responding articles             | Same as initial motivation                           | Some members                 |
| 4            | Information                      |                               | Rude Member                    | Sharing / seeking Information             | Same as initial motivation                           | Main participants            |
| 5            | Information                      | Frindly People Help           | Frindly People Help            | Ignorant Members                          | several communities                                  | Pretty Good                  |
| 6            | Purchased a car                  | Sharing good / bad experience |                                | Reading / Posting Comments                | Since GM not produce Saturn, Stop to visit community | Proactive members' names     |
| 7            | Information                      | sharing knowledge             | Pressure to click not interest | Sharing information meet other members    | Same as initial motivation                           | A few member (7)             |
| 8            | To find problems, Information    |                               |                                | Information seeking                       | Same as initial motivation                           | No social relationship       |
| 9            | Information                      | sharing information           |                                |   | Same as initial motivation                           | Some members                 |
| 10           | Information                      | Information Entertainment     |                                | Attending Meetings (Regional)             | Learn Culture  | Contact some members Offline |

**Table 2b Summary of Korean Community Members' Responses**

| South Korea |                                      |   |  |  |  |  |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
|             | Motivation                           | Like  | Dislike  | Activities   | Current Motivation                                 | Relationship   |
| 1           | Information<br>Social relationship   | Sharing Information,<br>Social Gathering            | Arguments<br>b/c many members,<br>Purchasing pressure      | Offline meetings,<br>Learn D.I.Y.                                  | Same with<br>initial motivation                    | Good Relationship  |
| 2           | Information<br>Purchasing auto parts | Huge information                                    | Scammers,<br>Trolls  | Offline meetings   | Information  | No relationship<br>in offline anymore                      |
| 3           | Information                          | Information<br>Meet diverse people                  | Hard to participate<br>offline meetings as<br>a new member | Learning and using<br>information<br>offline activities            | Talk about car to<br>Talk about personal<br>issues | Cycle period<br>Generation                                 |
| 4           | Knowledge                            | Information   | Not pretty<br>Homepage                                     | "Flea Market"  | Same with<br>initial motivation                    | Not comfortable with<br>new members                        |
| 5           | Information                          |   |  | Online / Offline<br>Activities                                     | Same with<br>initial motivation                    | Good Relationship  |
| 6           | Information,<br>Trade                | Sharing Information,<br>Extending social<br>Network | Incorrect Information,<br>Scammers                         | Offline Meetings,<br>Cooperating purchasing                        | Same with<br>initial motivation                    | Good Relationship  |
| 7           | Friendship<br>Information            | Sharing information<br>Meet diverse people          | Prejudice other<br>members                                 | Posting information<br>Offline Meetings                            | Same with<br>initial motivation                    | Good Relationship  |
| 8           | Information<br>Friendship            | Meet diverse people                                 | Trolls   | Offline meeting<br>Regional Chapter manager                        | Same with<br>initial motivation                    | Only attend online<br>this time                            |
| 9           | Information                          | Extend social network                               | Business oriented<br>community                             | Online / Offline<br>Activities                                     | Same with<br>initial motivation                    | Only small portion<br>of members<br>have good relationship |
| 10          | Information<br>Social networking     | Information   | Not yet  | Posting information<br>and pictures                                | Same with<br>initial motivation                    | Like brotherhoods  |
| 11          | Information                          | safety<br>quick response                            | Not yet  | Help other members<br>Posting pictures,<br>Hosting offline meeting | Get Information<br>to Help<br>new members          | Good Relationship  |

*There is also true entertainment value; i.e. Off Topic forum, or just the inherent hilarity of a bunch of people unhinged with no inhibitions and lots of opinions.”*

A couple of respondents from both countries mentioned business as a motivation to visit automobile online communities and to participate in community activities. A Korean community member stated that, *“I mainly visit the ‘Flea Market’ section of the website to trade or to buy auto parts in the online community. I can estimate prices of auto parts and catch up new trends of car accessories.”* An American respondent also mentioned that, *“I had recently purchased a Saturn Ion Redline which is a fairly quick vehicle out of the box that I planned on making quicker. There are a lot of other Ion owners that are available to ask questions and get tips and pointers from. There are also a lot of model specific aftermarket parts suppliers that I can get in touch with on the forum.”* Automobile community members might get auto price estimation when they purchase a new or old automobile through their online brand community. They can also get auto parts price after market through the communities.

However, there is a significant discrepancy in social motivation between American and Korean automobile community members. Most respondents of the Korean online community emphasized interpersonal relationships such as a friendship with the community via offline meetings. For example, a Korean respondent mentioned that, *“I have a good relationship with other members because I’m proactive in offline meetings. Almost all community members know me who is the manager/administrator of the Kyung Sang Province chapter of the community.”* Another Korean respondent said that, *“I already have close friends even though I am not an old member of the community. I build good relationships with other members through offline meetings of the online community. Our relationships seem like brotherhoods to me. I will keep trying to build good relationship with other members.”* The

other Korean respondent even mentioned that, *“I met other community members because we had the same interests about KORANDO. We talked about only our cars over night when we met the first time in offline, but we had started to talk about more personal issues in offline meetings since the first meeting and by getting know each other better. Thus, I feel like we are all brothers.”* Those Korean respondents expressed the close personal interaction and communication among other people in the online communities through their offline meetings.

On the other hand, American respondents rarely mentioned social network motivations and have limited relationship with few community members. For example, an American respondent said that, *“I don't interact with any of the members, no personal E-mails or anything like that.”* And the other member stated that, *“Not overly familiar. Some forum members are more familiar as they are much more present and vocal in the forums. Otherwise names, attitudes and avatars are familiar but not more profound then that.”*

In summary, the members of automobile online communities in both the US and South Korea pointed out information motivation as the most important reason to visit their online communities. They also cited business motivations for joining and participating in online communities in a similar degree with 2-3 occurrences in both countries. Online community members might participate in the community activities when they want to purchase a new or old car. In addition, they want to share all car related information and experience in order to maintain, repair, and upgrade their own car and found auto parts in the after-market trade through automobile online communities. Although the direct discussion about communication motivation did not occur in the interview, both American and Korean automobile online community members implied the reason for communication online was for convenience, since they do not have time and it is not cost effective to seek the information in person.

The only distinct difference in motivation orientation of automobile online community members between the two countries was that South Korean automobile online community members tended to have a higher level of social motivation, such as making new friends and building good relationships with other community members through online and offline activities, compared to American online community members. The qualitative approach of the study confirmed that community members' motivations to visit automobile online brand communities are consistent with the motivation typology by the previous study of content analysis on online communities (Park and McMillan, 2010). In other words, four different types of motivation orientation, information, social network, communication, and business, are well suited to observe motivation differences in different cultures and the U.S. and Korean automobile online brand community members have different motivation orientations. Therefore, the typology of motivation orientation is adopted to build a model of community motivation orientations, community experiences and community satisfaction in the different cultural contexts.

### **Research Questions**

This study mainly focuses on consumer-initiated automobile online brand communities in South Korea and the United States. The logic of the current study is that online brand community members in South Korea and the U.S. have different motivations and activities based on their cultural differences. Previous research has investigated offline communities in different cultural contexts. The logical extension of those previous studies is to examine the new trend of online brand communities across different cultures in order to understand the overall experience and consequences.

Park and McMillan (2010) categorized the contents of communication in the online brand communities into four motivational reasons for communication, information, business,

and social network. The initial qualitative study, reported here, validated that those dimensions exist in the experiences of members of automotive brand communities in both the United States and Korea. The literature, past studies, and the initial qualitative study all led to the development of a set of research questions and hypotheses about motivation orientations, cultural dimensions, community experiences and activities, and satisfaction.

RQ 1 > What are the differences in motivation orientations among automobile online brand community members in different cultural dimensions?

H1-1) As members of a collectivist society, Korean online brand community members are more likely to have social network motivations in their online brand community activities than are individualist Americans.

H1-2) As members of an individualistic society, American online brand community members are more likely to have business motivations in their online brand community activities than are collectivist Koreans.

H1-3) Koreans and Americans are expected to have similar communication and information motivations in their online brand community activities.

RQ2 > Are there any significant relationships between motivation orientations of online brand community members and their community experience and activities?

H2-1) Online community members who have stronger business motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to perceive lower levels of perceived risk.

H2-2) Online community members' four motivation orientations of business, communication, information, and social network are positively related to brand loyalty to their online brand communities.

H2-3) Online community members who have stronger social network motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to have high levels of trust toward both members and content in their online communities.

H2-4) Online community members who have stronger social network motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to have higher levels of membership identity.

H2-5) Online community members who have stronger social network motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to engage in offline behaviors.

H2-6) Online community members who have stronger social network motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to engage in word-of-mouth behaviors.

RQ3> Which factors of cultural dimension, demographics, motivation orientation, and community experience best predict overall satisfaction with an online brand community for online brand community members?

## **CHAPTER 4: METHOD**

To answer the research questions and test the hypotheses developed in the previous chapter, a quantitative online survey was developed. Survey participants were solicited from automobile online brand communities in both Korea and the United States.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

#### ***Automobile Online Brand Community Selection***

Five specific automobile online brand communities were randomly selected as the target communities in each country. The same random sampling method used for the qualitative portion of the study was again used for selecting ten automobile online brand communities. Five of American automobile online communities and South Korean automobile online communities were listed:

American automobile online communities- North American Motoring (Mini Cooper), Mustang Club (Mustang), The Hummer Network (Hummer), Jeepz.com (Jeep), and I-club.com (Subaru).

South Korean automobile online communities- Rezzo Club (Rezzo), Club Genesis Coupe (Genesis), Club Sorento (Sorento), Morning/ New Morning (Morning), and Club Beat (Matiz).

#### ***Sampling & Data Collection***

One of nonprobability sampling methods, convenience sampling, was used to request online brand community members' participation in the survey. Convenience sampling is the most commonly used sampling method in behavior science research and respondents were



selected based on the availability and willingness to participate in the survey (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). This study used available contact information of automobile online brand community members because there is no way to get contact information if the community members did not agree to disclose their personal information to the other community members.

Data collection was conducted from January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011 through surveymonkey.com website in both South Korea and the U.S. The researcher joined all of the targeted automobile online communities and sent email or messages to the other community members. All of the automobile online community members were able to access to the other community members' contact information if community members agreed to open their personal information to the other members. There were no incentives offered for their participation in the online survey.

Online community members were asked to provide their demographic factors, information about their motivations, personal community's experiences and activities, and overall satisfaction of their online brand communities. Relationships between community members' experience and their motivation were examined. All question items are adopted or modified from previous studies (See Table 3).

## **Measures of Categories**

### ***Motivations***

The previous study on orientations of online brand community was adopted in order to explore relationships between online community members' motivations and culture contexts (Park and McMillan, 2009). Four different motivation orientations of information, social, business, and communication were measured on the 5 point Likert-scale from 1: no

**Table 3 Summary of Variables & Modified Questionnaires Sources**

| Variables           | Sources                                 |
|---------------------|---|
| Motivation          | Park and McMillan, 2009                 |
| Brand Loyalty       | Chang and Chen, 2009                    |
| Trust               | Bart, Shankar, Sultan, and Urban, 2005  |
| Perceived Risk      | Kim, Femin, and Rao, 2008               |
| Membership Identity | Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Hemmam, 2005 |
| Offline Behavior    | Park and McMillan, 2009                 |
| Word of Mouth       | Hong and Yang, 2009                     |
| Satisfaction        | McAlexander, Kim, and Robert, 2003      |

motivation at all to 5: very strong motivation. Based on the previous theoretical understanding, the following research question and hypotheses are proposed.

