

Community Marketing and Tribal Brand Growth: Pantys' brand expansion based on activism, purpose, and community.

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Human connections are made through communication, whether verbal or nonverbal. Over the years, brands have come to understand their audiences better, and with that, they've learned how to present their products and adapt their communication.

Realizing that communication also plays a role in sales, Kotler (2017)¹ comments on the changing perspective in the relationship between companies and consumers. Initially, brands' main concern was the product itself, a view that has changed over the years, and now this concern has shifted to the public.

There has been a growing need to strengthen the bond between brands and their consumers. While products still have their value, today's consumers increasingly seek emotional connections and identification with the brands they choose. In Marketing 4.0, Kotler (2017)² highlights this connection with the public through bonds built on identification and new consumption patterns.

According to Lemos (2023, cited by Kotler & Machado, 2005)³, consumers currently expect companies to align with their ideals and demands related to social, environmental, and economic justice. Therefore, many organizations develop their missions and values to reflect these expectations, incorporating these principles into their products and services as a strategy to build a coherent and positive image. Furthermore, the authors emphasize that the process

¹Kotler, P. (2017). Marketing 4.0: from traditional to digital. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

²Kotler, P. (2017). Marketing 4.0: from traditional to digital. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

³Lemos, B. (2023). Beliefs and practices in purpose-driven marketing: a study with activist brands. Dissertation (Master's in Communication) – Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte. [apud KOTLER; MACHADO, 2005].

also occurs in reverse: advertising, by capturing and representing social concerns, acts as a link between brands and society, promoting current issues and reflections.

In other words, an individual is no longer defined as a person with a set of socioeconomic criteria (age, gender, nationality), but as a socially active being who plays a role in different communities, referred to as "tribes" (MAFFESOLI, 1996)⁴. The emotional and experiential dimensions of consumption have become much more important than those limited to traditional segmentation (HETZEL, 2002)⁵. The community dimension is particularly relevant in tribal marketing, as consumers seek social connection (MAFFESOLI, 1988); people belong to a tribe that thinks, consumes, and is influenced by them.

Another issue that is present in people's daily lives and is used as an ally by brands is sustainability. Conscious consumption has become an increasingly important concern for consumers, and there is a desire to consume in a way that generates less impact on the environment. This would reflect ethical behavior on the part of consumers, but it should also be a concern for companies and brands (SILVA, 2020)⁶.

The identification between the customer and the brand is affirmed when a brand proposes to talk about themes that have become fundamental to the pillars of organizations, making the public want to consume not only for the product itself, but because they understand that there is an interaction of ideals and values between them.

Bonjean (2022)⁷ differentiates "tribes" from "communities." According to the author, tribes are about values, consumption patterns, and passions, while communities are created

⁴Maffesoli, M. (1996). *The time of the tribes: the decline of individualism in mass societies*. 4th ed. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária.

⁵Hetzl, P. (2002). *Planète conso: Marketing expérientiel et nouvelles stratégies de communication*. Éditions d'Organisation.

⁶Silva, AMC (2020). Conscious consumption and sustainability: challenges for brands in the digital age. *Management & Sustainability Journal*, v. 7, n. 1, p. 85–102.

⁷Bonjean, Inès et al. (2022). How to include tribal marketing in order to close the gap between brand identity and brand image while satisfying target customers?.

when consumers group around an influencer or brand. A brand can target multiple tribes, just as it would reach multiple segments. For example, the global brand Adidas brings together diverse tribes such as runners, professional athletes, and streetwear fans.

Some Brazilian brands are using community marketing strategies, such as "Pantys," a brand launched in 2017 and considered a pioneer in the reusable absorbent products market. "Pantys" has distinguished itself through its sustainability approach and the technological innovation applied to its products. The pieces are developed with high-tech fabrics capable of effectively absorbing menstrual flow, providing comfort and safety to users. Furthermore, the brand promotes a strong commitment to reducing its environmental impact, as its products are reusable and contribute to the reduction of disposable menstrual waste.

Based on this brief discussion, this study seeks to analyze which strategies the Pantys brand positions itself with community marketing for its consumers in the digital environment, more specifically, Instagram, the platform that will be analyzed.

Therefore, the proposed methodology consists of a case study, an appropriate framework for investigating complex empirical phenomena, and providing an understanding of the object in the defined context. Adopting a qualitative approach, it analyzes how the Pantys brand uses community marketing strategies through data collection that was carried out through an analysis of one of the brand's virtual channels.

The research was made possible through the Instagram account of the brand⁸, analyzing its communication, brand alignment, and products. This approach aims to understand how Pantys uses community marketing to build its brand viability in the market.

⁸Pantys. (2017, November 27). Pantys chega ao mercado como primeira marca brasileira de calcinha absorvente. <https://www.pantys.com.br/blogs/pantys/pantyschega-ao-mercado-como-primeira-marca-brasileira-de-calcinha-absorvente>

So, based on the theme and its delimitation presented previously, we have the definition of the problem: How does the Pantys brand position itself with tribe marketing for its consumers in the digital environment?

Delimitation of the theme

This study analyzes the performance of the Pantys brand in the digital environment, specifically on its Instagram profile, to understand how the company uses community marketing strategies to promote brand growth through purpose and activism. The research focuses on posts published in May, considering the brand's most recent posts and actions, and adopts institutional communication, brand positioning, and the relationship with its online community as empirical objects. This is a qualitative case study, based on virtual observation, which seeks to interpret the practices that strengthen the bond between the brand and its engaged audiences.

How does Pantys use community marketing as a brand positioning and growth strategy through the formation of digital tribes?

The data collection timeframe, which was considered to be May 2025, is justified by two important dates directly or indirectly related to the brand. May marks Mother's Day (on the 11th) and International Menstrual Hygiene Day (on the 28th). The aim is also to identify how the brand leverages dates that may relate to its values and purpose to engage diverse tribes with community marketing.

For this purpose, 31 posts available between May 1st and 31st, 2025, were analyzed. These posts were analyzed based on content type. To identify this, posts as a whole were analyzed, including captions, images, colors, and the intention of each publication. From this, they were organized and categorized according to common themes and characteristics,

following the categorization technique highlighted by Bardin (1996), to facilitate interpretation and identify relevant patterns.