RQ 1 > What are the differences in motivation orientations among automobile online brand community members in different cultural dimensions?

According to the qualitative study result of the previous section, the motivation of automobile online brand communities between the U.S. and Korea was different: Korean community members had a stronger level of social motivation than American community members. As a high level of collectivistic culture, Koreans tended to have a stronger social motivation than Americans in online. Similarly, Korean college students tend to seek social supports while American college students tend to seek entertainment from the social network sites (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011). Based on the logical linkage, H<sub>1-1</sub> was proposed.

H1-1) As members of a collectivist society, Korean online brand community members are more likely to have social network motivations in their online brand community activities than are individualist Americans.

The result of the qualitative study indicated Americans tended to have a high level of individualistic characteristics than Koreans (See Figure 4a & 4b). In addition, according to La Ferle and Kim (2006), Americans had stronger motivations in online shopping than Koreans. Thus, H<sub>1-2</sub> was proposed.

H1-2) As members of an individualistic society, American online brand community members are more likely to have business motivations in their online brand community activities than are collectivist Koreans.

From the qualitative study of automobile online brand communities, information seeking and communication were common motivation between the U.S. and Korean

automobile online brand community members (See Figure 4a & 4b). Thus, the following hypothesis is posited.

H1-3) Koreans and Americans are expected to have similar communication and information motivations in their online brand community activities.

Independent sample t-tests will be utilized to test hypotheses 1-1 through 1-3 since the two different cultures of the U.S. and South Korea are compared in exploring motivation orientations of online communities.

### *Community Experiences*

Online brand community members' experiences and activities are measured within the relationship with community members' motivations. These variables and specific questions are explored, developed, and constructed to fit in the framework of the proposed theoretical model. In order to measure the degree of opinions, perceptions, experiences, and attitudes, a five-point scale of the Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree is utilized (See appendix 1).

RQ2 > Are there any significant relationships between motivation orientations of online brand community members and their community experience and activities?

### *Perceived risk*

Perceived risk in this study is defined as online community members' uncertainties about information security and transactions in their online brand communities. In order to measure community members' perceived risk, eight items are adopted and modified from Kim, Ferrin, and Rao's (2008) study and used a 5-point Likert-scale from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree. According to Bontempo, Bottom, and Weber (1997), consumers in a high level of uncertainty avoidance culture do not want to take a risk due to stronger fear of loss than consumers in low level of uncertainty culture. As discussed above, Korean people have a

higher level of uncertainty avoidance culture than Americans. Thus, the following hypothesis is posited.

H2-1) Online community members who have stronger business motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to perceive lower levels of perceived risk.

### Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is defined as community member's attitudes toward their online brand communities in terms of revisit intention and favorability of their own online communities. A total of five items are adopted and modified from the previous research of Hong & Yang (2009). A five-point scale of the Likert scale is used to measure community member's brand loyalty from no loyalty at all (value of 1) to strong loyalty (value of 5). According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), brand community is a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (p.412). This implies that automobile online brand community members who join an online community for any reason or motivation have certain levels of brand loyalty toward a specific automobile brand. Therefore, community members' community activities based on their motivations tend to enhance their brand loyalty toward automobile online brand communities and specific automobile brands. Hegal and Armstrong (1997) suggested that community building could be helpful in increasing 'site stickiness' which makes customers stay longer, and return more often to the website (Hegal & Armstrong, 1997). From previous theoretical understandings of building consumer loyalty online (Griffin, 1996; Holland & Baker, 2001), the positive relationship between consumers' motivation orientations and brand loyalty is expected and the following hypothesis is posited.

H2-2) Online community members' four motivation orientations of business, communication, information, and social network are positively related to brand loyalty to their online brand communities.

### Trust

Trust measures in this research include not only trust toward content and security in their online community web sites, but also trust toward interpersonal relationships with other community members and managers of their automobile online brand communities. A total of seven items are adopted and modified from Bart, Shankar, Sultan, and Urban' study (2007) and measured on a five-point Likert-scale from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree. Kavanaugh, Reese, Carroll, and Rosson (2005) found that people who are actively engage in social network in their communities tend to have a high level of trust toward other community members. Implying the theoretical connection, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2-3) Online community members who have stronger social network motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to have high levels of trust toward both members and content in their online communities.

### Membership Identity

Membership identification in the current study means sharing common values with other members within the boundary of an automobile online brand community. As a fundamental element of connection between members, *consciousness of kind* is a core concept of brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). According to Koh, Kim, Butler, and Bock (2007), social offline interaction among online community members strengthen the members' community identification. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2-4) Online community members who have stronger social network motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to have higher levels of membership identity

A total of six items will be used to measure membership identity and those items are adopted and modified from a European automobile online brand community study (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005). Identification is also measured on a five-point Likert-scale from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree.

### Offline behavior

Offline meetings are the common activities among members of Korean automobile online brand communities. Offline activities were measured in Park and McMillan's 2009 study. Offline interactions among online community members of online communities help to reduce community problems through knowledge sharing (Matzat, 2010).

Community members are asked about offline meeting experiences, participation intention, and the most concerning factor of attending offline meetings. Community members' participation intention and the number of offline meeting experience are measured as offline behavior. Intention of offline meeting participation is measured on a five-point Likert-scale from 1: very unlikely to 5: very likely, and participation experience is also measured on an interval scale variable. The other questions related to offline experience and community service are dichotomous questions and are the most concerning factor of attending offline meetings and types of offline meetings by automobile online brand communities.

Participation in offline meetings could help to build intense social relationship between members in online communities (Williams & Cothrel, 2000; Xie 2008). According to the results of the qualitative research of study 1, Korean automobile online brand

community members tended to have a higher level of social network motivation than American automobile online brand community members. Therefore, H<sub>2-5</sub> is deposited.

H2-5) Online community members who have stronger social network motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to engage in offline behaviors.

### Word of Mouth (WOM)

Word of mouth means intention and behavior of positive referral about automobile online brand communities and the automobile brand to others. In the measurement of word-of-mouth, this study utilizes six items from Hong and Yang's (2009) study. A total of six items are measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree. Brown, Broderick, and Lee (2007) pointed out that person to person offline interaction shifted to the social interaction between individuals in online communities. They argued that online community members had an eager to WOM to the other community members because they wanted to build a good social relationship. Social interaction activities in offline could increase trust in the other online community members (Matzat, 2010) and it could be positively related to the word of mouth intention. Thus, H<sub>2-6</sub> was proposed.

H2-6) Online community members who have stronger social network motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to engage in word-of-mouth behaviors

Hierarchical regression analyses will be utilized to test H<sub>2-1</sub> through H<sub>2-6</sub> since four motivation orientations as independent variables and brand loyalty, trust, perceived risk, membership identification, offline behavior (only intention), and word of mouth variables as dependent variables are all measured in continuous scales. The nationality and other demographic factors such as gender, age, education, socio-economic status, and religious affiliation will be controlled for testing the hypotheses. Actual offline experiences and



behaviors are coded as dichotomous values of 'yes' or 'no' variables, and thus a logistic regression model will be used to test hypothesis<sub>2-5</sub>.

### *Satisfaction*

Community member's satisfaction with the automobile online brand community is defined as community member's overall evaluation regarding their community experience. The respondents will be asked whether the experience exceeds personal expectations. These question items are adopted and modified from McAlexander, Kim, and Robert's study (2003). A total of three Likert-scale items from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree) are used to measure overall satisfaction of online community members. From the lack of comprehensive understanding in satisfaction, the following research question is asked rather than proposing a hypothesis.

RQ3) Which factors of cultural dimension, demographics, motivation orientation, and community experience best predict overall satisfaction with an online brand community for online brand community members?

A multiple regression test was conducted to evaluate the relationship (RQ3) between continuous-scale motivation independent variables and continuous-scale dependent satisfaction variable after controlling demographic factors.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS OF MAIN STUDY**

### **Response Rate**

An online survey was conducted with the members of ten selected automobile online brand communities, five communities for American cases and five for Korean cases (See Table 4). A total of 388 automobile community members, 202 from South Korea, and 186 from the U.S., participated in the online survey. A total of 5,326 emails, of which 2,810 emails targeted Korean automobile online community members, and 2,516 emails targeted American automobile online community members, were sent out asking for their participation in the survey. As the result, the response rate was about 7.3 percent. Although the response rate is somewhat lower, such rates were still accepted by a number of studies utilized online surveys. For instance, an online surveyed study that sent out about 30,000 email invitations for the survey got 1,590 responses and it is 5.3 percent response rate (Tourangeau, Couper, & Conrad, 2004). Online survey tended to have about twenty percent lower response rate on average compared to mail survey (Shih & Fan, 2009) and the average online survey response rates were decreased by more spam emails and better filtering systems (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004).

However, there were only 314 usable and valid responses, of which 165 were South Korean, and 149 were American online community members. The reason for this relatively low level of complete survey responses was perhaps the relatively long questionnaire that had 72 questions and it took at least fifteen minutes were expected to complete the survey. The participants could quit the survey anytime. The length of the survey could influence on the response rates. According to Ray and Tabor (2003), online survey response rates will increase