Justification

To justify the research, we begin with a few key points in this discussion. The first is the justification for choosing the brand based on the relevance of the main problem the product solves. When we talk about menstruation and people who menstruate, we are talking about a diverse group of individuals with different social and consumption patterns. Menstruation is a biological phenomenon characterized by monthly bleeding that is exclusive to women. According to Oliveira (2019)⁹, this period has historically been associated with concepts of impurity and has contributed to the widening of gender disparities.

Over the years, social representations of menstruation and women in the media, such as magazines and advertising campaigns, have contributed to reinforcing stigmas that associate them with impurity, dirt, or inferiority. Menstruation directly influences the daily lives of many women, impacting not only their physical and emotional health but also their financial and social well-being (FERREIRA, 2024)¹⁰.

Period poverty, recognized by the United Nations (UN)¹¹ as a public health and human rights issue, is a global problem involving economic, educational, and infrastructure factors. This reality is marked by a lack of information about the menstrual cycle, limited access to hygiene products, and a lack of basic sanitation.

⁹Oliveira, AP (2019). Social representations of menstruation: between the biological and the cultural. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, v. 27, n. 2.

¹⁰Ferreira, LP (2024). Pantys: marketing communication and the demands of women's rights and sustainability.

¹¹UN – UNITED NATIONS. Menstrual health management in the workplace and in schools. New York: United Nations, 2019. Available at: <https://www.un.org>. Accessed: May 27, 2025.

Free to Menstruate (2021)¹² report by the Girl Up initiative—which works to train female leaders—one in four women lacks access to sanitary pads during their menstrual period. This lack of resources contributes to school dropouts and the exclusion of girls from sports and social activities. Therefore, it is clear that menstrual poverty must be addressed as a priority in the fight for gender equality and the guarantee of fundamental rights.

In addition to the social and economic implications, menstruation also raises important environmental issues. According to Viana (2023, apud ALMEIDA, 2016), disposable sanitary pads pose an ecological threat from the very beginning, as they are composed of raw materials derived from non-renewable resources, such as petroleum, and the use of cellulose extracted from trees.

Conscious consumption has become increasingly a concern for consumers, and there is a search to consume in a way that generates less impact on the environment. This would be a reflection of ethical action on the part of consumers, but it should also be a concern for companies and brands (SILVA, 2020)¹³.

Customer-brand identification is strengthened when a brand addresses issues that have become fundamental to the foundations of organizations. This makes the public want to buy, not only for the product itself, but also because they understand the interconnected ideals and values. Given this context, it's necessary to consider not only how menstruation is treated socially and in marketing campaigns, but also to reflect on the menstrual care options available on the market and the barriers to accessing these alternatives. Added to this is the environmental issue involved in the mass disposal of sanitary pads. According to information published on the blog of Pantys, a pioneer in sustainable menstrual products, approximately 4

¹² Girl Up. (2021). Free to menstruate [Report]. United Nations Foundation. <https://girlup.org/resources/free-to-menstruate>

¹³Silva, MC (2020) Conscious consumption and sustainability: challenges for brands in the digital age. *Management & Sustainability Journal*, v. 7, n. 1, p. 85–102.

billion sanitary pads are discarded annually. The founders emphasize the importance of technological innovation as an essential tool for promoting change and raising awareness about the environmental and social impact of menstruation.

The brand's choice to address community and tribal marketing issues is justified by the persistence of taboos surrounding menstrual issues and the continued existence of menstrual poverty in the country. Brands play a strategic role in society, not only as suppliers of products, but also as promoters of solutions that can help transform this reality.

Finally, this study proves socially relevant, considering that menstruation is a universal experience among women, who, according to the 2022 IBGE Census¹⁴, represent 51.1% of the Brazilian population. The "Free to Menstruate" report indicates that approximately 30% of the country's population—approximately 60 million people—currently menstruate, highlighting the scope and importance of this topic.

Even so, menstrual health is still rarely discussed, and the topic remains taboo. Although the topic of female menstruation and its implications is not the focus of this research, it helps us understand the context in which the brand operates. Historically considered taboo, menstruation has gained visibility in recent decades, especially when associated with issues such as environmental sustainability and human rights. This scenario encourages conscious consumption and more responsible practices, opening up space for brands like Pantys, which offers reusable absorbent panties as an alternative to disposable pads, contributing to the reduction of solid waste and stimulating debate on menstrual poverty and the right to body care (GIRL UP, 2021; UN, 2019)¹⁵.

¹⁴ *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE]. (2022). Census 2022: Population and housing characteristics. <https://www.ibge.gov.br/en/statistics/social/population.html>*

¹⁵ GIRL UP. (2021). *Free to Menstruate: a study on menstrual poverty in Brazil*. São Paulo: Girl Up Brasil. Available at: <https://girlupbrasil.org>. Accessed on: May 27, 2025.

In this context, the concept of community marketing stands out, also related to tribal marketing, as proposed by authors such as Cova & Cova (2002)¹⁶, Muniz & O'Guinn (2001)¹⁷, and Kotler, et al. (2017). This approach shifts the focus from the product to the creation of bonds between consumers and brands, promoting collective identity, belonging, and engagement with shared causes. The Pantys brand acts directly in this area by building an engaged digital community that shares values linked to feminism, diversity, female empowerment, and socio-environmental activism.

Therefore, this research is justified by its approach to addressing the intersection of today's urgent and sensitive issues with emerging contemporary marketing strategies aimed at creating authentic connections with digital tribes and communities. Understanding how Pantys uses community marketing to generate identification, loyalty, and organic growth contributes to research on purposeful branding and activist consumption.

The choice of data collection timeframe, which was considered to be May 2025, is justified by two important dates directly or indirectly related to the brand. May marks Mother's Day (on the 11th) and International Menstrual Hygiene Day (on the 28th). The aim is also to identify how the brand leverages dates that may relate to its values and purpose to engage diverse tribes with community marketing.

Problem Situation

In the contemporary landscape, marked by increasingly conscious consumers engaged with social and environmental causes, brands have been seeking new ways to connect with their audiences. Traditional marketing, focused solely on product promotion, no longer meets

¹⁶Cova, B.; Cova, V. (2002). Tribal Marketing: The Tribalization of Society and its Impact of the Conduct of Marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(5/6), 595-620

¹⁷Muniz, AM; O'guinn, T. C. (2001). BrandCommunity. *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 27, no. 4, p. 412–432

the demands of consumers who value purpose, representation, and positive impact. In this context, community marketing emerges as a relevant strategy, allowing brands to build authentic and lasting bonds with their audiences by creating spaces for belonging and dialogue.

Pantys, a pioneer in Brazil in the reusable menstrual panties segment, stands out for its positioning aligned with themes such as sustainability, female empowerment, and combating menstrual poverty. The brand's work goes beyond offering products, promoting awareness campaigns, social partnerships, and engagement initiatives on digital platforms. Therefore, the question is: how does Pantys use community marketing as a strategy for brand positioning and growth through the formation of digital tribes?

This question guides this study, which seeks to understand how Pantys's communication on Instagram contributes to building a community engaged around its values and purpose. The aim is to investigate how symbolic elements, activist narratives, and purposeful branding practices are mobilized to strengthen the emotional bond with consumers and drive the brand's growth in the market.

Objective of the study

The overall objective of this study is to analyze how the Pantys brand uses community marketing strategies to enable and strengthen its market presence, based on activism, purpose, and tribal belonging. The research is based on the premise that contemporary brands are connecting with their audiences through social, environmental, and cultural causes, seeking to create engaged communities that transcend traditional consumer logic.

Based on this, the following research question is formulated: How does Pantys use community marketing as a brand positioning and growth strategy through the formation of digital tribes? To achieve this goal, the study is based on the following specific objectives:

- Observe how the Pantys brand communicates its values and purposes through its digital channels, especially in Instagram posts;
- Analyze the alignment between discourse, brand identity, and the products offered, with an emphasis on socio-environmental aspects and the menstrual cause;
- Investigate how Pantys mobilizes symbolic and affective elements to build an engaged digital community around the brand;
- Understand how activism and sustainability are integrated into the branding strategy, contributing to consumer loyalty and engagement.

The methodology adopted is based on a qualitative case study, focusing on content analysis, which allows us to analyze the brand's communication practices in its digital spaces and how these practices contribute to the construction of belonging and collective identity among its audiences.

Theoretical framework

To begin the discussion, it is important to define the concept of brand. For Kotler (2012, p.120)¹⁸, “a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the products and services of a seller or group of sellers and differentiate them from those of competitors.”

All the essential elements that make up a brand, including the brand name, typography, slogan, logo, and symbols, are important for identifying and distinguishing it from others in the market (CHEVALIERC; MAZZALOVO, 2011)¹⁹. To stand out in the market, a brand must go beyond the functional and rational aspects of its products, also incorporating

¹⁸Kotler, P.; Keller, K.L. (2012). *Marketing Management*. 14th ed. New York: Pearson Prentice Hall

¹⁹Chevalier, M., & Mazzalovo, G. (2011). *Luxury brand management: A world of privilege* (2nd ed.). Wiley.

symbolic, emotional, and intangible dimensions that express its identity and values. This type of approach contributes to a deeper connection with consumers.

Emotional positioning is one of the pillars of this process. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), when a brand successfully establishes emotional bonds and offers memorable experiences to its audience, it ceases to be seen merely as a practical response to a need. It begins to represent a lifestyle, valued not only for the benefits it delivers, but also for the feelings and meanings it evokes. Keller (2013)²⁰ complements this perspective by emphasizing that truly strong brands are those that can create symbolic and emotional bonds, allowing consumers to identify with their principles and purpose.

When Keller (1993)²¹ suggested the benefits of a brand, and among them the symbolic benefits, which allow consumers to send a message: "I am what I have and what I consume" (OSMAN, p.113, 2021). Symbolic meaning allows people to build, maintain, and express their identity.

Understanding Community Marketing

According to Mussoi, Flores & Behar (2007, apud LISBÔA; COUTINHO, 2011), since ancient times, humanity has sought survival strategies to ensure the continuity of the species. This instinct for preservation has driven the creation of bonds between individuals, leading to the formation of small groups, communities, and, over time, the constitution of organized societies. Thus, the concept of community is intrinsically linked to human history, accompanying its development since the beginning.

²⁰KELLER, K. L. (2013). *Marketing Management: Creating, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. 4th ed. São Paulo: Pearson Prentice Hall

²¹Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299305700101>

There are two aspects that allow a group of individuals to identify themselves as a tribe: the existence of a shared common interest and an effective form of communication between the members of that group (GODIN, 2008)²².

In this sense, it is important to consider that the concept of community, although multifaceted and subject to debate, can be understood, in this work, as a social construction based on the formation of collective identities and the sharing of meanings among members (Guimarães Jr., 2005)²³. It is, therefore, a symbolic structure that is strengthened through relationships between individuals who recognize each other based on common interests, values, or experiences.

With the advancement of digital technologies, especially the internet, the traditional notion of community, often tied to geographic proximity, has been significantly transformed. What was once defined by physical locations has become articulated in networks of symbolic connection. Heidegger (apud Introna; Brigham, 2007, p. 168)²⁴ proposes that "to be a community is to share a world," that is, to share a horizon of meanings, interests, and relevance.

Following this transformation, authors such as Wellman and Gulia (1997)²⁵ and Scaraboto (2006) observe that even the social sciences have begun to reconsider the requirement of territoriality for defining communities. In the online environment, interactions become frequent, and, according to Kozinets (1998, 2010)²⁶, when engaging with others on the

²²Godin, S. (2008). *Tribes: We All Need a Leader*. Alfragide: Lua de Papel.

²³Guimarães, J.; MJL (2005). Doing anthropology in cyberspace: fieldwork boundaries and social environments. In C. Hine (Ed.). *Virtual Methods: issues in social research on the internet* (pp.141-156). Oxford, New York: Berg.