**Table 4 The Summary of Selected Automobile Online Brand Communities**

| Summary of Selected Automobile Online Brand Communities |                                       |                   |                    |  |   |   |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Nationality   | Name of Community                     | Number of Members | Community Launched | Information  | Business  | Communication   | Social Network  |
| U.S.A   | North American Motoring (Mini Cooper) | 94,567            | February, 2002     | News<br>DIY<br>Vendors Review<br>Products Review   | Buy & Sell<br>Market Place  | General Forums<br>Regional Forums   | Member Gallery  |
|   | Mustang Club of America (Mustang)     | 10,849            | April, 1965*       | MCA News   | Online Store<br>Buy & Sell<br>Website Sponsors  | Local Clubs<br>New Members  | Events<br>Member Gallery  |
|   | The Hummer Network (Hummer)           | N / A             | June, 1996         | Info. Data Base<br>Info. Forum   | Market Place<br>Buy & Sell<br>Parts and Accessories<br>Donation<br>Dearle Finder  | Regional Forums<br>Q / A  | Meeting Events  |
|   | Jeepz.com (Jeep)                      | 14,250            | April, 2005        | Technical Forums   | Jeepz Store   | New Members<br>General Chat<br>Local Board<br>Chat<br>Arcade Game                         | Social Groups<br>Events   |
|   | I-club.com (Subaru)                   | 40,646            | November, 2002     | Vendors, Tunings, Service and Parts Review<br>Club News<br>Technical Forums                                | I-club Sponsors<br>Vendors Market Place<br>Buy & Sell<br>Advertising<br>Used Car Buy & Sell   | General Forums<br>Q / A<br>Regional Forums  | Member Gallery  |
| Korea   | Rezzo Club (Rezzo)                    | 21,676            | July, 2001         | DIY<br>LPG Station Info.<br>Free Parking Info.<br>Maintenance  | Flea Market<br>Free Market<br>Club Stickers<br>Cooperative Purchasing<br>Store Advertising<br>Used Car Buy & Sell<br>Auto Repair Review (Price & Service) | Bulltin Board<br>Local Board<br>Q / A<br>Attendance Check                                 | Regular Meeting<br>Offline Meeting<br>Meeting Pictures                                    |
|   | Club Genesis Coupe (Genesis)          | N / A             | June, 2008         | Auto Tuning<br>DIY<br>Maintenance<br>Famous Restaurants Info.<br>Auto News<br>Auto Tuning<br>Motor Sports  | New Car Consult<br>Cooperative Purchasing<br>Flea Market<br>New Auto-Part Purchasing<br>Club Stickers   | Bulltin Board<br>Local Board<br>Q / A<br>New Member Greeting<br>Attendance Check<br>Humor | Regular Meeting<br>Instant Meeting<br>Member Pictures<br>Meeting Picture<br>Meeting Video |
|   | Club Sorento R (Sorento)              | 58,347            | October, 2008      | Information Board<br>Auto Part Review<br>Maintenance<br>Auto Tuning<br>Auto News<br>Travel & Drive courses | Used Buy & Sell<br>Store Recommendation<br>Cooperative Purchasing<br>Club Stickers<br>Auto Insurance Estimation   | Bulltin Board<br>Local Board<br>Q / A   | Member Pictures   |
|   | Morning/ New Morning (Moming)         | 9,182             | December, 2007     | Auto Tuning<br>DIY<br>Auto Info.<br>Auto Cleaning Info.  | Flea Market<br>Free Market<br>Club Stickers<br>Cooperative Purchasing<br>Store Advertising  | Bulltin Board<br>Q / A<br>Humor<br>New Member Greeting                                    | Instant Meeting<br>Regular Meeting<br>Member Pictures<br>Meeting Pictures                 |
|   | Club Beat (Matiz)                     | 18,842            | September, 2008    | Beat (Club) News<br>Auto Tuning<br>DIY   | Club Market<br>Buy & Sell<br>Cooperative Purchasing<br>Club Event   | Bulltin Board<br>Local Board<br>Humor<br>Q / A  | Instant Meeting<br>Regular Meeting<br>Club Gallery  |

\* Mustang Club of America (MCA) had the first organizational meeting with ten people in March 1964.

if the survey is short. In addition, the online survey method had a crucial limitation in that it might have been unable to reach potential survey participants because web mail users might have set up a high level of internet security to avoid junk emails or spam mail, which this survey may have been flagged as (Evans & Mathur, 2006; Sills & Song, 2002). A detailed discussion of other possible reasons for the low response rate will be addressed in the discussion section.

### **Demographic Factors**

The respondents consisted of 282 males (90%) and 32 females (10%); 150 South Korean males (90.9%), 132 American males (88.6%), fifteen South Korean females (9.1%), and seventeen American females (11.4%). This response rate reflects the pattern of male-dominant participation in these automobile online communities. For example, a similar online survey research paper about European automobile online brand communities had 529 respondents from 101 different automobile communities. In that research paper, 86.9 percent were male and 13.1 percent were female (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005). This implies that the dominant male gender rate is caused by the characteristics of automobile product categories.

The age range of the respondents was from 20 to 76 years old. The average age of South Korean automobile community members was 32.73 years old and the average age of American automobile community members was 42.92 years old. Interestingly, Korean automobile community members were about ten years younger than American automobile community members. More specifically, only 1.2 percent (n=2) of South Korean community members in the sample were over 50 years old whereas 30.9 percent (n= 46) of American respondents were over an age of 50. This age discrepancy between the U.S. and South Korea

is congruent with the different Facebook users' age distribution in the two countries. For example, the percentage of U.S. Facebook users in the 18-34 year old age group is about 49 percent while the same Facebook user age group in Korea is about 73 percent. In addition, the percentage of Facebook users over the age of 55 in the U.S. is about ten percent of the total Facebook users, while the same age group in Korea is only two percent of the total Facebook user population (Choi, 2010).

In terms of current marital status, more American participants were married than Korean respondents. 65.1% (n=97) of the American online community members were married but only 41.2 percent (n=68) of the Korean members were married. While 55.2 percent (n=91) of the Korean automobile online brand community members were 'single, never married,' only 24.8% (n=37) of American automobile online brand community were 'single, never married.' There were four divorced individuals and two widows in the Korean automobile online brand communities and fourteen divorced members and one separated member in the American communities. The marital status of community members and the discrepancy between Americans and Korean online community members is related to other demographic factors, social networks, personal attitudes and behaviors, and may stem from the average age difference of the participants. In order to be used in multiple regression analyses, the categorical variable of the marital status was recoded as a dichotomous dummy variable of 'single vs. married'. Divorced members and widows were merged into a single category, and separated members were merged into the married category.

A total of 312 community members out of 314 (99.4%) owned an automobile and 311 community members (99%) owned an automobile of the same brand of their automobile online brand community. The number of respondents from each automobile online brand communities in South Korea and the U.S is listed (See Table 5a).

**Table 5a Frequency of Automobile Online Brand Community**

| <b>Nationality</b> | <b>Name of Automobile Online Communities</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent (%)</b> |
|--------------------|--|------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Korea</b>       | Morning / New Morning                        | 40               | 24.2               |
|                    | Rezzo Club                                   | 23               | 13.9               |
|                    | Club Genesis Coupe                           | 21               | 12.7               |
|                    | Club Sorento                                 | 62               | 37.6               |
|                    | Club Beat (Matiz)                            | 19               | 11.5               |
|                    | Total  | 165              | 100.0              |
| <b>U.S.A</b>       | North American Motoring.com (Mini Cooper)    | 56               | 37.6               |
|                    | Mustang Club (Mustang)                       | 37               | 24.8               |
|                    | The Hummer Network (Hummer)                  | 18               | 12.1               |
|                    | Jeepz.com (Zeeep)                            | 19               | 12.8               |
|                    | i-club.com (Subaru)                          | 17               | 11.4               |
|                    | Others                                       | 2                | 1.3                |
|                    | Total  | 149              | 100.0              |

American and Korean online community members had similar levels of education. 53.3 percent (n=168) of all respondents had at least four-year college degrees or higher education; 51.5 percent (n=85) of Korean respondents and 55.7 percent (n=83) of American respondents had four year college or higher education degrees; 25.5 percent (n=42) of Korean respondent and 23.5 percent (n=35) of American respondent had high school diplomas or lower education levels.

97.5 percent (n=156) out of 160 Korean automobile online brand community members resided in suburban areas (38.8%), urban areas (32.5%), or metropolitan areas (26.2%). Only 2.5 percent (n=4) of respondents came from rural areas. Comparatively, American automobile online community members resided in sub-urban areas (46.9%), metropolitan areas (19.7%), rural areas (19.0%), and urban areas (14.3%). 55.8 percent (n=92) of the Korean automobile online brand community member respondents perceived their socio-economic statuses as low or lower-middle classes, whereas only fourteen (9.4%) American automobile online brand community members responded that their socio-economic statuses were low, or lower-middle classes. While 39 percent (n=58) of American automobile online brand community members responded that they belonged to the upper-middle or upper classes, only 11.5 percent (n=19) of Korean automobile online brand community members responded they belonged to the upper-middle class or upper class (See Table 5b).

## **Cultural Differences**

Research question one asked about the differences in motivation orientations among automobile online brand community members across different cultures in the U.S. and South Korea when they participated in the online community's activities. More specifically, H<sub>1-1</sub> expected that as members of a collectivist society, Korean online brand community members

**Table 5b Socio-economic Statuses**

| <b>Socio-economic Class</b> |                    |                           |                     |                           |                    |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| <b>Nationality</b>          | <b>Lower Class</b> | <b>Lower-Middle Class</b> | <b>Middle Class</b> | <b>Upper-Middle Class</b> | <b>Upper Class</b> | <b>Total</b> |
| <b>Korea</b>                | 25 (15.2%)         | 67 (40.6%)                | 54 (32.7%)          | 15 (9.1%)                 | 4 (2.4%)           | 165          |
| <b>USA</b>                  | 1 (0.7%)           | 13 (8.7%)                 | 77 (51.7%)          | 53 (35.6%)                | 5 (3.4%)           | 149          |
| <b>Total</b>                | 26 (8.3%)          | 80 (25.5%)                | 131 (41.7%)         | 68 (21.7%)                | 9 (2.9%)           | 314          |



would be more likely to have social network motivations in their online brand community activities than individualist Americans. On the other hand,  $H_{1-2}$  predicted that as members of an individualistic society, American online brand community members would be more likely to have business motivations in joining and participating in their online brand community activities than collectivist Koreans.  $H_{1-3}$  predicted that there would be no differences in communication and information motivations in their online brand community activities between Korean and American members.

To answer RQ1, an independent sample t-test was conducted, testing mean differences in motivation orientations between the two different cultures of the U.S. and South Korea. According to the results, there were different levels of motivations between Korean and American automobile online brand community members in social network, communication, and business via their online brand communities. However, the level of information motivation was somewhat similar between two countries' automobile online community members (See Table 6).

More specifically, the results indicated that Korean automobile online community members ( $M=3.36$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ) had a stronger social network motivation than American automobile online community members ( $M=2.64$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ). Thus, hypothesis $_{1-1}$  was supported. However, Korean automobile online community members also tended to have a stronger business motivations ( $M=3.42$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ) than American automobile online community members ( $M=2.83$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ). Therefore, hypothesis $_{1-2}$  was not supported.

In addition, Korean automobile online community members ( $M=3.53$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ) had stronger communication motivations than American automobile online community members ( $M=3.21$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ). However, there was no statistical difference in information motivation

**Table 6 Result of Independent Samples T-Test**

| <b>Independent Samples T-Test</b> |                    |             |                       |                        |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Motivation</b>                 | <b>Nationality</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. Deviation</b> | <b>t- value (sig.)</b> |
| <b>Information</b>                | <b>Korea</b>       | 4.35        | 0.704                 | 1.934 (.054)           |
|                                   | <b>USA</b>         | 4.19        | 0.739                 |                        |
| <b>Social Network**</b>           | <b>Korea</b>       | 3.36        | 1.071                 | 6.094 (.001)           |
|                                   | <b>USA</b>         | 2.64        | 1.014                 |                        |
| <b>Communication**</b>            | <b>Korea</b>       | 3.53        | 0.973                 | 2.857 (.005)           |
|                                   | <b>USA</b>         | 3.21        | 0.963                 |                        |
| <b>Business**</b>                 | <b>Korea</b>       | 3.42        | 1.031                 | 5.122 (.001)           |
|                                   | <b>USA</b>         | 2.83        | 1.038                 |                        |

\*\*p ≤ .01, \*p ≤ .05

between Korean (M=4.35, SD=0.70) and American (M=4.19, SD=0.74) automobile online community members. Therefore, hypothesis<sub>1-3</sub> was only partially supported.

## **Community Experience Measurement**

Research question 2 and six hypotheses from H<sub>2-1</sub> to H<sub>2-6</sub> expected certain relationships between motivation orientations and community experiences. For measuring community experiences as dependent variables, a Principal Component Factor analysis was conducted in order to find the patterns of relevance or reliability among different items or variables for each of the following indices: loyalty, trust, perceived risk, membership identification, WOM, and satisfaction. If factor loading scores were above 0.5 in each factor dimension, the items in the dimension were generally acceptable to be merged as an index (Singh, Pandey, Nagar, & Dutt, 2010).

In order to check the internal consistency of each index, a Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was utilized. Cronbach's Alpha reliability refers to how well different items can be constructed into a single uni-dimensional scale. In social sciences, a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.7 or higher is considered an "acceptable" level of reliability (Nunnally, 1978). After confirming the reliability of each index using a Principal Component Factor analysis and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, each single index of Community Experience such as: loyalty, trust, perceived risk, membership identification, WOM, and satisfaction, was created by the average value of the items within each community experience.

### ***Perceived Risk***

A total of seven questions were asked in measuring perceived risk. Six questions were merged after conducting a principal component factor analysis with the factor score of 0.5, and a reliable level of Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.792. The six questions were: I feel

secure in providing personal information (e.i. credit card number) for online purchases (factor score of 0.776) - reversed recode; I feel the risk associated with online purchasing is low (factor score of 0.664) - reversed recode; The security issue of personal information is a major obstacle affecting my business activities in the automobile online brand community (factor score of .541); I would feel totally safe providing personal information to the automobile online brand community (factor score of .733) - reversed recode; Overall, the automobile online brand community is a safe place to transmit personal information - reversed recode (factor score of .811); and I feel the contents (automobile & other business information) of the automobile online brand community are protected from non-community members - reversed recode (factor score of .651). One of the seven perceived risk questions, 'whether I worry about the automobile online community continuing to charge my credit card, even after I canceled an order (factor score of .465),' was excluded from the index because the component factor score is below the critical level of 0.5.

H<sub>2-1</sub> expected that if automobile online brand community members' had a strong business motivation, their perceived risk of the community would be relatively low. In order to observe the embedded effects of members' motivations on perceived risk within different cultures and beyond various demographic characteristics, the same hierarchical regression analysis was used. According to the results, the cultural context of countries explained 11.2 percent of the variance in the level of perceived risk among the online community members. The block of demographic characteristics of community members explained additional 2.3 percent of the level of perceived risk. The main predictors of motivation orientation provided additional 3.9 percent of variance accounted for perceived risk (See Table 7).

The hierarchical regression analysis results indicated that communication motivation ( $\beta = -.139$ ,  $t = -2.658$ ,  $p = .008$ ) was the only statistically significant factor among the

**Table 7 R-Square Changes of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results**

| Community Experience      | Nationality Demographic Factors |                | R Square | Motivations    | R Square |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|----------|----------------|----------|
|                           | R <sup>2</sup>                  | R <sup>2</sup> | Change   | R <sup>2</sup> | Change   |
| Loyalty                   | 0.010                           | 0.029          | 0.019    | 0.249**        | 0.220    |
| Trust                     | 0.004                           | 0.021          | 0.016    | 0.146**        | 0.125    |
| Perceived Risk            | 0.112**                         | 0.135**        | 0.023    | 0.174**        | 0.039    |
| Membership Identification | 0.003                           | 0.052          | 0.049    | 0.342**        | 0.290    |
| Offline Behavior          | 0.113**                         | 0.148**        | 0.036    | 0.312**        | 0.163    |
| Word of Mouth (WOM)       | 0.123**                         | 0.156**        | 0.033    | 0.296**        | 0.140    |

\*\*p≤ .01, \*p≤ .05

various motivation orientations that determine perceived risk (See Table 8). If automobile online brand community members have a communication motivation that is a unit higher on a scale of 5, their perceived risk decreased by 0.139 on that same 5 unit scale. In other words, community members' strong communication motivations could reduce the level of perceived risk. However, business motivation was not a statistically significant factor of perceived risk to the community members. Thus the  $H_{2-1}$  was not confirmed.

The cultural circumstance of the motivation orientation, nationality, was a statistically significant predictor of perceived risk of automobile online brand community members ( $\beta = -.368$ ,  $t = -3.737$ ,  $p = .001$ ). The findings indicated that Korea automobile online brand community members had a higher level of perceived risk than American automobile online brand community members. Similarly, a previous risk perception study that compared cultural differences in the context of online shopping found that Korean internet users had a higher level of social risk and perceived risk in online shopping than American internet users (Ko, Jung, Kim, & Shim, 2004).

### ***Brand Loyalty***

One of community experience variables, loyalty, was created by combining five different items that asked questions on different types of loyalty. The five questions were: I try to visit the automobile online brand community whenever I need to find some information (factor score of 0.579); I like to visit the automobile online brand community (factor score of 0.760); To me this automobile online brand community is the best website to visit (factor score of 0.810); I believe that this is my favorite online community (factor score of 0.779); When I need to purchase an automobile related product, this community is my first choice (factor score of 0.604). The loyalty index of the automobile online brand community variable achieved a high Cronback's Alpha score of .744.

**Table 8 Motivation Orientations on Perceived Risk, Loyalty, & Trust**

|                             | Perceived Risk |                 | Loyalty |                | Trust  |                |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------|----------------|--------|----------------|
|                             | Coef.          | t (sig.)        | Coef.   | t (sig.)       | Coef.  | t (sig.)       |
| <b>Constant</b>             | 4.170          | 11.693 (.001)** | 1.667   | 5.391 (.001)** | 2.370  | 7.736 (.001)** |
| <b>Cultural Context</b>     |                |                 |         |                |        |                |
| <b>Nationality</b>          | -0.368         | -3.737 (.001)** | 0.081   | .964 (.336)    | 0.178  | 2.224 (.027)*  |
| <b>Demographic Factors</b>  |                |                 |         |                |        |                |
| <b>Gender</b>               | -0.048         | -.397 (.692)    | 0.016   | .151 (.880)    | -0.030 | -.290 (.772)   |
| <b>Age</b>                  | -0.004         | -1.035 (.302)   | -0.001  | -.017 (.987)   | 0.001  | -.179 (.858)   |
| <b>Socio-economic Class</b> |                |                 |         |                |        |                |
| <b>Married</b>              | -0.042         | -.494 (.621)    | 0.014   | .182 (.855)    | -0.004 | -.054 (.957)   |
| <b>Education</b>            | 0.056          | 1.680 (.094)    | 0.049   | 1.700 (.090)   | 0.018  | .649 (.517)    |
| <b>Urban</b>                | 0.010          | .115 (.909)     | 0.066   | .862 (.390)    | -0.013 | -.184 (.854)   |
| <b>Rural</b>                | -0.009         | -.067 (.946)    | 0.044   | .377 (.706)    | -0.008 | -.073 (.942)   |
| <b>Motivations</b>          |                |                 |         |                |        |                |
| <b>Information</b>          | -0.020         | -.388 (.698)    | 0.147   | 3.254 (.001)** | 0.058  | 1.394 (.164)   |
| <b>Social Network</b>       | 0.008          | .151 (.880)     | 0.084   | 2.005 (.046)*  | 0.078  | 2.012 (.045)*  |
| <b>Communication</b>        | -0.139         | -2.658 (.008)** | 0.156   | 3.589 (.001)** | 0.137  | 3.386 (.001)** |
| <b>Business</b>             | -0.007         | -.207 (.836)    | 0.145   | 4.598 (.001)** | 0.013  | .432 (.666)    |
| <b>F</b>                    |                | 4.534           |         | 8.095          |        | 3.721          |
| <b>p</b>                    |                | 0.001           |         | 0.001          |        | 0.001          |
| <b>R<sup>2</sup></b>        |                | 0.174           |         | 0.249          |        | 0.146          |

\*\*p ≤ .01, \*p ≤ .05

H<sub>2-2</sub> predicted that automobile online brand community members' four motivation orientations of business, communication, information, and social network would be positively related to their community loyalty. In order to control the cultural context of both countries, and their demographic variability in exploring the nested relationships between the community members' motivations and their levels of royalty to the communities, a hierarchical regression model was utilized. In the first step, the cultural environment of the countries was controlled as the first tier of the analysis. In the second step, the block of demographic factors including gender, age, socio-economic status, marital status, education, and type of residency were controlled. In the last stage, the main factors of motivations were regressed on the community experience of loyalty.

According to the model, the cultural context of the two countries explained 1 percent of the variance in the level of loyalty among the online community members. The demographic characteristics of community members explained an additional 1.9 percent of the level of loyalty to the community. The main predictors of motivation orientation provided an additional 22 percent of the variance accounted for loyalty (See Table 7).

After controlling for cultural contexts and demographic variability, the results indicated that all four motivations – orientations of information ( $\beta = .147$ ,  $t = 3.254$ ,  $p = .001$ ), social orientation ( $\beta = .084$ ,  $t = 2.005$ ,  $p = .046$ ), communication ( $\beta = .156$ ,  $t = 3.589$ ,  $p = .001$ ), and business ( $\beta = .145$ ,  $t = 4.598$ ,  $p = .001$ ) – were statistically significant predictors of loyalty among automobile online community members. If a unit of business, information, and community motivation on the scale of five increased, the level of community loyalty also increased by .147, .084, 0.156, and .145 on the scale of five respectively. Therefore, H<sub>2-2</sub> was supported (See Table 8).



## ***Trust***

A total of seven questions were used to develop the measure of trust. The seven questions were: My automobile online brand community appears to be more trustworthy than other automobile online brand communities I have visited (factor score of 0.647); I trust the manager(s) of the automobile online brand community (factor score of 0.805); I trust the contents and information of the automobile online brand community (factor score of 0.789); I trust other members of the automobile online brand community (factor score of 0.675); I trust that the online transaction system of the automobile online brand community (factor score of 0.659); I trust that my personal information is well protected by the automobile online brand community (factor score of 0.687); and overall, I trust my automobile online brand community (factor score of 0.801). With high principal component factor scores and a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.844, all seven questions were merged into a single index variable of trust. H<sub>2-3</sub> expected that a positive relationship would exist between business motivations of the automobile online brand community members and the level of trust toward online communities.

In testing the nested effects of members' motivations on trust after controlling cultural and demographic differences, the same manner of three block hierarchical analysis was adopted. The results indicated that the cultural context of the countries explained 0.4 percent of the variance in the level of trust among the online community members. The demographic characteristics of community members explained an additional 1.6 percent of the level of trust in the community. The main predictors of motivation orientation provided additional 12.5 percent of variance accounted for trust (See Table 7).

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis indicated that communication motivations ( $\beta = .137$ ,  $t=3.386$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and social network motivations ( $\beta = .078$ ,  $t=2.012$ ,

$p = .045$ ) were statistically significant predictors of trust among different motivation orientations (See Table 8). If a unit of communication motivation and social network motivation on the scale of 5 increased, the level of trust also increased by .139 and .085 on the scale of 5 responsively. Therefore, as  $H_{2-3}$  posited, the expected relationship between social network motivations and trust was confirmed.