²⁴Introna, LD; Brigham, M. (2007). Reconsidering community and the stranger in the age of virtuality. *Society and Business Review*, vol. 2, no. 2, p. 166-178

²⁵Wellman, B.; Gulia, M. (1997) Net surfers don't ride alone: virtual communities as communities. Available at <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~wellman/publications>. Accessed in 2025

²⁶Kozinets, R. (1998). How online communities are growing in power - surveys edition. *Financial Times*. London.

internet, individuals tend to form recurring groups, which become sources of information exchange and social support. These new forms of grouping have come to be called computer-mediated communities (Etzioni & Etzioni, 1999)²⁷, online or virtual communities (Carver, 1999)²⁸.

The term "virtual community" was coined by Rheingold (1993), referring to social groups that form in cyberspace through continuous and affective interactions, which enable the emergence of relationship networks. In general, these communities are structured around specific themes, products, or interests (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002)²⁹ and are composed of individuals who share common practices and communicate in a structured manner over time (Ridings; Gefen; Arinze, 2002)³⁰.

These digital communities generate diverse cultural impacts, including on consumer behavior, since many of these groups are organized around products and brands, configuring themselves as consumer communities (Kozinets, 1998, 2010)³¹. In these spaces, members interact intentionally, guided by the social dynamics of the group (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Chiu et al., 2006).

The motivation to participate in these communities goes beyond the search for useful information. Although knowledge exchange is a central factor (Riding & Gefen, 2004),

Kozinets, R.V. (2010). *Netnography: doing ethnographic research online*. London: Sage Publications.

²⁷Etzioni, A; Etzioni, O. (1999). Communities: virtual vs. real. *Science*, vol. 227, no. 5324, p. 295

²⁸Carver, C. (1999). Building a virtual community for a tele-learning environment. *IEE. Communication Magazine*, vol. 34, no. 3

²⁹Bagozzi, R; Dholakia, U. (2002). Intentional social action in virtual communities. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, vol. 16, no. 2, p. 2-21

³⁰Ridings, C.; Gefen, D.; Arinze, B. (2002). Some antecedents and effects of trust in virtual communities. *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, vol. 11, no. 3-4, p. 271-29

³¹Kozinets, R. (1998). How online communities are growing in power - surveys edition. *Financial Times*. London.

Kozinets, R.V. (2010). *Netnography: doing ethnographic research online*. London: Sage Publications.

participants also seek emotional bonds, social support, and belonging. Virtual communities function as spaces for symbolic socialization, fostering interactions that involve feelings, solidarity, and collective identification. The feeling of belonging to a group is associated with sharing, companionship, and the building of mutual support networks.

The concept of tribal marketing, introduced by Bernard Cova and Véronique Cova (2002), explores the formation of "tribes" of consumers who share common identities, values, and experiences. These tribes are linked not only to the consumption of the product itself, but also to the construction of a sense of belonging to a community of individuals with similar interests and values. In this context, consumption becomes a form of social expression and collective identity.

Within the context of social groups, the act of consumption takes on a prominent role, as purchased products begin to carry meanings that go beyond practical utility, becoming expressions of personal, social, and symbolic identity. Through consumption, individuals communicate who they are and reinforce their position within the group to which they belong. Thus, the emotional and symbolic value of products has increasingly surpassed their functional or utilitarian character (Cova & Cova, 2002)³².

From this perspective, the concept of tribal marketing emerges, recognizing that consumer relationships are not limited to the brand but also extend to other consumers with whom they share affinities. According to Meneses and Pinto (2014), people tend to create emotional connections with those who share similar preferences, generating exchanges of experiences and feelings. In this sense, tribalism can be understood as a social network

³²Cova, B., & Cova, V. (2002). Tribal marketing: The tribalisation of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(5/6), 595–620. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560210423023>

composed of individuals who interact with each other, generally around consumption and brands (Cova, 1997; Kozinets, 2001; Jhonson; Ambrose, 2006)³³.

Virtual Brand Communities

The internet has established itself as a fertile space for the formation and expansion of communities based on shared consumer interests (Muñiz & Schau, 2005; Schau, Muñiz & Arnould, 2009). An important conceptual framework was proposed by Rheingold (1993), when defining virtual communities as social structures that emerge in the digital environment when a significant number of individuals engage in lasting public dialogues, with sufficient emotional ties to give rise to networks of personal relationships in cyberspace.

Within this logic, so-called brand communities emerge, which, according to Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001), consist of social networks built around a specific brand. These bonds transcend physical or demographic limitations and are strengthened through shared values among consumers. Although they can also exist offline, these communities develop especially dynamically in the virtual space.

Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001)³⁴ identify three central characteristics that brand communities share with traditional communities: collective consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility. Contemporary studies delve deeper into how these elements are structured and influence the actions of members within these communities.

Collective consciousness, in this context, involves both the construction of the group's social identity and the emotional engagement of participants (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005). Kozinets (2010) demonstrates that, by participating in an online community, individuals not only access factual information, but also learn about the group's symbolic

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³⁴Muñiz, A. M., Jr., & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412–432. <https://doi.org/10.1086/319618>

codes, language, norms, and power structures, in addition to developing empathy and mutual recognition.

Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001)³⁵ highlight two mechanisms that contribute to this construction of collective consciousness: legitimation and oppositional loyalty. Legitimation refers to the differentiation of members based on length of participation and level of involvement, which generates subtle forms of internal hierarchy. Oppositional loyalty, on the other hand, unites participants through the identification of rival brands as "symbolic enemies," strengthening group bonds and reinforcing their collective identity. Thompson and Sinha (2008)³⁶ demonstrate that this process can even reduce the likelihood of members opting for competing brands.

Additionally, O'Sullivan, Richardson, and Collins (2011)³⁷ argue that collective consciousness can emerge from an intense symbolic experience with a brand, almost like a process of "conversion". In this case, consumers begin to attribute almost sacred meanings to the brand, linking their identity to consumption, while internal norms of surveillance reinforce members' commitment to the group.