Among external circumstance of motivation orientation, nationality was a statistically significant predictor of automobile online brand community members' trust toward their online communities ( $\beta = .178$ ,  $t = 2.224$ ,  $p = .027$ ). American community members had a stronger level of trust than Korean community members. Beyond the discussion of individualistic versus collectivistic cultures, a number of studies found that trust is a unique element separated from cultural circumstances and interpreted differently across different cultures. For example, Jin, Park, and Kim (2007) found that Americans tend to have a higher level of trust-satisfaction link than Koreans. These previous studies support the finding that members of AAOBC had a higher level of trust than members of KAOBCs.

### ***Membership Identity***

The index of membership identity was measured by six questions and created with a reliable level of a principal component factor analysis and a high Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.869. The six questions are: The friendship I have with other community members means a lot to me (factor score of 0.764); If the automobile online brand community members plan something, I'd like it to be something "we" would do rather than "they" would do (factor score of 0.669); I see myself as a part of the automobile online brand community (factor score of 0.751); I would like to attach an automobile online brand community emblem or logo sticker to my car if the community created its' own emblem or logo (factor score of 0.800); I am willing to purchase products with an emblem or a logo of my automobile online

brand community (factor score of 0.846); and an emblem or a logo of my automobile online brand community has a very special meaning to me (factor score of 0.834).

Hypothesis 2.4 predicted that online community members who have stronger social network motivations for their community activities are more likely than others to have higher levels of membership identity. According to the hierarchical regression model, the cultural context of nationality explained .03 percent of the variance in the level of membership identity among the online community members. The variability of demographic characteristics of community members explained an additional 4.9 percent of the level of the membership identification with their communities. The main predictors of motivation orientation provided an additional 29 percent of the variance that accounted for membership identity (See Table 7).

The results confirmed that social network motivations ( $\beta = .338$ ,  $t = 5.378$ ,  $p = .001$ ) had a positive effect on membership identity of automobile online community members (See Table 4). As a unit of social motivation increased, membership identity increased by .338 on the scale of five. Therefore,  $H_{2.4}$  was supported. In addition, communication motivation ( $\beta = .192$ ,  $t = 2.938$ ,  $p = .004$ ) was also a statistically important predictor of membership identity. If community members' communication motivation increased by a unit on the scale of 5, their membership identity increased by .192 on the scale.

Among external circumstance of motivation orientation, nationality was a statistically significant predictor of automobile online brand community members' membership identity within their online communities ( $\beta = .286$ ,  $t = 2.281$ ,  $p = .023$ ). The findings indicated that American automobile online brand community members had a higher level of membership identity than Korean automobile online brand community members.

### *Offline Behavior*

Offline behavior was measured with two questions. The questions were ‘How likely are you to attend an offline meeting of your automobile online community?’ (factor score of 0.867) and ‘Have you attended any offline national / regional meetings of the automobile online brand community?’ (factor score of 0.867). The Offline behavior index of the automobile online brand community variable achieved Cronback’s Alpha score of .712.

The H<sub>2-5</sub> expected that a positive relationship would exist between social motivation and offline behavior. In testing the nested effects of members’ motivations on offline behavior after controlling for cultural and demographic differences, the same method of hierarchical analysis was adopted. The results indicated that the cultural context of the two countries explained 11.3 percent of the variance in the level of offline behavior intentions among the online community members. The demographic characteristics of community members explained additional 3.6 percent of the offline behavior intentions of the community members. The main predictors of motivation orientation provided an additional 16.3 percent of variance in offline behavior intention (See Table 7).

The results also confirmed that social network motivations ( $\beta = .312$ ,  $t = 3.934$ ,  $p = .001$ ) had a positive effect on the offline behavior of automobile online community members, .312 on the scale of five. Therefore, the results supported H<sub>2-5</sub> (See Table 9). As a unit of social motivation increased, membership identity increased by.

### *Issues of Offline Meeting*

Automobile online brand community members were asked about the most concerning factor preventing their attendance at offline meetings. American automobile online brand community members prioritized the distance to the meeting place (45.8%), followed by time (38.1%) and cost (8.5%) as the main concerns of offline participation.

**Table 9 Motivation Orientations on Membership Identify, Offline Behavior, & WOM**

|                             | Membership Identity |                | Offline Behavior |                | Word of Mouth |                |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
|                             | Coef.               | t (sig.)       | Coef.            | t (sig.)       | Coef.         | t (sig.)       |
| <b>Constant</b>             | 1.817               | 3.972 (.001)** | 2.048            | 3.553 (.001)** | 2.266         | 6.236 (.001)** |
| <b>Cultural Context</b>     |                     |                |                  |                |               |                |
| <b>Nationality</b>          | 0.286               | 2.281 (.023)*  | -0.252           | -1.600 (.111)  | 0.653         | 6.572 (.001)** |
| <b>Demographic Factors</b>  |                     |                |                  |                |               |                |
| <b>Gender</b>               | 0.093               | .623 (.534)    | 0.078            | .416 (.678)    | -0.120        | -1.021 (.309)  |
| <b>Age</b>                  | 0.002               | .414 (.679)    | 0.001            | .043 (.966)    | -0.002        | -.589 (.556)   |
| <b>Socio-economic Class</b> |                     |                |                  |                |               |                |
| <b>Married</b>              | 0.100               | .917 (.360)    | -0.086           | -.627 (.531)   | -0.011        | -.131 (.896)   |
| <b>Education</b>            | -0.036              | -.857 (.392)   | -0.046           | -.882 (.379)   | 0.013         | .391 (.696)    |
| <b>Urban</b>                | 0.152               | 1.351 (.178)   | 0.108            | .763 (.446)    | 0.042         | .467 (.641)    |
| <b>Rural</b>                | 0.174               | 1.076 (.283)   | 0.122            | .600 (.549)    | 0.094         | .733 (.464)    |
| <b>Motivations</b>          |                     |                |                  |                |               |                |
| <b>Information</b>          | -0.004              | -.066 (.947)   | -0.008           | -.099 (.921)   | 0.085         | 1.662 (.098)   |
| <b>Social Network</b>       | 0.338               | 5.378 (.001)** | 0.312            | 3.934 (.001)** | 0.141         | 2.814 (.005)** |
| <b>Communication</b>        | 0.192               | 2.938 (.004)** | 0.161            | 1.931 (.055)   | 0.146         | 2.791 (.006)** |
| <b>Business</b>             | 0.058               | 1.275 (.204)   | 0.092            | 1.606 (.110)   | 0.020         | .550 (.583)    |
| <b>F</b>                    |                     | 10.399         |                  | 8.951          |               | 8.279          |
| <b>p</b>                    |                     | 0.001          |                  | 0.001          |               | 0.001          |
| <b>R<sup>2</sup></b>        |                     | 0.342          |                  | 0.312          |               | 0.296          |

\*\*p ≤ .01, \*p ≤ .05

However, Korean automobile online community members signaled time (39.4%) as the most concerning factor preventing participation in offline meetings, and distance (31.1%) as the secondary reason. Personal relationships with other community members (23.3%) is the third most concerning factor in deciding to attend offline meetings among Korean automobile online brand community members which was not a major reason for concern among American members (See Table 10).

This result indicated that Korean online automobile communities' members are more likely to be influenced by relationships with other people compared to the American automobile online communities' members when they considered attending offline meetings.

**Table 10 Concerning Factors of Attending Offline Meetings**

| <b>Concerning Factors of Attending Offline Meetings</b> |             |                         |                             |  |                                  |               |              |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Nationality</b>                                      | <b>Time</b> | <b>Cost<br/>(Money)</b> | <b>Place<br/>(Distance)</b> | <b>Relationship with<br/>other members</b> | <b>Promotions<br/>(Benefits)</b> | <b>Others</b> | <b>Total</b> |
| <b>Korea</b>  | 52 (39.4%)  | 4 (3%)                  | 41 (31.1%)                  | 31 (23.5%)                                 | 1 (1%)                           | 3 (2.3%)      | 132          |
| <b>USA</b>  | 45 (38.1%)  | 10 (8.5%)               | 54 (45.8%)                  | 6 (5.1%)                                   | 0                                | 3 (2.5%)      | 118          |
| <b>Total</b>  | 97 (38.8%)  | 14 (5.6%)               | 95 (38%)                    | 37 (14.8%)                                 | 1 (0.4%)                         | 6 (2.4%)      | 250          |

### ***Word of Mouth (WOM)***

A total of six questions were used to measure WOM. Three questions were related to the automobile online community and the other three questions were related to the automobile brand. The six questions were: I am willing to recommend my automobile online brand community to friends (factor score of 0.807); I am willing to recommend my automobile online brand community to family members or relatives (factor score of 0.819); I will talk about my automobile online brand community favorably (factor score of 0.817); I am willing to recommend the automobile of my online brand community to friends (factor score of 0.894); I am willing to recommend the automobile of my online community to family members / relatives (factor score of 0.909); I will talk about my automobile brand of the online community favorably (factor score of 0.884). These WOM items with a high Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.926 and the reliable level of factor loading scores were merged as an index of WOM.

The H<sub>2-6</sub> expected that if community members had a strong social motivation, they would have stronger WOM intentions regarding their automobile online brand community. According to the results of the hierarchical regression model with three levels of nationality, demographic factors, and motivation orientation, the cultural context of the two countries explained 12.3 percent of the variance in the levels of WOM among the online community members. The block of demographic characteristics of community members explained additional 3.3 percent of the levels of WOM. The main predictors of motivation orientation provided additional 14.0 percent of variance in WOM (See Table 7).

After controlling for nationality and demographic factors, the results indicated that two motivation orientations of social network ( $\beta = .141$ ,  $t = 2.814$ ,  $p = .005$ ) and communication ( $\beta = .146$ ,  $t = 2.791$ ,  $p = .006$ ) were statistically significant predictors of



WOM among automobile online brand community members. If a unit of social and communication motivation on the scale of five increased, the level of WOM also increased by .141, and .146 on the scale of five respectively. Therefore, H<sub>2-6</sub> was supported (See Table 9).

In addition, nationality was a statistically significant factor of automobile online brand community members' WOM intentions ( $\beta = .653$ ,  $t = 6.572$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Members of American automobile online brand communities tended to have a higher level of WOM intention than members of KAOBCs. This finding confirmed that cultural values could influence word of mouth communication. For example, Lam, Lee, and Mizerski (2009) found that people that lived in a strong individualistic culture were more likely to spread WOM to the other individuals from out-groups. Another study on cultural values and word of mouth (WOM) found that consumers from strongly individualistic cultures tended to have a higher level of negative word of mouth intentions than consumers from more collectivistic cultures if they experienced poor service (Liu, Furrer, & Sudharshan, 2001). These studies support the finding that nationality with a strong individualistic culture influenced WOM communication intentions.

## **Satisfaction**

A total of seven questions were used to measure satisfaction. Those seven satisfaction questions were: My automobile online brand community exceeds my overall expectations (factor score of 0.704); The community exceeded my expectation of "automobile information service" (factor score of 0.717); The community exceeded my expectation of "social network (online / offline meeting) services" (factor score of 0.728); The community exceeded my expectation of "communication with others" (factor score of 0.706); The community

exceeded my expectation of “business (selling or buying / promotion) service” (factor score of 0.740); I am generally satisfied with the automobile online brand community (0.750); and I am satisfied with the automobile brand (factor score of 0.476). Only six questions were merged to an index of satisfaction with a principal component factor score higher than 0.5 with a high Cronback’s Alpha score of 0.824. One satisfaction about an automobile brand, ‘I am satisfied with the automobile brand,’ was excluded due to a low factor score that was below 0.5.

RQ3 asked about important predictors of satisfaction among cultural differences, demographic factors, four motivation orientations, and six community experiences. To observe the different levels of explanatory power of these dimensions of predictors, a hierarchical regression model that blocks each group of cultural differences, demographic differences, motivation orientation, and various community experiences were utilized.

The results indicated that various community experiences were the most important groups of predictors for satisfaction (See Table 11). The block of community experiences of community members explained 37.6 percent of the level of members’ satisfaction for their online communities. Four motivation orientations of community members provided 11.2 percent of the variance of satisfaction and demographic factors explained 6 percent of community members’ satisfaction. The nationality of automobile online brand community members also provided 5.1 percent of the variance of community satisfaction. The final model containing all elements explained 59.9 percent ( $R^2=0.599$ ) of the variances in online community members’ general satisfaction in the automobile online brand community (See Table 12).

Among six different community experiences, trust ( $\beta = .324$ ,  $t = 4.753$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and WOM ( $\beta = .418$ ,  $t = 7.561$ ,  $p = .001$ ) were statistically significant predictors of satisfaction

**Table 11 R-Square Changes of Satisfaction Predictors**

|  | <b>Satisfaction</b> | <b>R Square Change</b> |
|--|---------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Nationalities R<sup>2</sup></b>         | 0.051               | 0.051**                |
| <b>Demographic Factors R<sup>2</sup></b>   | 0.111               | 0.060**                |
| <b>Motivations R<sup>2</sup></b>           | 0.223               | 0.112**                |
| <b>Community Experiences R<sup>2</sup></b> | 0.599               | 0.376**                |

\*\*p ≤ .01, \*p ≤ .05

**Table 12 Nationalities, Demographic Factors, Motivation Orientations, Community Experiences toward Community Satisfaction**

|                                  | <b>Satisfaction</b> |                |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
|                                  | Coef.               | t (sig.)       |
| <b>Constant</b>                  | 0.293               | .946 (.345)    |
| <b>Cultural Context</b>          |                     |                |
| <b>Nationality</b>               | 0.063               | .779 (.437)    |
| <b>Demographic Factors</b>       |                     |                |
| <b>Gender</b>                    | 0.075               | .863 (.389)    |
| <b>Age</b>                       | 0.001               | .183 (.855)    |
| <b>Socio-economic Class</b>      | 0.037               | 1.085 (.279)   |
| <b>Married</b>                   | -0.118              | -1.881 (.061)  |
| <b>Education</b>                 | 0.005               | .208 (.835)    |
| <b>Urban</b>                     | -0.116              | -1.812 (.071)  |
| <b>Rural</b>                     | 0.117               | 1.277 (.203)   |
| <b>Motivations</b>               |                     |                |
| <b>Information</b>               | -0.012              | -.326 (.745)   |
| <b>Social Network</b>            | 0.004               | .116 (.908)    |
| <b>Communication</b>             | 0.025               | .653 (.514)    |
| <b>Business</b>                  | 0.005               | .192 (.843)    |
| <b>Community Experiences</b>     |                     |                |
| <b>Loyalty</b>                   | 0.093               | 1.673 (.096)   |
| <b>Trust</b>                     | 0.324               | 4.753 (.001)** |
| <b>Perceived Risk</b>            | -0.022              | -.433 (.655)   |
| <b>Membership Identification</b> | 0.034               | .734 (.464)    |
| <b>Offline Behavior</b>          | 0.003               | .083 (.934)    |
| <b>Word of Mouth</b>             | 0.418               | 7.561 (.001)** |
| <b>F</b>                         |                     | 17.420         |
| <b>p</b>                         |                     | 0.001          |
| <b>R<sup>2</sup></b>             |                     | 0.599          |

\*\*p ≤ .01, \*p ≤ .05

among automobile online brand community members regarding their communities. For example, if automobile online community members' level of trust increased by one unit on the scale of 5, and WOM intention increased by one unit on the scale of 5, their community satisfaction increased by .324, and .418 respectively.

### **Summary of the Findings**

As expected, members of automobile online brand communities had different motivation orientations in the cultural context. Members of Korean automobile online brand communities tend to have stronger social, business, and communication motivations than members of American automobile online brand communities. These community members' motivation also influenced community experiences. Both social network motivations and communication motivations are crucial predictors for four community experiences of community loyalty, trust, membership identity, and WOM. Finally, community experiences were the most important indicators of the satisfaction of online community members among nationality, demographic factors, and motivation orientations by explaining 37.6 percent of the variance in satisfaction. Of the six community experiences, trust and WOM are statistically significant predictors for satisfaction.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION**

First, in this section, the importance of social network motivations in community experiences within the online communities will be discussed. Second, this section discusses theoretical explanations for the questions: ‘Why do members of KAOBCs have a stronger business and communication motivation than members of AAOBCs?’ and ‘What are the relationships between trust and satisfaction and WOM and satisfaction?’ Third, this section will address identifying verification systems of automobile online brand communities and the differences between the U.S. and South Korea. Because all of the automobile online brand communities had at least one or more identifying verification system to prevent registering for commercial purposes, it would be important to understand the characteristics of these online communities. This section will also address internet technology issues, and the possible reasons for low response rates will be explained. Fourth, the practical application and importance of managerial implications of online brand communities will be explained. Finally, limitations of the study and directions for future research will be discussed.

### **Importance of Social Network**

This study found that although community members’ social network motivations can vary across different cultures, a relationship with other people is a key to create and run online communities: a social network motivation is positively related to the five community experiences of loyalty, trust, membership identity, offline behavior, and word of mouth.

In the early stage of the internet community, studies focused on the beneficial characteristics of online in terms of anonymity (Baym 2000; Friedman, Kahn, & Howe,

2000) and convenience (Childers, Carr, Peck, & Carson, 2001; Srinivasan, Anderson, & Ponnnavolu, 2002). Recent research examined the extended offline interaction because face-to-face interaction helped to build strong relationships between online community members (Lin 2007; Koh, Kim, Butler, & Bock, 2007). As Tönnies (Harris, 2001) emphasized, the concept of *Gemeinschaft* is that community members had a strong level of social relationships under the value and goal of the community. These studies emphasize the importance of social motivations in communities and support the results of the current study that indicated that a level of social network motivation can increase the level of involvement of members in community activities.

## **Motivation Orientations**

### ***Business Motivation***

South Korean automobile online brand community members had a stronger business motivation to participate in their community activities than American automobile online brand community members. There are a couple of possible explanations for the finding. First of all, the website features of KAOBCs had more business relevant navigation menus such as cooperative purchasing, sales of community emblems or stickers, flea market, and buying and selling than did their American counterparts. In the Korean automobile market, the combined market share of Hyundai and Kia stood at 81.8 percent of the new automobile market (Himi, 2008). The after-service and auto repair service quality is questionable in the oligopolistic automobile market in Korea. As result, Korean car owners tend to use online brand communities as a trade channel for auto-parts. In contrast, the American automobile market is much more competitive with a greater number of domestic and foreign car makers, thus all automobile manufactures provided good quality of service. The automobile market

environment could result in the different levels of business motivations between members in the two countries.

Another possible reason for Korean automobile community members to have stronger business motivations than American members is related to the different internet infrastructure between the two countries. South Korea is the top country in the world with broadband internet speeds and South Korea's broadband internet speed is almost three times faster than that of the U.S. (Robert, 2010). This high speed internet infrastructure in South Korea and oligopolistic automobile market situation could help develop business activities online. One of several previous studies found that South Korean online users had stronger online shopping motivations than American online users (Rodgers, Jin, Rettie, Alpert, & Yun, 2005).

### ***Communication Motivation***

Members of KAOCBs had a stronger communication motivation than American members. According to Hofstede (1984), people in more collectivistic cultures, where strong interpersonal ties and group norms prevail, tended to have closer interpersonal relationships if they found others similar to themselves. Members of automobile online brand communities share interests in a specific brand of a car. In other words, community members are more likely to communicate based on similar interests to develop their interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the members of KAOCBs who live in a strong collectivistic culture are more likely to have stronger communication motivations than members of AAOBCs who live in a strong individualistic culture.



## **Satisfaction**

### ***Trust***

Trust is a crucial element for building a relationship between community members of an online community because trust could reduce the uncertainty of belonging to an online community (Swanson, Davis, & Zhao, 2007). The familiarity members feel with an online community helped to increase trust toward the websites (Yoon, 2002) and prior experiences with the internet shopping affected people's trust in the internet (Lee & Turban, 2001). Thus, trust is an antecedent to consumers' satisfaction in the internet (Chiou, Droge, & Hanvanich, 2002; Singh, & Sirdeshmukh, 2000).

Because community members' satisfaction is highly related to shopping activities, the finding suggest that automobile marketers need to build trust between community members and community websites in order to increase levels of satisfaction.

### ***Word of Mouth (WOM)***

Numerous studies focused on the positive relationships between satisfaction and WOM in that consumers' satisfaction is an antecedent determinant to word of mouth (Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst, 2005; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002; Maxham III, 2001). The other group of scholars found that dissatisfied consumers engaged more in negative WOM communication than satisfied ones (Anderson, 1998; Kimmel, 2004; Richins, 1983).

However, very limited research examined the reverse relationship between word-of-mouth and satisfaction. If community members had a positive WOM intention based on their community experience, they could believe they had a high level of satisfaction with the community experience. According to cognitive dissonance theory, people tend to seek consistency in their beliefs and perceptions (Festinger, 1957). Therefore, community members who had a strong level of WOM intention and engaged in positive WOM tended to

enhance the positive cognition toward satisfaction in order to keep consistency in their beliefs.

### **Identity Verification System**

Automobile online brand communities had a security system to protect their community members from business people who were not allowed to advertise on the community website and to preventing them from taking advantage of illegal commercials. As a way to protect community members, automobile online brand communities used community members' identity verification system. Community members had to use their personal information when they registered as a community member. The method of identity verification differed between the two countries. 115 out of 126 American automobile online brand communities (91.3%) required email identification. Members were required to provide their personal email address and then community members could activate their membership after receiving email confirmation from the automobile online community. Therefore, community members could not use a false email address under the email identification verification system.

However, 52 out of 149 Korean automobile online brand community members (34.9%) responded that they were required to provide their personal identification numbers. The personal identification number in Korea is an individual' thirteen digit numbers including birthday and year. The Korean personal identification number is equivalent to a social security number in the U.S. Cellular phone identification (27.5%) was the second most popular identity verification system in Korea while only 3.2% of American automobile online brand communities required it. Community members were required to provide their cellular phone numbers in the registration process, and then the online community administrator sent

text messages with a verification number via the phone. Future community members were required to input those verification numbers if they wanted to complete the registration process with the online community. KAOBC used cellular phone identity verification more commonly than AAOBC because Korean cellular phone service providers charge only text message senders. Therefore, Korean community members' cellular phone identification is cost efficient, fast, reliable verification method (See Figure 9).