Another essential element in brand communities is rituals and traditions, which function as symbolic practices that maintain and transmit the community's shared meanings. According to Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001)³⁸, this occurs both through the celebration of the

³⁵Muñiz, A. M., Jr., & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412–432. <https://doi.org/10.1086/319618>

³⁶Thompson, S. A., & Sinha, R. K. (2008). Brand communities and new product adoption: The influence and limits of oppositional loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, 72(6), 65–80. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.72.6.65>

³⁷O'Sullivan, S. R., Richardson, B., & Collins, A. (2011). How brand communities emerge: The Beamish conversion experience. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(9–10), 891–912. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2011.565684>

³⁸Muñiz, A. M., Jr., & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412–432. <https://doi.org/10.1086/319618>

brand's history and the exchange of personal narratives among members. Schau et al. (2009)³⁹ expand on this concept by describing impression management practices such as evangelization (which promotes the enthusiastic sharing of positive experiences with the brand) and justification, which rationalizes the time and resources invested in the brand.

Furthermore, these authors identify ritualized engagement practices, such as delimitation (recognition of differences and similarities between members), milestones (significant events related to consumption), badges (symbols that represent these milestones), and documentation (narrative accounts that reinforce the consumer's bond with the brand).

Brand-related practices also reveal a ritual dimension, reflecting members' efforts to enhance their experience. These actions include care (maintaining brand integrity), customization (adapting to meet personal or group needs), and commoditization (a process of internal commercial valuation within the community).

Finally, the third dimension identified by Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) refers to the sense of moral responsibility, which consists of the perception of a collective duty towards the community. This commitment manifests itself both in the integration of new members and in guidance on how to interact appropriately within the group and with the brand. This awareness of responsibility reinforces the sense of belonging and mutual support among participants.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, understood as a form of research that prioritizes the interpretation of phenomena within their social and cultural contexts. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) point out, this type of approach is based on interpretive perspectives, focusing on understanding the meanings that individuals attribute to their

³⁹Schau, H. J., Muñiz, A. M., Jr., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 30–51. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.5.30>

experiences and the social dynamics in which they are inserted. This perspective allows us to explore the subjective aspects of human behavior, such as beliefs, values, and perceptions, which cannot be fully captured by quantitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)⁴⁰.

According to the same authors, qualitative research is particularly effective in capturing nuances of social relations and symbolic elements that cannot be classified as statistical or operational variables. This characteristic gives qualitative methodology a unique ability to interpret the meanings and significance that social participants attribute to their daily practices. Therefore, it is well suited to investigating communication and cultural processes that involve multiple layers of meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)⁴¹.

Content analysis was the primary tool for interpreting messages. This systematic methodology allows us to examine the meanings present in discourses. Bardin (1996)⁴² defines this method as a set of techniques that seek to identify and interpret the semantic and symbolic elements of communications, relating them to their social and psychological dimensions. Content analysis, therefore, is not limited to classifying information but also reveals latent meanings and discursive structures that underpin the content being analyzed (Bardin, 1996)⁴³.

This approach allows researchers to go beyond the surface level of texts, exploring the implicit intentions, values, and thought patterns underlying discourses. The analysis can be applied to diverse materials, such as interviews, social media posts, advertisements, or institutional documents, to identify the symbolic and ideological elements that shape statements within their contexts of production (Bardin, 1996)⁴⁴.

⁴⁰Denzin, NK; Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications.

⁴¹Denzin, NK; Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications.

⁴²Bardin, L. (1996). *Content analysis*. Lisbon: Editions 70.

⁴³Bardin, L. (1996). *Content analysis*. Lisbon: Editions 70.

⁴⁴Bardin, L. (1996). *Content analysis*. Lisbon: Editions 70.

The second methodological procedure was the collection and analysis of posts published on Pantys' Instagram profile between May 1st and 31st, 2025. To organize and interpret the data systematically, categories of analysis were developed based on the observed recurring elements. According to Bardin (1996)⁴⁵, this step is essential in the content analysis process and consists of grouping units of meaning that share common characteristics, enabling the identification of patterns and the organization of the material into thematic axes.

Categorization, when performed with well-defined criteria, contributes to a more accurate and in-depth reading of discourses, in addition to ensuring greater reliability in the interpretation of results (Bardin, 1996)⁴⁶. After categorization, it is possible to perceive nuances of strategies mobilized by the brand, contributing to the discussion proposed here.

Case description

Founded in 2017 by entrepreneurs Maria Eduarda Camargo and Emily Ewell, Pantys emerged as one of the first Brazilian brands to invest in reusable menstrual solutions. Its portfolio includes absorbent panties, bras, shorts, and bikinis, specifically designed for women seeking sustainable alternatives to conventional intimate hygiene methods (Dal Bello et al., 2021)⁴⁷.

Since its launch, the company has stood out for both its sustainability and the use of technology in its products. The pieces are developed with high-performance materials, which offer effective absorption, comfort, and safety during use. One of the brand's main pillars is the reduction of disposable waste, encouraging the prolonged use of its products to minimize the environmental impact caused by conventional sanitary pads.

⁴⁵Bardin, L. (1996). Content analysis. Lisbon: Editions 70.

⁴⁶Bardin, L. (1996). Content analysis. Lisbon: Editions 70.

⁴⁷Dal Bello, D.; Duarte, L.; Scóz, B. (2021). Pantys and innovation in the menstrual hygiene market: a case study. Brazilian Journal of Organizational Communication, v. 2, n. 1

According to information released by the brand itself (Pantys, 2024), its mission is to promote innovation to improve the health of women and the planet. Therefore, its values are strongly associated with sustainability, innovation, and female empowerment. Through its products, Pantys seeks to offer greater autonomy to women, combining comfort, information, and well-being. Furthermore, the company adopts an open, transparent, and socially engaged communication approach, supporting educational projects and social impact initiatives. Among the impact data provided, the brand states that each Pantys reusable panty prevents the disposal of approximately 500 disposable pads per person per year. This figure reinforces the company's contribution to reducing plastic waste and combating pollution caused by hard-to-decompose products. This proposal connects to the principles of the circular economy, as described by Ellen MacArthur (2013)⁴⁸, by offering durable products as an alternative to single-use items, whose production requires large amounts of natural resources, such as water and oil.

Another distinguishing feature of Pantys is its use of materials with a lower environmental impact. The company uses biodegradable fabrics, including organic cotton and polyamide fibers, which decompose significantly faster than traditional materials. While disposable pads can take centuries to decompose, the brand's products were developed to degrade in up to three years, demonstrating its commitment to sustainability. This narrative is prominent in the brand's posts and throughout its communication on Instagram, as seen in Image 1, educational/promotional content focused on the brand's reduced environmental impact.

⁴⁸ Ellen MacArthur Donation. (2013). Towards the circular economy. Available at: <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/towards-the-circular-economy>. Accessed: May 27, 2025.

The production of these items also aligns with sustainable practices: its factories operate with energy from renewable sources, which reinforces the company's position in combating climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



Figure 1. Post on the brand's Instagram
Source: Screenshot from the brand's official Instagram account @pantys

Beyond environmental concerns, Pantys demonstrates concern for the health and safety of its users. Its products are free of harsh chemicals, such as artificial fragrances and bleaching agents, often found in disposable pads. This choice reflects the brand's commitment to offering solutions that respect the female body.

Another relevant aspect is Pantys' transparency regarding its practices. By clearly disclosing the social and environmental impacts of its production, the company enables consumers to make more informed choices. This stance is aligned with ESG (environmental, social, and governance) criteria, promoting a responsible business model. This approach

echoes the concept of values-driven marketing, as discussed by Kotler (2011)⁴⁹ in *Marketing 3.0*, where companies' objectives are not limited to selling products but extend to championing social and environmental causes that resonate with contemporary consumers.

In addition to its ecological impact and health concerns, the company also generates a positive economic impact. Pantys' durable products represent a more affordable alternative in the long term, as they reduce the need for recurring purchases of disposable products. These savings can especially benefit women in vulnerable situations.

In the social sphere, Pantys' work is also noteworthy. The brand maintains partnerships with non-governmental organizations and projects that combat menstrual poverty, promoting access to reusable menstrual products for at-risk populations, contributing to the dignity and well-being of girls and women in contexts of exclusion.

Since Pantys, through its positioning, demonstrates a brand that takes a strong stance on issues such as sustainability and menstrual health, it is important to understand how the brand uses community marketing strategies to keep its audience engaged with the brand's social and environmental values.

The "Pantys" profile (@pantys) has 526,000 followers and over 2,000 posts since its launch in 2017 (Image 2). A quick look at the profile reveals that the brand has a VIP group on Instagram, which appears right on the profile page, where they share commercial content such as discounts and brand-related events. With a cool language aimed at a female audience, the brand also uses visual communication, with prominent colors like light pink, red, and orange in all its communications.

⁴⁹Kotler, P. (2011). *Marketing 3.0: The Forces Shaping the New Human-Centered Marketing*. Rio de Janeiro: Elsevier.



Figure 2. Pantys' Instagram profile

Source: Screenshot from the brand's official Instagram account @pantys

A striking aspect of analyzing the brand's profile is the links in the page's bio. As soon as we click on the link, we can identify the brand's community strategies, which include educational content and engage an entire ecosystem. These include the brand's gynecological event and menstrual poverty website, where we find educational materials, reports on menstrual poverty in Brazil, and several donation channels for partner NGO projects. We find several points of contact with the brand's clear positioning and strategies that engage consumers in community with other topics that touch on the brand's interests.

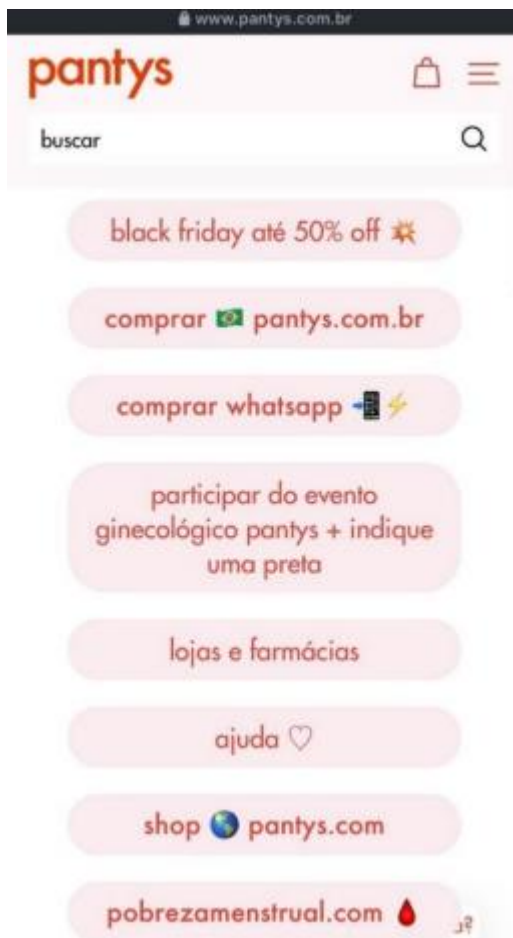


Figure 3. Links available in the page bio

Source: Screenshot from the brand's official Instagram account @pantys

Another important aspect of the brand's online positioning is the use of real female bodies in its posts, showcasing all body types and highlighting its positioning of empowerment for all female bodies. This stance was particularly prominent in the initial comments on the page, as seen in Image 4, which is typical of brands that advocate for policies that contradict the standard models of other brands, such as Victoria's Secret and Loungerie.



Figure 4. Post Pantys

Source: Screenshot from the brand's official Instagram account @pantys

Case analysis

The corpus of this research consists of publications from the official Pantys brand account on the Instagram platform. Thirty-one posts were collected between May 1st and 31st, 2025. These posts were organized and categorized according to common themes and characteristics, following the categorization technique highlighted by Bardin (1996)⁵⁰, which proposes organizing data into groups with significant elements to facilitate interpretation and identify relevant patterns.

This stage seeks to reveal how Pantys uses segmentation strategies and the visual and textual elements that make up its communication, with the aim of building a robust and contextualized analysis of the brand's approach to community marketing.

⁵⁰Bardin, L. (1996). Content analysis. Lisbon: Editions 70.

Initially, the brand's visual identity is clear (Image 5), with predominant colors like light pink, orange, and red. These colors evoke a delicate, feminine touch, with red representing menstrual health and orange as a complementary color. Communication is youthful and informal (Image 5), with the use of expressions, English words, and emojis in captions, as well as visual elements in drawings on images and different typography in post headlines.



Figure 5. Brand's Instagram homepage

Source: Screenshot from the brand's official Instagram account @pantys

pantys 🌐 ter uma nova calcinha absorvente lllllinda, ajudar o planeta, seu corpo, e ainda ajudar a combater a pobreza menstrual?? oh, yes! na compra de uma calcinha #doei1pantys, outra será automaticamente doada para quem precisa <3
saiba mais em pantys.com.br

pantys 🌐 tem coisas que só um café gelado e nossa pantys favorita resolvem, né?
go-getter mocha absorve fluxo noturno, tem tecido natural e deixa seu look ☐☐☐☐

Figure 6. Publication caption

Source: Screenshot from the brand's official Instagram account @pantys

Posts were manually collected from the page using screenshots and reconstructed into a chronological timeline of publications. After mapping and collecting the material, the material was categorized and interpreted in a table. To develop the analysis for this research, four categories were created based on the content seen on the page. The defined categories are: community, meme, commemorative date, products, and other aspects (Table 1).

Most of the month's posts have a strong educational appeal, focusing on topics such as menstrual health, environmental impact, and female leadership. These educational posts highlight the brand's strengths and differentiation from traditional sanitary pad brands. The page showcases this through collaborative content with influencers and carousels featuring educational content.

CATEGORIA	CRITÉRIO	TOTAL	PORCENTAGEM
Comunidade	Reforçam o sentimento de comunidade, quando trazem assuntos educativos e que abordem pautas como sustentabilidade, pobreza menstrual, liderança, empoderamento feminino	16	51,6%
Meme	Conteúdos criados para engajar a comunidade através de diversão, conexão e atualidade.	4	12,9%
Data comemorativa	Publicações relacionadas a datas comemorativas como o dia das mães	2	6,5%
Produtos	Conteúdos que trazem informações sobre os produtos, ou promoções ou apenas imagens dos produtos	6	19,4%
Outras Vertentes	Conteúdos que mostram novos produtos relacionados a marca. Produtos que são adjacentes do foco principal do produto da marca, mas se conectam com o propósito e outras marcas.	3	9,7%

TABLE 1 – Description of categories

Source: prepared by the author (2025).

Of the 31 posts published in May, 8 were in reel format, 11 in carousel format, and 12 in image format. Looking at the categorizations, we can see that 51.6% of the posts addressed community issues. In other words, they reinforced topics that are important to the brand and the community, such as sustainability, menstrual health, and women's empowerment.

One of the topics that drew the most attention in the analysis, and which reflects the results of the community content, is the launch of an annual movement that the brand has been promoting against menstrual poverty since 2021. The "Menstrual Dignity" campaign, part of the Pantys Protest movement, consists of automatically donating menstrual panties with each purchase and joins forces with other brands in the market to further amplify the cause by donating a panty. Additionally, the brand facilitates other donations to similar projects through a project website highlighted in the link in the brand's profile bio.



Figure 7. Pantys Post

Source: Screenshot from the brand's official Instagram account @pantys

The campaign began with the launch of special edition menstrual panties with the #Doei1Pantys label on May 20. May 28 is recognized as International Menstrual Hygiene Day, a date created to raise awareness about the challenges faced by people who menstruate around the world.



Figure 8. 2025 #Doei1Pantys Campaign

Source: Screenshot of the burqa by #Doei1Pantys on Instagram

Another interesting factor in the campaign promoted by the brand last year, which reinforces the value of emotional connection with the public and the power of community marketing, was the creation of an online protest in 2022. The brand launched a protest in which for each photo posted on the feed with #PantysProtest with an "activist sign", like those available on the website, or with elements that have synergy with the cause, a pair of absorbent panties was donated to NGOs.



Figure 9. #PantysProtest 2022

Source: Screenshot of the burqa by #Doei1Pantys on Instagram

This campaign went viral, and several women and influencers supported the cause. It's clear that the brand has a strong purpose and champions related causes, which enables the creation of communities and identification with the brand's target audience, who share the same values and purposes.

This approach aligns with the concept of "emotional consumer connection," as proposed by Aaker (2018)⁵¹, in which brands add value by associating themselves with causes that resonate with the public. By establishing a direct dialogue with its consumer base, Pantys adopts cause marketing, defined by Kotler (2018)⁵² as the integration of brand values with relevant social issues, fostering loyalty and active public participation.

Furthermore, this practice contributes to the formation of consumer communities that share similar values, which is similar to the idea of "tribes" in marketing, where consumers

⁵¹Aaker, D. (2018). Creating and managing successful brands. São Paulo: Futura.

⁵²Kotler, P. (2018). Marketing 4.0: Moving from traditional to digital. Wiley.

become spontaneous advocates for brands with which they identify in terms of lifestyle and principles.

In the case of Pantys, the choice of topics such as menstrual health, sustainability, and gender equality reveals a commitment to defending women's rights—a core aspect of the brand's identity. By addressing topics that have historically been overlooked, the company strengthens female empowerment and encourages meaningful conversations with its audience.

This positioning allows the brand to expand its message with the support of engaged consumers, promoting a positive impact that goes beyond product sales. Further reinforcing the narrative of empowerment and sustainability can deepen community connections and solidify the brand's perceived purpose. This strategy aligns with purpose-driven branding, a concept also explored by Aaker (2018)⁵³, in which the brand goes beyond simply delivering products and builds value around relevant causes. By highlighting menstrual poverty and other social issues, Pantys reinforces its mission and invites other women to identify with its journey and worldview.

Another interesting result of this research is demonstrated in the "other aspects" category, which, despite not being the second most prevalent category, provides insights into brand extension and brand community. Pantys published some products that were not the brand's primary products, such as sustainable soaps and a line of pajamas. Analyzing the brand's website, it's clear that the community has consolidated to the point where consumers purchase products from various categories, such as sweatshirts and accessories.

Brand extension and the formation of brand communities have become central strategies in contemporary marketing, especially for brands seeking to expand their portfolio while remaining consistent with their values and purpose.

⁵³Aaker, D. (2018). *Creating and managing successful brands*. São Paulo: Futura.

Brand extension is defined as the use of an established brand to launch new products in different categories, leveraging the value already built in the consumer's imagination (Aaker & Keller, 1990)⁵⁴. According to Keller (2003)⁵⁵, the success of this strategy depends on the perceived congruence between the original products and the new items offered, as well as the strength of brand equity. Kotler and Keller (2012)⁵⁶ add that brand extension allows the company to explore new market opportunities with lower risk and greater acceptance.

In the case of Pantys, the company began its journey focusing on reusable menstrual hygiene products and gradually expanded its reach to a broader portfolio, including intimate soaps, sleepwear, and self-care accessories. This expansion is a clear example of successful brand extension, as the new products directly align with the company's original purpose: promoting well-being, comfort, and sustainability for women. By maintaining consistency between the products and the brand's values, Pantys was able to preserve its image and avoid so-called "brand dilution," a common risk in poorly planned extension strategies (Keller, 2003)⁵⁷. And the public's use of these and other brand accessories, such as a reusable bag, demonstrates that an individual's use of the brand represents what they believe in and stand for.

⁵⁴Aaker, D.; Keller, K. L. (1990). Consumer evaluations of brand extensions. *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 54, no. 1, p. 27–41

⁵⁵Keller, K. L. (2003). *Strategic brand management: building, measuring, and managing Brand equity*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

⁵⁶Kotler, P.; Keller, K.L. (2012). *Marketing Management*. 14th ed. New York: Pearson Prentice Hall.

⁵⁷Keller, K. L. (2003). *Strategic brand management: building, measuring, and managing Brand equity*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.



Figure 10. Other products of the brand
Source: Screenshot from the brand's website.

Furthermore, the Pantys case stands out for the presence of a highly engaged brand community. According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001)⁵⁸, brand communities are specialized groups of consumers who share a sense of belonging, rituals, and values associated with the brand. Pantys has built a solid base of consumers who not only buy its products but also share ideals related to women's health, sustainability, and breaking body taboos. This community acts as a support network for the brand, spontaneously promoting its values and new launches.

⁵⁸Muniz, AM; O'guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 27, no. 4, p. 412–432

Cova and Cova (2002)⁵⁹ expand on this idea by introducing the concept of a "consumer tribe," in which engagement goes beyond the consumer relationship and involves a symbolic and emotional construction. In the case of Pantys, the activity of this tribe is visible on social media, forums, and events, strengthening the bond between brand and consumers. Schau et al. (2009)⁶⁰ observe that these community practices are fundamental elements in value creation. These practices are present in the Pantys ecosystem, whose communication encourages the active participation of its consumers and provides a space for the exchange of experiences.

The synergy between brand extension and brand community in Pantys' strategy reveals an effective brand path. And the trust placed in consumers, combined with a sense of community belonging, allows the brand to explore new categories while maintaining its symbolic and market capital.

The other categories, such as Memes (12.9%), Products (19.4%), and Commemorative Dates (6.5%), demonstrate the brand's marketing profile and positioning for its target audience. The memes were related to current and fun topics, addressing topics related to menstruation. The Commemorative Dates category was created by focusing on May, which coincided with Mother's Day, celebrated on May 11th in 2025. The brand created posts to connect Mother's Day with its products and the relationship between mothers and daughters.

Conclusions

Based on the problem-solving approach, which sought to understand how the Pantys brand positions itself with community marketing and tribal growth in the digital environment, it was possible to determine that the brand builds a solid strategy based on purpose, activism,

⁵⁹Cova, B.; Cova, V. (2002). Tribal marketing: the tribalization of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 36, no. 5/6, p. 595– 620

⁶⁰Schau, HJ et al. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 73, no. 5, p. 30–51

and emotional connection with its audience. Through an analysis of Instagram posts during the month of May 2025, it was observed that 51.6% of the content reinforced the feeling of community by addressing topics such as sustainability, menstrual poverty, and female empowerment. This emphasis demonstrates that the brand understands its role not only as a product supplier, but as an active agent in social and environmental transformation.

The "Menstrual Dignity" campaign, with actions involving donations, online engagement, and influencer mobilization, reveals how Pantys applies the principles of cause marketing and symbolic value creation, as proposed by Kotler (2018)⁶¹ and Aaker (2018)⁶². By connecting its brand identity to relevant causes, the company consolidates a consumer base that shares the same values and engages in activist actions for the benefit of the collective, evidencing the concept of a "consumer tribe" described by Cova and Cova (2002)⁶³.

Furthermore, Pantys demonstrates effective brand extension practices (Keller, 2003)⁶⁴ by expanding its portfolio to include items such as pajamas and intimate soaps without breaking with the company's core purpose. This coherence reinforces the brand's brand equity and prevents the dilution of the established identity. Consumer engagement with the new products highlights the existence of an active and loyal brand community, as characterized by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001)⁶⁵ and Schau et al. (2009)⁶⁶.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Pantys uses community marketing as a core strategy for the growth and strengthening of its brand. The analyzed case study proves that

⁶¹Kotler, P. (2018). *Marketing 4.0: Moving from traditional to digital*. Wiley.

⁶²Aaker, D. (2018). *Creating and managing successful brands*. São Paulo: Futura.

⁶³Cova, B.; Cova, V. (2002). Tribal marketing: the tribalization of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 36, no. 5/6, p. 595– 620

⁶⁴Keller, K. L. (2003). *Strategic brand management: building, measuring, and managing Brand equity*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

⁶⁵Muniz, AM; O'guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 27, no. 4, p. 412–432

⁶⁶Schau, HJ et al. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 73, no. 5, p. 30–51

positioning through digital tribes and shared values allows the brand not only to differentiate itself in the market but also to generate a positive impact in the social, environmental, and cultural spheres. By fostering active consumer participation, encouraging conscious consumption, and highlighting historically neglected topics, Pantys represents a successful example of purposeful branding in the contemporary landscape.