**Figure 9 The Comparison of Identity Verification Systems**

| Identity Verification System  |                      |                               |                  |                                 |           |       |
|---|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Nationality   | Email identification | Cellular Phone Identification | Captcha Anti-bot | Personal Identification Numbers | Others    | Total |
| Korea   | 19 (12.8%)           | 41 (27.5%)                    | 29 (19.5%)       | 52 (34.9%)                      | 10 (6.7%) | 149   |
| USA   | 115 (91.3%)          | 4 (3.2%)                      | 31 (24.6%)       | 22 (17.5%)                      | 5 (4.0%)  | 126   |
| Total   | 134                  | 45                            | 60               | 74                              | 15        | 275   |
| * A total of 275 community members combined with 149 Koreans and with 126 Americans were responded. |                      |                               |                  |                                 |           |       |
| * The total percentage was over 100% due to multiple responses.                                     |                      |                               |                  |                                 |           |       |

## **Response Rates**

As discussed above, automobile online communities had a strong security system in order to protect their community members' personal information from purposive third parties. Automobile online brand communities are attractive marketing spheres to automobile insurance agents, auto shop managers, and car dealers because most members own their automobiles and need to get automobile services and information. Thus, those third parties want to get personal information of automobile online brand community members to send their advertising and other marketing information. As a result, automobile online brand community set up a strong security system in order to protect their members from annoying business groups.

Email service providers also used spam filtering programs to prevent their members from receiving annoying spam emails. Thus, emails sent from different countries have a higher chance of ending up in users' spam mailbox directly by filtering programs. This study utilized a popular online survey website, SurveyMonkey, for both South Korea and the U.S. Despite sending email messages in the Korean language to Korean automobile online community members, some of the survey request emails could go to the spam mailbox because the email sender's IP address was trackable and was found to come from outside of South Korea. As a result, some emails could not reach the target members of KAOCs because of technical reasons and it became one of the main reasons for the lower response rate.

American automobile online brand community also had strong security systems to protect their members from spam emails. For example, none of the five selected online communities allowed the sending of emails to multiple community members at the same time and even prevented this despite the fact that the email sender was registered as an online

community member. Automobile online community members are only able to contact one community member with an email message at a time. Emails must be at least one minute apart from a previous email. Moreover, one of the five selected online communities required posting at least twenty threads on the community website in order to send emails to the other community members.

Automobile online brand community managers were very sensitive to the protection of their community members from spam emails. If they knew that some community members spread spam mails to other members, they blocked and restricted those community members' community activities. For example, an automobile online brand community manager banned the author's registered user name from the online community because the author emailed a survey request to the community members in the early stages of the data collection. Thus, the author needed to replace the automobile online brand community with another one. Some community members actively reported spam emails to the community managers, and they blocked spam producers. This online survey experience indicated that a request for an online survey to the online community members makes it difficult to access and target community members, and avoid the screening system. In addition, an increased number of online survey requests and spam emails allows the members to ignore those requests and it influenced on the lower response rates (Sheehan, 2001).

### **Theoretical Implications**

The key theoretical implications of the study are Hofstede's cultural dimensions: the study applied the cultural approach to the online context and explored the culturally embedded motivations in online brand communities and the community members' activities. From a theoretical perspective, this study supports an application of Hofstede's cultural

dimension to the online communities and implies the existence of cultural differences in the context of the internet. Some previous studies have supported that Hofstede's finding that cultural dimensions are applicable to an internet context. For example, cultural differences could influence the website design (Lee, Geistfeld, & Stoel, 2007; Kim, Coyle, Gould, 2009), online purchasing behavior (Ko, Jung, Kim, & Shim, 2004; Park & Jun, 2003), and internet usages (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011; Mahatanankoon, Wen, Anandarajan, 2006). Therefore, the findings of this study extend Hofstede's cultural dimensions to online brand communities.

In addition, the finding of the current results imply that online communities have to be run and managed in different ways across different cultures because people online have different types of motivations and different levels of involvement depending on their culture. The proposed model considers the cultural differences and can be theoretically applicable to the other types of online brand communities in different cultural contexts.

The last significant theoretical contribution of the current study to the new area of online community research is to provide evidence of the importance of the community experience. The results show that the most important factor in determining community members' satisfaction is their community experiences. This indicates that online community members' community activities are the most important predictors that determine their level of satisfaction among other cultural differences, demographic variations, and motivation orientations. As discussed above, satisfaction is a perceived outcome based on an individual's prior expectation (Kotler, 2000; Tse & Wilton, 1988). This study suggests that the personal experiences of automobile online communities are the determinant of a level of satisfaction. Therefore, the findings provide a guide for further research in the satisfaction of online community activities and experiences that have rarely been investigated.

## **Managerial Implications**

### ***An Example for Undeveloped Counties***

The online brand community has emerged as a new sub-area of research in many academic disciplines, along with Internet technology development. The number of Internet users and online brand communities has increased rapidly during the last two decades. However, little research has explored the relationships between individuals' motivation orientations and online community experiences in the different cultural contexts. Therefore, this study targeted two countries with advanced internet technology and developed automobile production to observe the dynamics of automobile online brand communities. The United States has the leading automobile production with advanced internet infrastructure and South Korea is one of the leading countries in terms of broadband household penetration rates and is ranked fifth in the world in automobile production. The cases of online brand communities in the advanced countries could not be applied to other undeveloped countries because the internet technology gap became smaller among different countries.

### ***Automobile Marketers***

As a new communication channel, automobile online brand communities are considered important tools for automobile marketers. Understanding automobile online brand community members' motivations and experiences in the diverse cultural contexts is a crucial market strategy because many automobile production companies are multi-national corporations. Korean automobile marketers need to provide useful information for the American automobile consumers and keep them updated with auto information in their automobile online brand communities. American automobile marketers are encouraged to create social activities such as offline meetings for Korean automobile consumers to run their automobile online brand communities in Korea. In addition, American automobile marketers



need to make connections with individual automobile community managers to create more positive reactions and interactions since Korean community members with strong social ties are more positively predisposed toward consumer-initiated online brand communities (Porter, 2004).

The U.S. and Korea became an attractive market for automobile marketers because the U.S. automobile market is the second largest automobile market in the world and the Korean automobile market is the 12<sup>th</sup> largest automobile market in the world (Korea Automobile Manufacturers Association, 2011). The Korean automobile market is unique because of the extremely low import rates in automobile trade based on the high tariffs imposed on automobiles (United States International Trade Commission, 2011). However, this barrier to the Korean automobile market will change with FTA (Free Trade Agreement) between Korea and the U.S. signed in 2007. This potentially attractive automobile market will provide greater opportunities to increase volumes of sale with free tariff rates for foreign automobile marketers in Korea. Therefore, this study of automobile online brand communities in the U.S. and Korea can help with the important task of understanding the automobile consumers in the two different cultures.

## **Limitations & Future Research**

### ***Limitations***

#### **Different Features / Structures of the Automobile Online Brand Communities**

The features and structures of automobile online brand communities were different in the U.S. and South Korea. AAOBCs are mostly forum communities that are information- and discussion-oriented, integrated to manufactures' brand communities, are corporation-initiated, and require membership fees while KAOBCs are club type communities that are more

information- and social-oriented, based on specific automobile brands, and consumer-initiated, free communities. These different features and structures between the two countries' automobile brand communities were a limitation of the cultural comparison in the study because the comparable automobile online brand communities in the two countries are limited.

#### *Access of Community Members' Contact Information*

As discussed above, there was no way to access all community members' contact information because of the privacy barriers and security issues. Thus, the study could only request participation in the online survey from community members' who shared their personal contact information with other community members. In addition, the selected ten automobile online brand communities vary in the number of community members. One of KAOBCs had about 60,000 members. As a result, the researcher only contacted a randomly selected sample of 500 community members. The combination of samples with available and selected community members is one of the limitations of the study.

#### ***Future Research***

##### *Managerial Perspective of Online Brand Communities*

This study focused on the community members' perspectives of online brand communities. Automobile online brand community members' motivation orientations, community experiences, and satisfaction were examined in different cultural contexts. For the next step of the study, managerial perspectives of online brand communities would be useful to examine for the marketers who prefer to use online brand communities as a new communication channel with their customers. Then, managers who established consumer-initiated online brand communities would be target samples for the marketers because ordinary community members tend to have a higher level of trust toward members and

content in consumer-initiated online brand communities than company-initiated online brand communities (Porter, 2004). If automobile marketers know about online community managers' motivations and experiences, they can use online brand communities efficiently as valuable communication tools for their target customers.

#### *Ownership of Online Brand Communities*

The ownership of online brand communities needs to be explored in future research. Some online brand community owners seek monetary profit through cooperative purchasing commissions and related services and product advertising fees. The monetary value of online brand communities has emerged as a debate in ownership of the communities. Managers of online brand communities insist on the ownership of the online brand community and on the financial benefits because they established, organized, and managed the communities. On the other hand, members of online brand communities assert the ownership of their online brand communities because community members generate brand information and reviews of the brand based on their experience. Therefore, definitions and boundaries of online brand community ownership needs to be clarified to consider consistent and reliable online regulations and applications in the different cultural contexts, such as in selling and trading ownership of online brand communities worldwide.

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## APPENDICES

**Appendix A: Human Subjects Form A**

**FORM A**

**Certification for Exemption from IRB Review for Research Involving Human  
Subjects**

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**A. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(s) and/or CO-PI(s)** (For student projects, list both the student and the advisor.):

Jae Hee Park  
Adviser: Sally J. McMillan

**B. DEPARTMENT:**

School of Advertising and Public Relations

**C. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER OF PI(s) and CO-PI(s):**

University of Tennessee  
College of Communication and Information  
Advertising and Public Relations  
98 Communications Building  
Knoxville, TN 37996-0343

**D. TITLE OF PROJECT:**

**An Examination of Automobile Online Brand Communities (AOBCs) in the U.S.  
and South Korea:  
Relationships of Motivation, Experience, and Satisfaction**

**E. EXTERNAL FUNDING AGENCY AND ID NUMBER** (if applicable):

None

**F. GRANT SUBMISSION DEADLINE** (if applicable):

NA



**G. STARTING DATE (NO RESEARCH MAY BE INITIATED UNTIL CERTIFICATION IS GRANTED.):**

Upon IRB approval

**H. ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE (Include all aspects of research and final write-up.):**

August 2011

**I. RESEARCH PROJECT**

**1. Objective(s) of Project (Use additional page, if needed.):**

The study of online brand community is relatively new. To gain a better understanding of the emerging phenomena of online brand communities in different cultural contexts by comparing Korean and American automobile online brand communities (AOBCs). The purpose of the proposed study is to learn more about the community members who participate in online brand community. In particular, the study addresses the following Research Questions:

RQ 1 > What are the differences in motivation orientations among automobile online brand community members in different cultural dimensions?

RQ2 > Are there any significant relationships between motivation orientations of online brand community members and their community experience and activities?

RQ3> Which factors of cultural dimension, demographics, motivation orientation, and community experience best predict overall satisfaction with an online brand community for online brand community members?

All measures of motivation and community experience will be based on scales that have been developed and tested in the psychology and marketing literature. Media use and socioeconomic data will be collected with commonly used scales. All data will be analyzed in the aggregate and there will be no way for the researchers to connect personally identifiable information with answers to any questions.

**2. Subjects (Use additional page, if needed.):**

A total four hundred adult subjects (age 18+) will be recruited from 10 randomly selected automobile online brand communities – five based in the US and five in South Korea. Subjects will be recruited via an e-mail message that directs them to an online survey site. No individually identifying information will be collected. Total time required from the subjects will be 10-15 minutes. No special participant characteristics are required beyond the online community member and age of 18+. There is no reward for participation.



**Student Advisor:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name                      Signature                      Date

**Department Review Committee Chair:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name                      Signature                      Date

**APPROVED:  
Department Head:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name                      Signature                      Date

## **Appendix B: Automobile Online Brand Community Survey**

### **Informed Consent Statement within Email**

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study of automobile online brand communities. Your participation will help researchers better understand factors that explain motivation for participation automobile online brand communities and experiences that community members have at those sites. You are eligible for this study because you are a member of automobile online brand community. The information you provide will be treated in confidence. You will not be identified individually at any stage of the study. You must be age 18 or older to participate. By completing the survey, you provide your informed consent to participate.

There are no known risks for study participants. If at any time, you wish to quit the project, simply close the survey. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it. If you have questions about the study or the procedures, you may contact Jae Hee Park, at 98 Communications Building, Knoxville, TN 37996, by phone at 865-974-8200, or by e-mail at [jpark36@utk.edu](mailto:jpark36@utk.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact Research Compliance Services at (865) 974-3466. Thank you very much for your participation.

### **Part I: Demographics**

1. What is your gender?

(1) Male (2) Female

2. What is your age?

( ) years old

3. Which socio-economic class do you identify with yourself?

(1) Lower Class

(2) Lower-Middle Class

(3) Middle Class

(4) Upper-Middle Class

(5) Upper Class

4. What is your current marital status?

(1) Single, Never Married

(2) Married

(3) Separated

(4) Divorced

(5) Widowed

5. What is your religious affiliation?

(1) Protestant Christian

(2) Roman Catholic

(3) Evangelical Christian

(4) Jewish

(5) Muslim

(6) Hindu

(7) Buddhist

(8) Other (        )

(9) No religion

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

(1) Less than High School

(2) High School Graduate

(3) 2-year College Degree

(4) 4-year College Degree

(5) Master's Degree

(6) Doctoral Degree

(7) Professional Degree (MD, JD)

7. Where do you live?

(1) Metropolitan area

(2) Urban area

(3) Sub-urban area

(4) Rural area

(5) Other

8. Do you own an automobile?

(1) Yes    (2) No

9. Are you a member of an online community of your owned automobile brand?

- (1) Yes (2) No

## **Part II: General Questions about Automobile Online Brand Community**

1. What is the name of your automobile online brand community? (U.S)

- (1) North American Motoring.com (Mini Cooper)
- (2) Mustang Club (Mustang)
- (3) The Hummer Network (Hummer)
- (4) Jeepz.com (Jeep)
- (5) i-club.com (Subaru)
- (6) Other

1. What is the name of your automobile online brand community? (Korea)

- (1) Rezzo Club (Rezzo)
- (2) Club Genesis Coupe (Genesis)
- (3) Club Sorento (Sorento)
- (4) Mornig / New Morning (Morning)
- (5) Club Beat (Matiz)
- (6) Other

2. How did you find your automobile online brand community?

- (1) Internet search engine (ex. Google, yahoo. Etc)
- (2) Other community members referral
- (3) Advertisements about the community
- (4) Auto dealer's referral
- (5) Other

3. How long have you been a member of the automobile online brand community?

- (1) Less than 1 year
- (2) Over 1 year - less than 3 years
- (3) Over 3 years – less than 5 years
- (4) Over 5 years – less than 7 years
- (5) Over 7 years – less than 9 year

(6) Over 9 years

4. How many automobile online brand communities do you belong to?

(            )

5. On the average, how many hours do you spend online per week?

(1) Less than an hour / week

(2) 2-5 / week

(3) 6-9 / week

(4) 10-13 / week

(5) 14-17 / week

(6) Over 18 hours / week

6. On the average, how many hours do you spend visiting and participating in the automobile online brand community per week?

(1) Less than an hour / week

(2) 2-5 / week

(3) 6-9 / week

(4) 10-13 / week

(5) 14-17 / week

(6) Over 18 hours / week

7. Have you posted any comments / articles to the automobile online brand community?

(1) Yes    (2) No

7-1. If you answered "yes", how many comments / articles have you posted to the automobile online brand community for the last week?

(1) Less than one / week

(2) 2-5 / week

(3) 6-9 / week

(4) 10-14 / week

(5) over 15 / week

8. If your automobile online community asks you to pay for the membership fee, would you be willing to pay a membership fee?

(1) Yes (2) No

8-1. If you answered "yes", how much are you willing to pay for a membership fee per year?

(1) Less than \$5

(2) Over \$5 – less than \$10

(3) Over \$10 – less than \$15

(4) Over \$15 – less than \$20

(5) Over \$20 – less than \$25

(6) Over \$25 – less than \$30

(7) Over \$30

### **Park III: Motivation (1: not at all - 5: very strong motivation)**

1. What was your ***initial*** motivation to join your automobile online brand community?

1-1. Extended social network online and offline

(1) No motivation at all (2) little motivation (3) Some motivation (4) strong motivation  
(5) very strong motivation

1-2. Communication with other people / Two-way communication

(1) No motivation at all (2) little motivation (3) Some motivation (4) strong motivation  
(5) very strong motivation

1-3. Selling or buying car related products / Promotion

(1) No motivation at all (2) little motivation (3) Some motivation (4) strong motivation  
(5) very strong motivation

1-4. Car related information searching / One-way communication

(1) No motivation at all (2) little motivation (3) Some motivation (4) strong motivation  
(5) very strong motivation

2. What is your ***current*** motivation to participate in the automobile online brand community?

2-1. Extended social network online and offline

(1) No motivation at all (2) little motivation (3) Some motivation (4) strong motivation  
(5) very strong motivation

2-2. Communication with other people / Two-way communication

(1) No motivation at all (2) little motivation (3) Some motivation (4) strong motivation  
(5) very strong motivation

2-3. Selling or buying cars or car related products / Promotion

(1) No motivation at all (2) little motivation (3) Some motivation (4) strong motivation  
(5) very strong motivation



2-4. Car related information searching / One-way communication

(1) No motivation at all (2) little motivation (3) Some motivation (4) strong motivation  
(5) very strong motivation

**Part IV: Brand Loyalty (1: strongly disagree - 5: strongly agree)**

1. I try to use the automobile online brand community whenever I need to find some information.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

2. I like to visit the automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

3. To me this automobile online brand community is the best website to visit.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

4. I believe that this is my favorite online community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

5. When I need to purchase an automobile related product, this community is my first choice.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree (6) Not applicable

**Part V: Trust (1: strongly disagree - 5: strongly agree)**

1. My automobile online community appears to be more trustworthy than other automobile online communities I have visited.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

2. I trust the manager(s) of the automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

3. I trust the content/information of the automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

4. I trust other members in the automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

5. I trust the online transaction system of the automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree (6) Not applicable

6. I trust that my personal information is well protected by the automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

7. Overall, I trust my automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

**Part VI: Perceived Risk & Security (1: strongly disagree - 5: strongly agree)**

1. I feel secure in providing personal information (e.i.credit card number) for online purchases.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

2. I feel the risk associated with online purchasing is low.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

3. I worry about the automobile online community continuing to charge my credit card, even after I cancel an order.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree (6) Not applicable

4. The security issue of personal information is a major obstacle affecting my business activities in the automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

5. I would feel totally safe providing personal information to the automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

6. Overall, the automobile online brand community is a safe place to transmit personal information.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

7. I feel the contents (automobile & other business information) of the automobile online brand community are protected from non-community members.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

8. The contents of the automobile online brand community are available to all people, both community members and non-community members.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

9. What kind of web-security process was used when you registered as a member of the automobile online brand community? (Answer all)

(1) Email identification (2) Authorization code through mobile phone (3) CAPTCHA/ Anti-bot. registration (4) Personal Identification number (5) No security process (6) Other ( )

**Part VII: Membership Identification (1: strongly disagree - 5: strongly agree)**

1. The friendships I have with other community members mean a lot to me.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

2. If the automobile online brand community members plan something, I'd like it to be something "we" would do rather than something "they" would do.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

3. I see myself as a part of the automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

4. I would like to attach an automobile online brand community emblem or logo sticker to my car if the community creates its own emblem or logo.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

5. I am willing to purchase products with an emblem or a logo of my automobile online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

6. An emblem or a logo of my automobile online brand community has a very special meaning to me.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

### **Part VIII: Offline Behaviors**

1. Have you been ever offered any offline national / regional meetings by your automobile online brand community?

- (1) Yes, only National meeting(s)
- (2) Yes, only Regional Meeting(s)
- (3) Yes, Both National / Regional Meeting(s)
- (4) No

2. Have you attended any offline national / regional meetings of the automobile online brand community?

- (1) Yes, one time
- (2) Yes, 2-4 Times
- (3) Yes, 5-7 Times
- (4) Yes, 8-10 Times

(5) Yes, more than 11 times

(6) No

3. How likely are you to attend an offline meeting of your automobile online brand community?

(1) Very unlikely (2) Unlikely (3) Somewhat likely (4) Likely (5) Very likely

4. What is the most concerning factor of attending offline meetings?

(1) Time

(2) Cost (Money)

(3) Place (Distance)

(4) Relationship with other community members

(5) Promotions (Benefits)

(6) Other ( )

**Part VIII: WOM Referral Intention (1: strongly disagree - 5: strongly agree)**

*Automobile online brand community*

1. I am willing to recommend my automobile online brand community to friends.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

2. I am willing to recommend my automobile online brand community to family members / relatives.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

3. I will talk about my automobile online brand community favorably.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

*Automobile brand*

4. I am willing to recommend the automobile of my online brand community to friends.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

5. I am willing to recommend the automobile of my online community to family members / relatives.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

6. I will talk about my automobile brand of the online community favorably.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

**Part X: Online Community General Satisfaction (1: strongly disagree - 5: strongly agree)**

1. My automobile online brand community exceeded my overall expectation.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

2. The community exceeded my expectation of “Automobile Information”.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

3. The community exceeded my expectation of “Communication with others”.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

4. The community exceeded my expectation of “Business (selling or buying / Promotion).”

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

5. The community exceeded my expectation of “Social Network (Online / Offline Meeting)”

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

6. I am generally satisfied with the online brand community.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

7. I am generally satisfied with the automobile brand.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

## VITA

Jae Hee Park earned bachelor degrees in Public Administration and International Trade from Ajou University in South Korea in 2002 and a Master of Science Management from the University of Florida in 2007. In August 2011, he completed the requirements for the Ph.D. degree in Communication and Information with a primary concentration in Advertising and a secondary concentration in Sociology and Management. He is currently employed as an Assistant Professor of Advertising at the University of North Florida in Ponte Vedra, Florida.

His research interests focus on online brand community, online health communication, international advertising, and social media. His work has been published in journals, including *Journal of Promotion Management*, *Public Relations Review*, and *International Academy Business Disciplines*. He is a current member of the American Academy of Advertising (AAA), the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), and the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA).