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## Understanding brand authenticity in specialized communities: An interpretive qualitative study of the Brit Iron Rebels Las Vegas Clan

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UNDERSTANDING BRAND AUTHENTICITY IN SPECIALIZED COMMUNITIES:  
AN INTERPRETIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE BRIT IRON REBELS  
LAS VEGAS CLAN

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
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University of Nevada Las Vegas

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We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

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## ABSTRACT

Postmodern society is marked by a condition where traditional identity markers have degenerated in value. Without the spatial or temporal connection provided by traditional identity markers, individuals look to brands perceived to be authentic to aide in identity construction. Paradoxically, individualized identities need the interpretive support of other likeminded individuals in specialized communities to give legitimacy to constructed identities. These specialized communities often focus around a lifestyle or a brand. This research employed interpretive qualitative methodology to understand authenticity. Semistructured depth interviews were conducted with members of the Brit Iron Rebels Las Vegas Clan to understand the authenticity of Triumph Motorcycles within the context of their specialized community. Results of study found that the indexical connection provided by ownership of Triumph Motorcycles and participation in specialized communities provides traditional identity markers lacking in postmodern society. In practice, analysis of data revealed that a genuine interest on the part of brand managers who participate in specialized motorcycle communities must trump commercial intentions.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society is marked by a condition where traditional identity markers used to create identity have degenerated in legitimacy. This condition is known as the postmodern condition (Lyotard 1979/1984; Miller 2008; Beverland, Farrelly & Quester 2010). The postmodern condition has been amplified by a process of individualization where identities and social relationships are mediated by a variety of Internet connected devices. The postmodern condition and individualization have generated an environment where people are free to create individualized identities mediated by a commoditized system of signs and symbols. Postmodern consumer culture theory posits that brands perceived to be authentic aide in identity construction (Baudrillard 1976/1993; Holt 2002). The postmodern condition, individualization and postmodern consumer culture theory are all tenets of postmodernism. Postmodernism is the theoretical framework for this research.

Johnson and Duberley (2000), Belk, Fischer and Kozinets (2013) and Merriam (2002) position postmodernism as a formal epistemology and research tradition, but many formal institutions reject it. Johnson and Duberley (2002) argue that “postmodernism maybe seen as a new and distinctive means of understanding science that, at first sight, has some radical cachet yet may also be seen as something of a bandwagon for aspiring academics” (p. 94). Schwandt (2001) argues that the denigration of postmodernism stems from the postmodernist rejection of conventional styles of academic discourse (p. 201).

## Postmodernism

There is debate amongst scholars as to what constitutes postmodernism. In an attempt to define the postmodern for students Hans Bertens (1995) said, “No single definition of postmodernism has gone uncontested or has even been widely accepted” (p. 12). Postmodern theory is found in art, literature, architecture, and economics. This research will only focus on postmodernism in social and cultural theory.

Postmodern culture theorists argue that the postmodern condition is marked by the decline in legitimacy of metanarratives. Metanarratives, according to Stephens and McCullum (1998) are, “the implicit and usually invisible ideologies, systems and assumptions which operate globally in society to order knowledge and experience” (p. 3). The concept of the postmodern and the postmodern condition can be traced to the philosophy of Jean- François Lyotard (1979/1984).

Lyotard (1979/1984) was among the first scholars to attempt to define postmodernism. In his momentous and often contested publication, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979/1984) Lyotard defines the postmodern as, “incredulity toward metanarratives” (p. xxiv). Lyotard’s argument is that older forms of legitimation, metanarratives-the ways in which reality was explained: science, class, race, sex, community, are no longer adequate to order knowledge or define experience.

Lyotard (1979/1984) makes an argument against the unifying rationality of metanarratives and their attempt to explain reality. In his analysis of Lyotard’s work, Browning (2000) explains that, “Lyotard deprecates grand narratives that aspire to provide meta-perspectives by which all other narratives are to be explained” (p. 2).

Lyotard posits the postmodern as a reaction to the ways in which the modern attempts to universally explain all other narratives.

According to Lyotard (1979/1984) metanarratives have been replaced by “petit récits” or little narratives. Petit récits are narratives that are ever evolving and defined by the individual stemming from personal experience and not subservient to grand narratives. Petit récits allow for individual identity creation because they stem from personal experience, according to Browning (2000), “Lyotard is disinclined to see individual human beings as possessing a unified identity” (p. 7). Jean Baudrillard (1976/1993) expanded the concept of petit récits further with the argument that society now exists in a hyperreal world where one is free to create an identity through a mediated system of signs and symbols which are often commoditized.

In *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976/1993) Baudrillard argues that postmodern society is marked by the presence of simulacra. In an analysis of *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Kellner (2002) explains that in the society of simulacra, where “identities are constructed by the appropriation of images and codes and models determine how individuals perceive themselves and relate to other people” (p. 62). Grbich (2004) contends that in postmodern society mediated symbols become more powerful than what they represent. Grbich (2004) argues “Our lives become dictated by the images and ideals presented through the media. The boundary between image and reality implodes and a world of hyper-reality is created where the distinction between real and unreal are blurred” (p. 20). The symbols in Baudrillard’s society of simulacra are influential enough where identity is constructed by the adoption of mediated signs and symbols.

A common misconception of postmodernism is what Clark (2003) refers to as the perioditizing argument. The argument is often made that history has shifted from a period where humans were once modern and now are postmodern. In his analysis of Bauman's work, Clark (2003) explains that the modern still exists around us in a posthumous form.

The postmodern condition is one marked by the disbelief in metanarratives. There is some debate amongst scholars as to what generated the postmodern condition. David Harvey (1989) argues that globalization, consumer capitalism and technological innovations have created a sense of placelessness that makes it possible for the dissemination and adoption of mediated signs and symbols. Grbich (2004) argues that the economic arrangements and political values of modern capitalism are an intrinsic part of postmodernism. This research does not seek to understand what generated the postmodern condition only to understand the influence of postmodernism in society and culture.

In postmodern culture the individual is free to create an ever evolving identity through the appropriation of mediated signs and symbols. Baudrillard's (1976/1993) mediated symbols were commoditized and mediated through the media of the time, magazines, radio, and television. Johnson and Duberley (2000) argue that "current levels of accelerated social, economic and technological change have been labeled as the postmodern condition" (p. 92). Contemporary media have amplified the postmodern condition and generated a process of individualization where identity and community are mediated by computers, tablets, smartphones and social media.

## **Individualization**

Individualization is a process in which identity is less bound by history, place and tradition (Miller, 2008). Media have “freed the individual from the context of tradition, history, and under globalization are free to and perhaps forced to actively construct their own biographies and social bonds” (Miller, 2008, p. 388). Miller’s definition of individualization is rooted in the philosophies of sociologists Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2001).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) argued that due in part to globalization and urbanization; established social structures have broken down. Individualization means, “the disintegration of previously existing social forms, for example the increasing fragility of such categories as class and social status, gender roles, family, neighborhood” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001, p. 2). Those disintegrated social forms are the traditional identity markers used in identity construction. The disintegration of social forms is augmented by the proliferation of social media and constant connectivity.

Contemporary media are amplifying the individualization process. Miller (2008) argues that identity, social bonds and community have shifted, “from a focus on human groups to something that takes in to account our increasing engagements with a variety of objects, tools and technologies such as mobile phones, computers, blogs and social networking profiles” (p. 394). Although discussing the technology of the time, Grodin and Lindlof (1996) argued that in postmodern society identity and relationships are mediated by technology. Grodin and Lindlof (1996) explain “In the culture more generally, we see the change manifest in the slow replacement of limbs, organs, skin, and so on with technological devices; the avid enthusiasm for virtual realities, cyberpunk and

the chaotic flow of MTV images” (p. 135). The more contemporary system of signs and symbols used to communicate identity and form social bonds are mediated through devices that provide constant connectivity.

In postmodern society individuals face a crisis of identity brought about by the de-legitimation of traditional identity markers. Individualization has created a demand for a system of symbols to communicate to others how they wish to be perceived.

Beverland, Farrelly and Quester (2010) argue that because of, “the decline of traditional markers of identity such as local communities and institutions consumers have renewed links to time and place by engaging in communities of consumption” (p. 699).

Scholars of postmodern consumer culture theory have proposed the idea that individuals are looking at branded goods to provide the identity markers used in identity construction. These branded goods serve a dual purpose, to make sense of the social world and to aide in identity construction. The following section explains postmodern consumer culture theory and demonstrates examples of it in practice.

### **Postmodern Consumer Culture**

Postmodern consumer culture posits the notion that in postmodern society the consumption of branded goods serves as a resource in identity construction and helps make sense of the social world. Identity in postmodern society is predicated on personal choices not by the cultural engineering of companies or traditional markers of identity. To be successful in the postmodern marketplace brands must be perceived as having an authentic quality.

Postmodern consumer culture theory can be traced to the 1960's when consumer goods began to be used to define identity and establish a stake in community. Holt (2002) argues that, "from the 1960's onward people increasingly viewed consumption as an autonomous space in which they could pursue identities unencumbered by tradition, social circumstances or societal institutions" (p. 82). Identity was no longer delineated by traditional identity markers but by the thoughtful independent choices of the consumer. The consumer began to create an identity mediated by the social symbols inherent in branded goods.

Elliot (1999) argues that postmodern consumption signifies a shift from where goods fulfill a need to one where goods communicate value to others and identity to ourselves. In postmodern consumer culture, consumption serves two purposes, "in constructing the social world, social symbolism and inward in constructing our self-identity, self-symbolism" (Elliot, 1999, p. 113). According to postmodern consumer culture theory goods no longer simply fill a need. An individual no longer simply buys butter for toast; through the consumption of branded goods a person buys a specific brand of butter because that specific brand of butter communicates status, lifestyle and value to the self and to others who might happen to be peeking in one's refrigerator or shopping cart.

Paradoxically, individuated identities need the support of others to give their created identities legitimacy. Holt (2002) argues that, "even sovereign identities require the interpretive support of others to give them ballast" (p. 83). Because of the need for interpretive support, individuals began forming brand communities. Holt (2002) contends that, "consumers now form communities around brands a distinctly postmodern mode of sociality" (p. 83). Once an identity has been created through the appropriation of

social symbols inherent in branded goods, that identity needs the interpretive support of likeminded others, that support however is reciprocal and helps establish social status outside and within brand communities.

Postmodern consumer culture theory encompasses the rejection of cultural engineering by companies and supports the personal sovereignty of the individual to define the self. Branded goods must be perceived as cultural resources to help create an identity. Those resources must appear disinterested in any cultural or commercial agenda. Holt (2002) explains, “in order to serve as valuable ingredients in producing the self, branded cultural resources must be perceived as authentic” (p. 83). Brands perceived as authentic become a resource in the construction and communication of identity.

Brand managers and marketers are employing the concept of authenticity to help consumers create an identity that is not delineated by tradition, social circumstances or institutions. Beverland and Farrelly (2009) argue that “the loss of traditional sources of meaning and self-identity associated with postmodern market characteristics (globalization, de-territorialization and hyperreality) has encouraged consumers to become active and adept in appropriating authenticity” (p. 839). Existing literature in brand authenticity offers an approach to successfully position a brand as authentic in the postmodern marketplace.

To be successful in the postmodern marketplace a brand must not be viewed as a blueprint to an identity. An authentic brand must be perceived as a resource in the construction of a personal identity. According to Holt (2002), “to be authentic, brands must be disinterested: they must be perceived as invented and disseminated by people who are intrinsically motivated by their inherent value” (p. 83). The rise in prominence of



“craft” beer serves as an example. Samuel Adams beer typifies how marketers employ authenticity in advertising. In clothing, Levi’s jeans have had a successful run at positioning itself as a brand that is authentically American. Brands that are marketed as authentic often employ cues that provide for the consumer the identity markers that have degenerated in value. For purposes of this study Indian Motorcycles will be used as a case study. Indian Motorcycles exemplifies marketing attempts to position a brand as an authentic product.

### **Indian Motorcycles**

Indian began production in 1901 at the “Wigwam” production facility in Massachusetts, with what legend has it, its first sale to the New York Police Department. During WWI Indian produced 41,000 motorcycles for the American war effort and did the same during WWII (Droege, 2009). Diminishing postwar sales in 1963 led to the sale of Indian motorcycles to Associated Motor Cycles (AMC), Britain’s largest motorcycle manufacturer (Ward, 2012).

During AMC ownership Indian motorcycles were manufactured in Woolwich South London with only the Indian name plate attached to them to distinguish them as an Indian Motorcycle. From the 1960’s onward Indian Motorcycles changed ownership continuously and began manufacturing in Taiwan in 1972 until it folded in 1985 under ownership of the American Moped Associates (Droege, 2009, p. 59). After mounting losses Indian all but disappeared completely from the market in 1985 (Ward, 2012). In 1999 the private equity firm Audax Group acquired the rights to the brand and began to assemble Indian Motorcycles from parts made by Italian and German manufacturers. In

2004 Indian produced only 40 motorcycles and ceased production further tarnishing its brand value and leaving consumers in need of parts in the lurch.

In 2004 the rights to Indian Motorcycles were acquired by Stellican Limited, a British private equity firm. Stellican specializes in re-launching companies with strong brand names, Chris-Craft boats and Italian yacht manufacturer Riva (Droege, 2009). In an effort to be successful Stellican has opened up a 40,000 square foot plant in Kings Mountain, North Carolina. Indian Motorcycles has re-launched and is attempting to be more than just an alternative to Harley-Davidson Motorcycles.

Stellican Limited wants to position Indian Motorcycles as an authentic American brand. In their attempt to be perceived as authentic through various means of advertising, Indian Motorcycles boast, “honoring our past and powering our future” (Honoring our Past, 2013) written next to a man portrayed shaping a motorcycle part by hand. What makes this a claim of authenticity is the indexical connection to a heritage in American motorcycling when goods were hand-crafted and built for quality, all this is done while downplaying the fact that Indian Motorcycles is foreign owned, foreign engineered and was manufactured abroad for decades. Indian Motorcycles exemplifies how brand managers are employing the concept of authenticity to better position a brand in the postmodern market place. Norton, Royal Enfield and Matchless Motorcycles have followed suit. The success of Triumph Motorcycles opened up the road for Indian Motorcycles, Norton and others motorcycle companies to follow.

### **Triumph Motorcycles**

British Motorcycles are referred to by motorcycle enthusiasts as British Iron. British iron was so prominent in the world motorcycle market that they were considered

an essential part of the British national identity. Aamidor (2009) explains that, “Motorcycles were as important to England’s national identity as the wine industry is to France’s national identity” (p. 39).

Triumph Motorcycles began production in 1902 (Aamidor, 2009). The British motorcycle industry was so prominent that British motorcycles “were the third largest source of foreign exchange for the United Kingdom, lagging behind only automobiles and Scotch whiskey. And yet, the British motorcycle industry was essentially dead by 1975” (Aamidor, 2009, p. 39). After enjoying popularity and cult status in the 1950’s and 1960’s, Marlon Brando rode a Triumph Thunder Bird in *The Wild Ones* (Kramer & Benedek, 1953) and Steve McQueen rode a Triumph Scrambler in *The Great Escape* (Sturges, 1963), Triumph Motorcycles went bankrupt. In 1983 Triumph Motorcycles was purchased by real-estate developer John Bloor. It was not until 1990 that Triumph Motorcycles enjoyed profitable success (Aamidor, 2009). Although Triumph Motorcycles had enjoyed success in the sport bike category, in 2000 Triumph Motorcycles re-launched the Bonneville. With the success of the Bonneville, Triumph Motorcycles paved the way for companies like Norton, Royal Enfield, and to some extent Indian Motorcycles to follow suit and re-launch.

Several other motorcycle companies have taken a page out of the Triumph Motorcycle play book. Like Triumph Motorcycles, the Norton Motorcycle Company, which met the same fate as Triumph Motorcycles in the 1970’s, has re-launched a new line of classic Norton motorcycles. In 2010 Norton re-launched the iconic Norton Commando (Norton History, n.d.). In the United States, Indian Motorcycles re-launched under new ownership, Stellican Limited in 2013 (Droege, 2009). Indian Motorcycles has undergone several failed re-launches but the injection of capital by Stellican Limited and

a focus on marketing Indian motorcycles as authentic has revitalized sales of the brand. With an established pedigree and economic resurgence Triumph Motorcycles is the ideal brand to research. Examples of authentic brands in media highlight the cultural importance of these brands and their claim to authenticity.

### **Authentic Brands in Media**

Like Indian Motorcycles in the movie *The World's fastest Indian* (Donaldson, 2005), Norton Motorcycles followed suit with the movie *One Week* (McGowan, 2008) which features a Norton Commando. Norton owned by AMC until merging with Triumph in 1973 has changed hands and manufacturing locations (Ward, 2012). Twice in its history Norton has been American owned and manufactured (“Norton Motorcycles-History”, 2014). Norton still continued to be revered and perceived as an authentic British motorcycle brand. Matchless Motorcycles will also be featured prominently in *The Expendables 3* and a clothing line will be release in conjunction to the release of the motion picture (Lerner & Hughes, 2014). Like Indian Motorcycles, Matchless, Norton, and Triumph Motorcycles are undergoing a resurgence which employs the concept of authenticity in their effort to be successful in the postmodern market place.

Positioning a product as authentic is not limited to British motorcycles. Chrysler is also attempting to position products as authentic. The new line of Dodge cars features brands that were absent from Dodge’s portfolio for decades: the Challenger, Charger and Dart (“Born Dodge”, 2014).

Jeep is also planning to revive the Jeep Wagoneer which was discontinued in the mid 1990’s but enjoyed a cult following (Frank, 2014). Jeep Wagoneers can be spotted as the choice vehicle for dads in almost any commercial or movie. In *Man of Steel* (Roven

& Snyder, 2013) Superman's adoptive father Jonathan Kent, played by Kevin Costner, drove a Jeep Wagoneer.

One cannot ignore the attempts of American automobile firms to position their vehicles on the center stage of pop culture. The vehicles in *Transformers* (Murphy, DeSanto & Bay, 2007) are exclusively manufactured by GM. The prominence of GM's yellow Camaro as Bumblebee, as opposed to the original yellow Volkswagen Bug in the 1980's cartoon series *The Transformers* (Bloom, 1984), cannot go unmentioned. Many brands make a claim of authenticity. Examples of appeals of authenticity can be found in wine, beer, clothing and brands that have a stake in specialized communities.

#### PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of study is to understand authenticity in the Brit Iron Rebels Las Vegas Clan. This research argues that members of the Brit Iron Rebels Las Vegas Clan prefer Triumph Motorcycles because they are perceived to be authentic. This research will contribute to the scholarship of authenticity in theory and in practice. In theory, this research will attempt to understand if the preference for Triumph Motorcycles in the Brit Iron Rebels Las Vegas Clan conforms to postmodern theory. In practice, this research will explore implications for brand managers who attempt to position a brand as authentic in specialized communities.

Postmodern consumer culture theory posits goods perceived to be authentic as having two purposes, to make sense of the social world and to aide in identity construction. This research will attempt to understand the demand for authenticity. It will attempt to understand if the reasoning for the preference for Triumph Motorcycles conforms to postmodern consumer culture theory. This research will attempt to

understand if there are phenomena in the demand for authenticity that postmodern consumer culture theory according to Elliot (1999), where brands communicate social symbolism and self-symbolism, does not account for. This research also attempts to understand authenticity in specialized communities with a focus on practical implications.

Postmodernity has generated a condition where the individual can create an identity and gain membership in specialized communities. Beverland Farrelly and Quester (2010) argue that, “the postmodern consumer often finds authenticity in communities of consumption including those that are based around a focal brand” (p. 698). This research will attempt to understand if social media have influenced perceptions of community and authenticity in the Brit Iron Rebels Las Vegas Clan. A focus will be allocated to implications that can be generalized to brands that position themselves as authentic or have a stake in specialized communities. Like Harley-Davidson Motorcycles with the Harley Owners Group (H.O.G.) other motorcycle brands have launched their own brand communities. To better understand how marketers employ authenticity, a definition of terms will follow.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following section will be an introduction to the definition of authenticity in existing literature. This section will provide an operational definition of authenticity as well as examples of it at work. Community and brand community will also be defined. The importance of the Brit Iron Rebels to this study will also be explained. The section begins with a definition of authenticity and the three attributes that compose it. The definition in this study is operational because of the multiple meanings authenticity has in the existing literature.

## **Authenticity**

A claim of authenticity has three attributes that are found throughout scholarly peer reviewed articles. A claim of authenticity is a claim that a brand has an indexical connection, emphasizes craftsmanship and downplays commercial intentions. The consumer perception of authenticity is dependent on each attribute and explained in further detail.

*Indexical Connection-* For a claim of authenticity, a brand must emphasize an indexical connection. An indexical connection is a spacio/temporal connection (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). A spacio/temporal connection is a reference to a connection to a place (spacio) or time (temporal). The claim can be real or invented. The claims of indexical connection are not overt. An example of indexical authenticity is the Levi's Jeans brand and their claim of, "Original Riveted Quality Clothing since May 20th 1873" ("History of Levi's," 2010). The brand emphasizes the tie to America with the claim "Patented in U.S" ("History of Levi's," 2010). These two claims make a connection to the pioneer spirit that made America great at the turn of the century. The claim of authenticity can be verified by means of the patent; however claims of an indexical connection that have been invented have also been found to be successful.

The Gucci brand invented a back story claiming the brand founder as a saddle maker for to the Medici family during the renaissance (Alexander, 2009). Although Gucci has admitted the claim to be untrue, what made the claim successful was the emphasis on the spacio/temporal connection; the connection to renaissance Italy. The brand emphasized a history and a connection to a time where good craftsmanship was more important than commercial success.

A product that makes a claim of authenticity offers cues that are thought to have a connection to a place or a time to give the product a point of origin. Giving a product a point of origin gives the product, originality. Grayson and Martinec (2004) contend that indexical authenticity, “distinguishes the 'real thing' from its copies” (p. 298). Grayson and Martinec also discuss the importance of iconicity to an authentic product. Iconicity is the consumer perception that an item resembles an indexical item. The purpose of indexicality in a claim of authenticity is to provide for the consumer a connection to a place or time and the values of that place and time. The indexical notion provides the basis for an iconic representation. In an iconically authentic item a consumer has an indexical notion of the values that an iconically authentic item possesses. Indexical authenticity is similar to Baudrillard’s theory of simulacra.

An indexical connection provides a point of origin, a reference. By preferring Levi’s jeans a consumer is seeking a pair of jeans that were rough enough for the consumer perception of pioneers of the American west. A claim of authenticity through indexicality assures that a product is not an imitation or a replica but an original item. Indexicality is the basis for iconic authenticity. In the Gucci example a consumer wants to be distinguished by the same fine quality hand crafted goods that the Medici’s preferred during the renaissance in Italy.

The spacio/temporal connection in the Gucci example is a claim of indexicality. However because it is connected to the renaissance, when goods were hand made by innovative thinkers, the claim also relates to craftsmanship. Craftsmanship is the second attribute of authenticity.

*Craftsmanship*-Craftsmanship refers to an attribute where the producers of the good are invested in the quality of the good and not motivated by mass production. Aside from the



indexical connection to Boston and American revolutionary Sam Adams, Samuel Adam's beer exemplifies the craftsmanship example with the claim, "Independently crafted from the finest everything since 1984" ("Samuel Adams", 2014). The fact that Samuel Adam's brewers emphasize "the finest everything" in the crafting of their beer is a testament to the interest in the quality of the beer over mass producing a beer. Samuel Adams (2014) beer is also "crafted," not made or produced.

In their research in to authenticity, Beverland Lindgreen and Vink (2008) highlight craftsmanship as a hallmark of authenticity. Beverland et al. (2008) argue that, "authenticity comes from the sense that a passionate creator is involved in making products, and is motivated primarily by their love of craft, rather than the possibility of financial reward" (p. 12). The passion for the craft is a testament to the producer being interested in the product itself over a mass commercial gain or mass production.

Liao and Ma (2009) found six attributes to consumer perceptions of authenticity. Three of the attributes: originality, heritage and sacredness relate to indexicality because they are attributes that relate to a place of origin, and time-established practices. Scarceness relates to the third attribute of authenticity in this research. The other two of Liao and Ma's attributes, quality and purity are about craftsmanship. Liao and Ma (2009) contend that "authenticity meant a representation and a paragon of something including quality guarantee, objective and robust quality" (p. 101). Purity refers to a product that "comes from one source, is focused on and proficient in one thing" (Liao and Ma, 2009 p. 104). This research collapses Liao and Ma's (2009) six attributes of authenticity in to three attributes.

The three attributes of authenticity: indexicality, craftsmanship and downplaying commercial intentions interlock. An indexical connection establishes a tradition and

location for craftsmanship. The craftsmanship of a brand helps communicate value. Preferring Gucci as a brand communicates that you are in a societal position where you can afford handcrafted goods once exclusive to Italian nobility.

Craftsmanship is rendered irrelevant if there is an overt mass commercial intention perceived in the communication between brand and consumer. To be perceived as authentic a brand must downplay commercial intentions. By downplaying commercial intentions a brand can gain market insights and maintain a positive relationship with a consumer.

*Downplay Commercial Intentions-* The third attribute of authenticity is downplaying commercial intentions. Downplaying commercial intentions refers to a rejection of mass marketing and advertising. Beverland Lindgreen and Vink (2008) argue that, “using advertising to project authenticity is difficult because methods of mass marketing are believed to undermine such claims” (p. 5). This is a difficult task because a brand must remain relevant to the market place. If a brand completely rejects marketing, a decline in quality is perceived by the consumer. To remain relevant while still projecting an aura of authenticity a brand must engage in strategic decoupling.

Strategic decoupling refers to a process where a brand separates projected messages from internal operations. In a study of luxury wines Beverland and Luxton (2005) suggest that brands engage in strategic decoupling to maintain the projected aura of authenticity while still remaining relevant to the market place and market place innovations. Simply explained strategic decoupling is an attempt to, “present an external façade to give the impression that they are conforming to external, institutionally acceptable norms, (values of the community or consumer) while behind the scenes they engage in practices that contradict their external image” (Beverland and Luxton, 2005, p.

104). Behind the scenes practices refer to mass production, consumer research, advertising and mass marketing.

To be perceived as authentic a brand must “be in the market place” (Beverland & Luxton, 2005) by showing a direct connection with the market place, in the case of authentic brands, the market place is a subculture. Being in the market place refers to a direct interaction with a consumer, community or subculture to gain insight in to new trends and consumer insights. An authentic brand must not appear to engage in formal consumer research and advertising (Beverland & Luxton, 2005). An authentic brand must be perceived to have the interests of the community at heart without seeming to be interested in profiting on the community or to be mass marketing to consumers outside the community.

A brand that has been remarkably successful in maximizing profits while down playing a commercial intent is Harley-Davidson Motorcycles. Harley-Davidson Motorcycles created and fosters the H.O.G group both on and off-line to maintain brand value and to conduct consumer research. H.O.G stands for Harley Owners Group. Membership is free after the purchase of a new Harley-Davidson motorcycle and can be renewed the following year. The online function of H.O.G encourages owners to discuss maintenance, customization while at the same time brand managers disseminate offers, new product information and conduct consumer research.

In an ethnographic study of H.O.G, McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (1995) explain the fine line that Harley-Davidson Motorcycles brand managers navigate to maintain the brand’s authenticity while conducting consumer research. Through the maintenance of H.O.G, Harley-Davidson Motorcycles is engendering a sense of

community while collecting consumer insights on brand value and mechanical problems encountered by consumers.

Brand communities pose a challenge for brand managers who want to position their brand as authentic. For well established brands creating a brand community is a balancing act. On the one hand the brand must maximize its commercial potential while downplaying mass commercial intentions. A brand must be seen as upholding the values of the community and must not overextend brand value outside the community.

Claiming a brand as authentic is not enough. Contemporary scholars recommend that an authentic brand engage in brand community whether the community exists independently or is created by brand managers. The importance of these communities is in helping the consumer make sense of the social world and strengthen identity creation. Thus to be authentic brands must downplay commercial intentions and not engage in over extending brand value.

Postmodern consumer culture theory posits the notion that brands help the consumer create an identity and make sense of the social world. Brand communities help provide interpretive support for individuated identities. These communities provide a social structure and a sense of belonging for members. To understand brand community one must first understand community.

### **Community**

Community has been an ever evolving concept. Tonnies's seminal work *Geimenschaft and Gesellchaft* (1887/1957) began to explore the disconnected nature of community in society arising from urbanization and modernity. It is in this vein of theory that this research defines the concept of brand community as a next step in the evolution of community. Before defining a brand community one must first outline what makes a

community. The literature that attempts to understand community defines it in physical proximity. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) outline three markers of physical community.

The first marker of community is a consciousness of kind. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) explain that, "Consciousness of kind is the intrinsic connection that members feel toward one another. Consciousness of kind is a shared consciousness; a way of thinking about things that is more than shared attitudes or perceived similarities" (p. 413). Simply explained, the consciousness of kind is the feeling that members of a community belong together. This identity marker was traditionally delineated by proximal space, a village, town, city, state county and even country.

The second marker of community is the existence of shared rituals and traditions. Rituals and traditions are the second marker of community because, "they perpetuate the community's shared history, culture and consciousness" (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 413). Rituals and traditions teach norms and values in a community. An example of this community marker is the shared stories of a tribe that help perpetuate normative behavior.

The third marker of community is a sense of moral responsibility. Members of a community must have a sense of obligation for the preservation of the community. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) explain that the sense of moral responsibility "is a felt sense of duty or obligation to the community as a whole and to its individual members. This sense of moral responsibility is what produces, in times of threat to the community, a collective action" (p. 413). An example of the sense of moral responsibility is when a community comes together to fill sandbags during a flood not only to save their individual homes but to save city hall, the public library or the homes of elder members of the community.

The existing literature on community delineates community in terms of physical and proximal space. Muniz and O’Guinn (2001), among other scholars (Lyotard, 1979/1984; Beck & Beck- Gernsheim, 2001; Baudrillard 1976/1993), refer to the concept of community as, “a grand narrative of the modern period and one in which consumption plays a very significant role” (p. 413). Postmodern consumer culture theory argues for the formation of a different form of community, brand community.

### **Brand Community**

The postmodern condition has created a demand for brands perceived to be authentic (Beverland et al., 2010). Brands perceived to be authentic engage or create brand communities. A brand community is much more than likeminded individuals coming together, they are a reflection of the *petit récits* discussed by Lyotard. Existing literature on brand communities discuss the benefits of brand communities from two perspectives, the perspective of the benefits to consumers and the perspective of the benefits to brands.

Brand communities are communities centered on consumption. Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) define brand community as, “a specialized, non-geographically bound community based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand” (p. 412). Brand communities help give legitimacy to individuated identities and according to postmodern consumer culture theory help make sense of the social world.

In a study to advance the theoretical notion of brand community written from the perspective of the consumer, Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) found the three markers of physical community present. The benefits that brand communities provide for community members were a key component of the study. The study included brand communities that

exist both off-line in physical space and online mediated by the internet. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) make an argument for brand communities to, "satisfy a yearning for a reconstructed and re-mystified community" (p. 428). This statement is an argument for brand community as a *petit récit* to provide for the community member the traditional identity markers that have degenerated in value.

A brand can run a risk of diminished brand value when brand managers do not interact with brand communities. Stockburger-Sauer's (2010) study focused on benefits for brands that engage in brand community. Stockburger-Sauer proposes that the Hell's Angels is a self-regulated community of Harley-Davidson motorcycle owners. According to Stockburger-Sauer (2010), "non-company-run communities bear the risk of community members conveying brand information in a non-company intended way" (p. 363). Stockburger-Sauer's (2010) argument is that the Hell's Angels is a non-company regulated community that conveys a brand message that is not intended by Harley-Davidson Motorcycles brand managers.

Brand communities have recently become a prominent research topic in marketing (Stockburger-Sauer, 2010). Studies identify and define the benefits of brand communities for both brands and consumers. Studies also outline the setbacks non-company regulated brand communities pose. One non-company regulated brand community is the Brit Iron Rebels.

### **Brit Iron Rebels**

The Brit Iron Rebels (B.I.R.) is a specialized community that focuses on owning, racing, modifying and collecting British motorcycles ("About the B.I.R.," n.d.). This community was chosen for this study because it is a community that has a well-organized

worldwide presence. B.I.R. is the most prominent specialized community focused on Triumph Motorcycles in terms of membership and organization in Las Vegas. All information about the B.I.R. was taken from the Brit Iron Rebels World Wide website: <http://www.britironrebels.com>.

B.I.R. was established in 2004. It was established with a focus on the preservation, restoration and promotion of British iron (“About the B.I.R.,” n.d.). In no way shape or form is B.I.R. a motorcycle club, gang or a one percent group. In *Hell’s Angels*, Thompson (1976) quotes a Hell’s Angel who explains that, “We are the one-percenters, man. The one percent that don’t fit in, and don’t care” (p. 13). It is open to British motorcycle enthusiasts who collect, restore, race or customize older or recently manufactured British motorcycles. B.I.R. has a specialized interest on the authenticity of the motorcycles of group members worldwide.

B.I.R. is an international incorporated entity with a structure and governing body. According to the B.I.R. website there are clans in 10 countries with close to 400 members (“About the B.I.R.,” n.d.). The community has a significant online presence but fosters offline functions. The B.I.R. is governed by a body that regulates membership. The governing body also sponsors meeting, benefits and schedules rides. The B.I.R. governing body also regulates participation of clans in non B.I.R. events.

The Las Vegas B.I.R. clan is the most organized and prominent British motorcycle community in Las Vegas. Membership includes 35 official members. Out of those 35 members there are 10 notable members who participate most often in clan functions (Clans, n.d.). Although the B.I.R. is focused on all British motorcycle brands the majority of clan members in Las Vegas ride Triumph Motorcycles.



The B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan is important to this study because it is a specialized community that is prominent, well-organized and has a focus on Triumph Motorcycles significantly over any other British motorcycle. Scholarship on brand authenticity positions brand communities as pivotal to the concept of authenticity. To better formulate the argument for understanding authenticity in the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan the following section will outline the organization of this research.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

This research is comprised of five chapters. The first chapter introduced the purpose of study; to understand authenticity in the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan. Chapter one included postmodernism as the theoretical framework. The first two chapters lay down a theoretical foundation in the scholarship of authenticity.

Chapter three expounds on qualitative methodology. In this research the method will be depth interviews. The chapter elaborates on the data collection, sample and analysis of data. The results of the data will follow in chapter four.

Chapter four also outlines results with practical implications. The final chapter is the discussion and recommendation chapter. The discussion deals with insights that came about after the study was conducted. The recommendations are for scholars interested in the topic of authenticity. The thesis also includes a section of references.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature reviews scholarly work in the field of authenticity. The studies are laid out in a manner that introduces the common epistemology and theoretical framework in the study of authenticity. The studies in the literature review were influential to this research. The Rationale section for this research will outline how the research will extend the scholarship of authenticity.

There are eleven studies included in the literature review. The concept of authenticity is defined differently in the studies but often reverts back to the importance of indexicality and iconicity. The literature review includes studies on cues that lead to the perception of authenticity. Another common theme in the studies is the idea that authenticity is a socially constructed concept that is negotiated between brand and consumer on the individual and communal level.

Studies in the literature review are grounded in postmodernist theory. The studies name a crisis in identity construction brought about by the postmodern condition. The argument is made that brands perceived to be authentic are a part of a system of signs and symbols that aide in identity construction. There is also a common approach in methodology.

Most studies included in the literature review utilize an interpretive qualitative research methodology. Only one study undertook quantitative research methodology. The interview is found to be the tool of preference. This research takes a similar approach in theory and methodology.

## **Brand Consumption and Narrative of the Self**

Schembri, Merrilees and Kristiansen (2010) conducted research to find how consumers use brands to construct a narrative of the self. The study undertook an interpretive qualitative approach to data collection and employed a thematic analysis to interpret the findings. Results of the study show that consumers use brands in three ways in identity construction.

The theoretical framework of the study was grounded on the work of Charles Sanders Peirce. Schembri et al. (2010) argue that in consumer's brand choices there was, "a symbolic interrelationship that involves the consumer as interpretant relating the sign to the object with associations" (p. 626). The work aimed to address the relationship between brands, consumers and consumption choices when using brands to create an identity.

The methodology used in the study was qualitative, or what Schembri et al. (2010) call an interpretive approach. Schembri et al. (2010) called their method the narrative method. Not much detail was given as to the method other than the name. Data collection took place at a car dealership in Australia. The dealership sold, Kia, Ford, Volvo, Jaguar and Aston-Martin cars. Participants were approached and interviewed about their consumption and brand experiences. Interviews were voluntary and adhered to ethical requirements. No further detail was given in the study as to the interview method or procedure.

Thematic analysis was used to interpret data. Responses were coded based on Pierce's semiotic triangle. Analysis resulted in three interrelationships between themes in which consumers used brands in creating identity: symbolic, iconic and indexical.

In the symbolic use of brands for identity construction Schembri et al. (2010) found that brands are used to communicate meaning. The responses of, a man who drove a BMW and Ford were interpreted as symbolic, “he deliberately used the BMW as a symbol of success, whereas the ford was symbolic of his family orientation” (Schembri et al., 2010, p. 632). According to the study brands are symbols that are used to communicate meaning to others.

As in other studies in the literature review, brands were found to have iconic and indexical meaning. Brands have an iconic meaning in identity construction. Schembri et al. (2010) argued that the use of brands in an iconic meaning is aspirational. The symbol used as an example in the study was a Broncos jersey where the consumer wants a self-association with the Broncos, a winning team. Brands were also found to have an indexical significance in creating a narrative of the self. Brands used in an indexical manner were referential to a time or place. The example involved a participant that consumed Jägermeister. Schembri et al. (2010) explain that, “the brand is something that connects him to his past” (p. 633).

Limitations in the study involved generalizability. The study named context dependency as a basic assumption of the work limiting the generalizability of the findings. Because of the contextual limitations a large sample was not needed for the study. A larger study according to Schembri et al. (2010) could make findings more generalizable in the future.

This study reverts to the importance of iconicity and indexicality when using brands in identity creation. The use of thematic analysis in data analysis influenced this

research to use a similar approach in the analysis of data. This study focused on the use of brands in identity creation, the following study researches resistance to brands.

### **Why Brands Cause Trouble**

Holt (2002) undertook a study to develop extensions of theory of consumer culture and branding that explains why consumer culture branding practices encounter resistance. The study was a critical of modern consumer culture theory. The method employed was the extended case method. The extended case method allowed for the development of theories that account for consumer resistance and what brands must do to reduce resistance. The study was strong in explaining theoretical concepts but weak in the explanation of method and analysis.

Holt's (2002) study like this research employed qualitative methodology. The study sought to interpret participant responses to narrative interviews about consumption practices. The aim of the study was to understand resistance to consumer culture branding practices.

The extended case method employs narrative interviews as the instrument. Responses to interviews are then reduced to prominent responses and tied to tenets of consumer culture theory in the first step, structuration. The second step of the process, reconstruction, allows for extensions of theory to be developed. Reconstruction allows for understanding emerging principles not accounted for in modern consumer culture theory. The sample was twelve individuals who displayed consumer resistance practices.

Findings of the study account for consumer resistance to modern consumer culture branding principles. Holt (2002) found that consumers are more active in their

consumption practices. Modern consumer culture theory posits companies as cultural engineers that dictate lifestyle. The restructuring process showed that consumers resist cultural engineering and chose to make sovereign choices that are more in line with the individual consumer's identity construction project. Holt (2002) recommended that brands engage consumers in a manner that posits the brand as a cultural resource in identity construction.

The strength of the study was the thorough explanation of consumer culture theory. The study explained the origins and major movements of consumer culture theory. Explaining and understanding the theory laid a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the development of concepts in the last step of the extended case method. Authenticity was mentioned as a major component of more contemporary postmodern branding practices.

The weakness was the lack of explanation for the extended case method. More detail was needed to understand the way in which Holt (2002) developed the new extensions of theory that account for consumer resistance. No explanation is given as to why the sample was adequate.

The study incorporated a strong theoretical explanation of the concepts in the study. More detail was needed in the method, sample and data analysis process. The study was influential to this research as it explained postmodern consumer culture theory and the importance of authenticity to contemporary marketing practices.

The studies on brands as symbols used in identity construction were influential to the research at hand for two reasons. Schembri et al. (2010) introduced thematic analysis as a means to conduct data analysis in qualitative research studies. Holt (2002) introduced

the concept of postmodern consumer culture theory and the importance of authenticity to postmodern branding. The following studies attempt to define and identify the concept of authenticity.

### **The Quest for Authenticity in Consumption**

Authenticity is described throughout scholarly literature as a quest. Beverland and Farrelly (2009) have tied the quest for authenticity to consumer goals in consumption and indexical cues offered by brands. The purpose of study was to account what constitutes authenticity by examining the goals consumers have when assessing authenticity. Beverland and Farrelly (2009) posit the postmodern condition as a contributing factor in the quest for authenticity.

The 2009 study of the link between consumer goals and the assessment of authenticity employed an interpretive qualitative approach. Data were derived from 21 semi-structured interviews. No reasoning was given as to the adequacy or purpose of sample size. The interviews lasted two hours and were informal in nature. Participants were shown images that elicited respondent's perceptions of authenticity. Themes that were concurrent throughout the interviews were used to outline consumer goals in the quest for authenticity.

The results of the study outlined three themes in the quest for authenticity. The first is feeling in control of their personal identity. By consuming brands perceived as authentic, participants described a feeling of control over market offerings and differentiating themselves from others. The second is a sense to feel connected to others that have similar interests. The feeling of connectedness outlined a need for brands to participate in brand communities. The third is a feeling a virtue. Participants described a

moral virtue when making conscious choices to consume authentic products. Because of these three different values, authenticity is not defined outright but rather conceptualized as encompassing these three attributes.

The study conformed to a body of literature on authenticity in theory and methodology. Beverland and Farrelly (2009) employed a method that is found throughout the body of literature. The postmodern condition is also outlined as a core factor in the quest for authenticity. What differentiated the study was the lack of focus on a specific brand.

### **Consumer Perceptions of Iconicity and Indexicality**

Greyson and Martinec (2004) undertook a quantitative research study to examine consumer evaluations of market offerings. The study was grounded in semiotic theory. The study found support for two types of authenticity indexical and iconic authenticity. The study posits authenticity as an evaluation made by the consumer.

The study is based on Charles Sander's Peirce's semiotic theory to define two forms of authenticity. Indexical authenticity refers to a market offering, be it a good or service where, "The perceiver must believe that it actually has the factual and spatio-temporal link that it has" (Greyson & Martinec, 2004, p. 298). Iconic authenticity is when a consumer, "has some preexisting knowledge or expectation" (Greyson & Martinec, 2004, p. 298). The concepts of indexical and iconic authenticity are not mutually exclusive.

This study is the only study in the literature review that undertook a quantitative approach. Surveys were administered at two different locations. Forty-seven respondents, 51% female participated in the study. Statistics were used to understand what types of assessments led to indexical and iconic authenticity.



Findings of the study show that consumers assess iconic cues of authenticity as more influential when assessing authenticity. Limitations were noted as internal validity due to the naturalistic experience. Greyson and Martinec (2004) suggest employing manipulations of authenticity to assess the strength of cues of authenticity in a controlled environment.

The strength of this study was the attempt to define authenticity in terms of indexicality and iconicity. The weakness was the limitation in internal validity. Greyson and Martinec's (2004) study was influential to the current research because it mentions that technology has, "facilitated the effective simulation of authenticity" (p. 296).

### **Conceptualizing Consumer Need for Product Authenticity**

In an exploratory study Liao and Ma (2009) investigated the properties that attribute authenticity to a brand. The study employed an operational definition of authenticity. As in all other studies in the field of authenticity Liao and Ma (2009) attributed the contemporary interest in authenticity to the postmodern condition.

Although postmodern theory is mentioned and several theorists cited, no single theory is mentioned as a theoretical framework. The researchers do mention that, "in postmodern society, consumption is associated in part with the symbolic meaning of products and with hedonic fulfillment" (Liao and Ma, 2009, p. 90). The research defines authenticity from Greyson and Martinec's (2004) concept, "The word authenticity refers to the qualities of genuineness, truth and reality (Grayson & Martinec, 2004)" (Liao & Ma, 2009, p. 91).

The method in Lia and Ma's (2009) study consisted of a two stage multi-method approach. The first step consisted of 10 in-depth interviews with participants sampled using the snowball sampling method. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 60. The

interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes. Responses were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Following the snowball sampling method, three groups consisting of 17 respondents participated in focus group interviews. Responses were then coded and interpreted for properties attributed to authenticity.

In total six properties were interpreted from the data. The first property consumers attribute to authenticity is originality. Originality is tied to indexicality. The second property identified was quality commitment and credibility referring to a commitment to quality and a brand's guarantee to quality. The third property of authenticity was heritage and style persistence referring to a brand standing the test of time. Scarceness was the fourth property. Scarceness implies an effort to achieve or maintain authenticity. Sacredness was also found as a property of authentic products. Sacredness according to Liao and Ma (2009) refers to the sanctified position authentic products hold for consumers. Authentic products also only come from one source according to results of the study.

The strength of the study was the two stage multi-method approach to refine concepts. The study contributed to research in to the field of authenticity by expanding on properties that consumers attribute to products believed to be authentic. Consumer perceptions stem from marketing strategies in all marketing and advertising efforts by firms positioning their products as authentic.

### **Strategic Decoupling**

In a 2005 study, Beverland and Luxton sought to understand how large commercial brands managed the concept of authenticity through strategic decoupling. Strategic decoupling involves creating a product for mass consumption while downplaying commercial prowess. Beverland and Luxton (2005) found that large

commercial companies that emphasize indexical cues of authenticity and downplay commercial prowess can create a perception of authenticity. Beverland and Luxton (2005) explained that there cannot be a wholesale rejection of marketing because brands must maintain a presence in the marketplace.

The study was an exploratory single industry study of fine wine labels. The focus of the study was twofold: “How do firms project an image of authenticity? Second how to consistently maintain this image?” (Beverland & Luxton, 2005, p. 105). Twenty-six producers were included in the study using a case study format as the basis. Data were collected by email interviews. An analysis of each label’s marketing strategies was conducted as well as analysis of a firm’s media projections. Concepts were triangulated and codified to develop themes that resulted in concepts for the study. Results of the study included implications for brand managers.

The study resulted in three key themes. The first theme was a consistent sincere story throughout all communications or emphasizing a brand history, a temporal connection. The second theme was relationship to terroir (location), the study found terroir as key to positioning a product as authentic, terroir is an indexical cue of authenticity. The third theme was continuing traditional methods of production and downplaying the firm’s contemporary mass production practices.

The strengths of this study included the development of three themes in the multi-year, multi-label study. The study highlighted the importance in downplaying commercial potential and commercial communications to project authenticity (Beverland & Luxton, 2005, p. 113). The weakness of the study was found in the description of the methodological approach. More detail on the analysis of data would have been informative.

The liquor industry is ideal for claiming a product as authentic. This study did not define authenticity. It only identified the strategies with which a wine firm may position a product as such.

### **Projecting Authenticity**

Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink (2008) conducted a study to identify how consumers assess claims of authenticity in Trappist and Abbey beer brands. The study undertook an interpretive qualitative approach to the study of authenticity. By emphasizing indexical cues Beverland et al. (2008), found that Trappist and Abbey beer brand marketers are, “seeking to imbue the product with a set of values that differentiate it from other more commercialized brands” (p. 5). Beverland et al. (2008) contend that mass marketing undermines claims of authenticity but direct understated claims of authenticity reinforce the authenticity concept.

The method employed in the study was semi-structured depth interviews. Data were collected from consumers, marketers and industry associates. After the interviews were transcribed data were triangulated to ensure efficient coding using case and cross case analysis. The data collection and analysis process were not described in detail.

Three forms of authenticity were identified in projecting authenticity through advertising. The first is pure authenticity which refers to “unbroken commitment to tradition and place of origin” (Beverland et al., 2008, p. 7). The second is approximate authenticity which is, “products or objects are authentic if they approximate historical referents” (Beverland et al., 2008, p. 9). The third theme was moral authenticity, “brands that were genuine in their intent” (Beverland et al., 2008, p. 12). Moral authenticity refers to a commitment to love of craft while not necessarily emphasizing a spatio-temporal connection.

The study demonstrated the importance of indexical cues to reinforce claims of authenticity. The study emphasized the importance of the low-key marketing that Holt claimed as a hallmark of authenticity. Beverland et al. (2008) claim, “The fact that it is not advertised everywhere and whispers rather than shouts its benefits, helps convey something meaningful” (Beverland et al., 2008, p. 5). A strategic importance was also placed on a specialized audience and overt commercialized mass marketing was found to be detrimental to conveying authenticity. Specialized audiences are of particular importance to the concept of authenticity.

### **Subcultural Authenticity in Mainstream Advertising**

Mikkonen’s study (2010) of subcultural authenticity through interpretation of mainstream advertising focused on the indexical cues that in-authentically portray lesbians. The study focused on lesbian consumer’s interpretation of authentic lesbianism in mainstream advertising. The study contributed to the body of work relating to authenticity in subcultures. The study undertook a qualitative research approach.

The method employed was open-ended interview method. Data were collected with the use of three group discussions and two individual interviews. All respondents were recruited using the snowball sampling method. Respondents were all self-identified homosexual women ranging in age from 26 to 37. Respondents were asked to discuss their interpretation of the authenticity of lesbian indexical cues in mainstream advertising. Findings of the interviews interpreted mainstream advertising as not portraying authentic lesbianism.

Four themes were identified in the interpretation of data. The first finding defined an authentic lesbian look not portrayed in mainstream advertising according to respondents. The second finding discussed heterosexualized and oversexed media

representations of homosexual women. The third finding discussed the intrinsic nature of lesbianism not portrayed in advertising. The fourth finding constructed heterosexual women as an “other” different from homosexual women. Findings were relevant to the representation of authentic values of a subculture in mainstream advertising.

Mikkonen (2010) discussed authenticity as a complex concept that is found in one’s being rather than one attempting to “do” authentic actions. The study argued that mainstream advertising misrepresents lesbian culture in to something representative of pornography for heterosexual males. In the vein of authenticity scholarship the study focused on the indexical cues of authenticity offered in advertising as in Beverland and Farrelly’s study (2009) of indexical cues and consumer goals in authenticity. The study introduced the idea of the importance of authenticity to specialized communities.

### **Teaching Old Brands New Tricks**

A retro-brand is a re-launch of a historical brand or “vintage” brand with updated features. In 2003 Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry undertook a study of authenticity in the re-launch of the “Star Wars” movies and the re-launch of the Volkswagen Bug. The study emphasized the need for brands to connect with brand communities to generate acceptance. Brown et al. (2003) argued that retro brands intrinsically are imbued with an indexical sense of authenticity.

The study is premised on the marketing theories of Walter Benjamin. Walter Benjamin was a cultural theorist of the Frankfurt School. Brown et al., (2003) synthesize Benjamin’s theories in to four themes: Allegory (brand story), Arcadia (brand community), Aura (authenticity) and Antinomy (brand paradox). These themes are useful in conceptualizing how companies manage marketing within brand communities.

The study undertook a “netnographic” method. By “netnography”, Brown et al. (2003) are referring to an ethnographic approach focused on brand communities on the Internet. Specifically, the study focused on the re-launch of the Volkswagen Bug and the Star Wars prequels and the brand communities that revolve around them. The websites chosen for the study were filtered through Arbitron ratings that included the most discussions relevant to their specific brand community.

Results of the study showed the importance of brand resonance to reinforce the authenticity concept within brand communities. The study emphasized the need for brands to generate discussion within communities to generate feedback on products and reassure consumers that the intended purpose of the brand manager is not to dilute the value of the brand through commercial gain.

### **MG Car Culture**

Leigh, Peters, and Shelton (2006) conducted a study within the MG automobile collector subculture to understand the multiplicity of meanings authenticity holds in the specialized automobile restoration subculture. The MG automobile collection subculture is positioned as a community of consumption focused around a brand and meets the criterion for brand community outlines by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001). Leigh et al. (2006) found that participants in the MG automobile collection subculture believe there is an, “increasingly contrived and in-authentic nature to contemporary life” (p. 481). The study makes a case for the achievement of authenticity of the self through the consumption of MG brand automobiles and the participation in the MG restoration subculture to counteract the in-authentic nature of contemporary life.

Leigh et al. (2006) conducted a five year ethnographic study. The ethnography was both emic, from an insider’s perspective, and etic, from an outsider’s perspective.

The study included participant observations, document reviews, informal and formal interviews with participants and industry insiders (Leigh et al., 2006, p. 484).

Findings in the study affirm how participation in brand community helps members gain a sense of authenticity through consumption. Through the consumption of the MG automobile brand an individual can construct a narrative where he can define himself as a member of the MG automobile restoration subculture. Leigh et al. (2006) used Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) markers of community to understand the hierarchy in the MG brand community and the importance of acceptance of membership in a brand community. Data analysis showed that, "MG owners gain a sense of authenticity in the consumption context via the object and its ownership" (Leigh et al., 2006, p. 482). The study also outlined implications for brand management.

The study posits the idea that understanding the social and cultural value of a brand in the context of community can lead to economic success for marketers. Leigh et al. (2006) contend that, "marketing executives who seek to build relationships with brand community leaders or execute brand community management in its various manifestations maybe successful at advancing their marketing objectives" (Leigh et al., 2006, p. 492). To be successful brand managers must go beyond the basic marketing research and truly understand the cultural values of a brand in a community because it leads to the mutual benefit of the brand community and brand manager, this is very important to what Beverland et al. (2010) have termed, board cultures.

### **Authentic Subcultural Membership**

Beverland, Farrelly and Quester (2010) conducted a study on how authenticity is represented in subcultures. Key to the study was the definition of subcultures as cultures of consumption. The subcultures chosen for the study were the "board" cultures of



surfing, skateboarding and snowboarding. The study demonstrates the idea that in order for individuals to be accepted as authentic members of a community they must consume products that have been deemed as authentic by a community, in this case the “board” communities.

The postmodern condition is a central tenet of this study. Beverland et al. (2010) argue that, “the postmodern consumer finds authenticity in communities of consumption” (p. 698). This research takes a similar theoretical standpoint as well as a similar methodological approach.

Interpretive interviews were the method employed for the study. The interviews were analyzed and coded to develop concepts. The interviews focused on the reactions to brands and marketing activity. A theoretical sample chosen by a market research firm was employed.

The results of the study show that converts to the communities sought a self-authenticating experience. Individuals seek to construct a narrative of the self and gain acceptance in to a community through consumption. An authenticating experience refers to the achievement of flow or, “experiences that are achieved individually” (Beverland et al., 2010, p. 707). Members “are driven by a desire for authentic experiences and to escape mainstream, highly commercialized, sports” (Beverland et al., 2010, p. 702). The study held implications for brand managers where a brand must have the interest and preservation of the community at heart over commercial gain through overextending its reach.

Brands that extended themselves lost brand equity within the community. Brands that extended themselves employed strategies that went outside the subculture to reach a wider commercial audience. In keeping with the principles of authenticity, Beverland et

al. (2010) state that, “Rather than use strategies such as sponsorship in an overtly commercial way, low-key marketing, are recommended, as such activities reflect a sincere desire by the brand owners to give back to their host communities” (p. 714). Studies in the literature review do not focus solely on one specific context but on the overall perception of authenticity.

### SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

There were common themes found throughout the literature review. A theoretical argument was made for the postmodern condition as a contributing factor in the consumer quest for authenticity. Next was a consistency in authenticity scholarship to employ interpretive qualitative methodology. The final element in common was the importance of brand community to the study of authenticity. There are links between this research and the literature review, the belief in the postmodern condition as a contributing factor to the need for authenticity and the use of qualitative research methodology.

There was a noted consistency throughout the literature review to mark the postmodern condition as a factor in the consumer quest for authenticity. The decline in prominence of traditional identity markers in postmodern society was named as a factor in the consumer quest for authenticity. Traditional identity markers are physical space and time. Globalization and technology have freed the individual from the constraints of space and time but have also forced the individual to invent and redefine a narrative of the self (Miller, 2008). This narrative of the self is constructed through consumption and membership in to specialized communities. Often these communities revolve around a single brand (Beverland et al., 2010). The postmodern condition is the first link between the literature review and this research.

The second element in the literature review was the employment of interpretive qualitative methodology. A majority of the studies in the literature review include an interpretive qualitative approach be it a case studies, the extended case method, ethnography or netnography. The interview is the tool most used in studies in the literature review. Responses from the interviews were then transcribed and coded to conceptualize themes in the research. Throughout the literature, participants were recruited using the snowball sampling method, data saturation was sought. This research will employ a similar method and sample.

The final common theme found in the literature review was the emphasis on indexical cues to authenticity. Indexicality refers to an emphasis on a brand history, a connection to a time and place. This research will take into account the importance of indexicality in understanding authenticity in the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan.

There were several relationships between the literature review and this research. Like the studies in the literature review the theoretical framework for this research posits the postmodern condition as a factor in the consumer quest for authenticity. In the existing literature an interpretive qualitative approach is employed in most studies, this research will take the same methodological approach. There is also a relationship between the body of literature and this research based on brand communities as important to authenticity.

Literature exists on the relationship between authenticity and brand communities. No studies focus specifically on understanding authenticity in motorcycle focused brand communities. There is also a need to extend the scholarship of authenticity to understand the influence of social media on authenticity and brand communities. A body of literature has been presented that explores the topic of authenticity. An epistemological and

theoretical framework has been presented that explain how this research comes to understand authenticity. The following section will explain the rationale for undertaking this research.

## RATIONALE

This research extends the body of literature in the authenticity paradigm in theory and generates results with practical implications for motorcycle brands that attempt to compete in the American motorcycle market. The existing body of literature includes studies of authenticity dealing with alcohol, automobiles, surf-skate-snowboard and lesbian subcultures but no studies focus on authenticity and motorcycle brand communities. There are also practical implications in the results of this study as there is resurgence in marketing motorcycles, automobiles and brands as authentic. American motorcycle industry research will demonstrate a need for a new approach in marketing motorcycles to compete against the leading American motorcycle manufacturer, Harley-Davidson. Triumph Motorcycles is a brand as recognized as Harley-Davidson Motorcycles. Triumph Motorcycles has demonstrated success in marketing motorcycles as authentic leading other motorcycle brands to take note of its marketing strategy.

The American motorcycle industry is a \$6.9 billion dollar market. Industry data on the American motorcycle industry shows opportunity for growth. According to Ulama (2014) industry revenue for motorcycles will increase by an annual .9% for the next five years. Ulama (2014) classifies this growth as tepid growth and reflective of recovery from the economic recession of 2009.

Harley-Davidson Motorcycles controls 47.5% of the market (Ulama, 2014). The rest of the market is not quantified and only listed as other because of the large variation of manufacturers and the stranglehold on the market by Harley-Davidson Motorcycles.

Aging in targeted demographic population accounts for tepid growth and decreased demand and demonstrates an opportunity for industry operators to reach a diverse and younger demographic. Harley-Davidson Motorcycles targets American men aged from mid- 40's to early 50's. Ulama (2014) explains, "To the baby boomers the motorcycle is a cultural symbol that represents a distinct lifestyle, but this approach has not materialized among younger groups" (p. 6). This research can provide insights as to how industry operators can market to a younger more diverse demographic to increase demand and industry revenue.

Results of this study are generalizable to brands that make a claim to authenticity and engage in brand community. This research provides theoretical insights to understand authenticity for motorcycle brands who want to gain a competitive edge in the American motorcycle industry by engaging in brand communities. Harley-Davidson Motorcycles has demonstrated success with the Harley-Davidson Owner's Group. This study will focus on implications for understanding the influence social media have had on the concept of authenticity and brand community. Motorcycle brands such as, Matchless (Matchless, n.d.), Royal Enfield (Royal Enfield, n.d.), Indian (Ward, 2012), and Norton (Norton, n.d.) are attempting to re-launch in the American motorcycle market. Iconic Automobile brand MG has re-launched two models and is attempting to gain a foot hold in the American Automobile market.

The following chapter outlines the methodology that this research undertook to gain theoretical insights and generate practical implications to understand authenticity in specialized communities. The method, and data collecting procedure are outlined along with the data analysis process. The results of the study are detailed in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 3

### QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

This chapter will present the methodology and method for this research. The methodology is the “justification for choosing certain methods” (Trainor and Graue, 2013, p. 13). Qualitative research is a complex concept to define. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) define qualitative methodology as, “research that produces descriptive data-people’s own written or spoken words and observable behavior” (p. 7). This research seeks to understand authenticity in the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan through descriptive data in the form of the responses of members of the Brit Iron Las Vegas Clan to depth interview questions.

### EPISTEMOLOGY

Belk et al. (2013) refer to phenomenology as a research tradition that encompasses several philosophical assumptions. Phenomenology in marketing is specified as existential phenomenology and being concerned with “the life-world of individuals and that the meanings of people’s experiences are always situated in their current experiential context and coherently related to their ongoing life projects” (Belk et al., 2013, p. 21). According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998) phenomenology encompasses several theoretical frameworks, one of those being postmodernism.

This research seeks to understand the life world and meaning of authenticity in the experiential context of the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan. Merriam (2002) explains that reality is not a fixed positivist phenomenon; there are multiple interpretations of reality and qualitative researchers “are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context” (p. 4). Interpretive qualitative methodology undertakes research from the perspective that all meaning is not an

empirical positivist modern phenomenon. In their interpretation of Lyotard's work (1979/1984), Johnson and Duberley (2000) argue that Lyotard's postmodern theory is premised on the rejection of empirical positivist metanarratives that argue that modernist positivist scientific inquiry is adequate to understand meaning. In her treatise of interpretive qualitative research, Merriam (2002) postulates that data are collected through interview methods (p. 6).

## METHOD

This researcher employed the depth interview method. Questions in a depth interview are intended to elicit an in-depth understanding of a subject, thus questions were open-ended. The format of the interview will be semistructured. All interviews were conducted face to face.

The depth interview is a method used in qualitative marketing research. Belk et al. (2013) describe the depth interview "The depth interview seeks an in-depth understanding of a topic that the research informant is able to speak about" (p. 31). Questions in this research sought to understand the in-depth understanding of the authenticity of Triumph Motorcycles from members of the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan. To reach an in-depth understanding, questions were open-ended to elicit rich descriptive data necessary for qualitative research and analysis.

The questions in the research are open-ended. Open-ended questions seek to elicit the informant's subjective experience and do not limit answers as in survey method (Seidman, 1998). A special consideration was taken to not lead informants when conducting the interview. Questions were meant to elicit rich detail from informants. The interviews were conversational in nature but followed a format of questions in a semistructured manner.

In a semistructured interview there is an exchange of information from open-ended questions. According to Trainor and Graue (2013) questions are loosely sequenced. Questions may be re-arranged to probe or elicit more detail from respondents and do not adhere to a strict format. The researcher's prior knowledge of a topic or phenomenon allows for, "probing questions planned or arising from the participants response maybe asked" (Morse, 2012, p. 197).

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS

This research employed the depth interview method to elicit meaningful answers on a topic of which the informant has a deep understanding. Belk et al. (2013) contend that "Nothing is more critical to the success of a research project than choosing research questions" (p. 17). The questions for this research are open-ended. Interviews had a semi-structured format that included probing questions (Morse, 2012).

The following questions are meant to elicit responses relevant to authenticity in general and the attribute of indexical connection.

1. What do Triumph Motorcycles mean to you?

1a. If respondent begins to speak about history of Triumph:

Does the history matter to you?

1b. If respondent does not talk about history of Triumph:

What do you know about the history of Triumph?

2. Do you know where Triumph is manufactured?

2a. Does the manufacturing location matter to you?

3. Do you know where Triumph is assembled?

3a. Does the assembly location matter to you?



4. What does Harley-Davidson represent to you?

4a. If respondent begins to talk about the outlaw image of Harley-

Davidson:

How does the outlaw image come in to play when you think about buying a motorcycle?

5. Do you prefer Triumph Motorcycles over other British motorcycles?

The following questions are meant to elicit responses about craftsmanship.

6. Does the assembly location play a role in your perception of craftsmanship?

7. What do you think of when you think of the way Triumph is manufactured today?

7a. Does that matter to you?

8. How does customization come in to play when you consider the craftsmanship of Triumph?

The following questions relate to the authenticity of Triumph and downplaying commercial intentions.

9. How did you find out about Triumph Motorcycles?

10. Would the involvement of a Triumph salesman in B.I.R. effect your perception of Triumph?

11. Would it matter to you if Triumph embarked on a wide advertising campaign?

12. How do you feel about the product placement of Triumph in movies/TV shows?

The following questions are meant to elicit responses about Triumph Motorcycles and postmodern consumer culture theory and the argument that brands are used in identity construction.

13. Do you think Triumph communicates something about who you are?
14. Do you think people view you differently because you chose Triumph over
  - 14a. Harley-Davidson?
  - 14b. Indian Motorcycles?
  - 14c. Norton Motorcycles?

The following questions will elicit responses about Triumph Motorcycles and postmodern consumer culture theory and the argument that brands are used to make sense of the social world.

15. How do you feel about people who ride Triumph motorcycles?
16. How do you feel about people that ride Harley-Davidson?
17. How do you feel about people that ride Yamaha Motorcycles?

The following questions deal with the concept of community and the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan.

18. What does membership in the B.I.R. mean to you?
  - 18a. How is that important to you?

The following questions deal with the influence of social media on the perception of authenticity and community.

19. Do you use social media?

- 19a. How often do you use Facebook?
- 19b. How often do you use Twitter?
- 19c. How often do you use Instagram?
- 19d. If respondent says no: Why not?
- 20. How do you feel about social media?
- 21. Does Triumph motorcycle's communication through social media effect the way you perceive Triumph?
- 22. Does communication through social media (Facebook, twitter, Instagram) effect the way you perceive the Brit Iron Rebels?
- 23. If a Triumph brand representative engaged in direct communication with the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan through social media would it affect your perception of Triumph?
  - 23a. Of the Brit Iron Rebels?

The sample questions in this section are not the only questions asked, the semistructured format allows for probing questions arising from informant responses.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

In ethnography finding a gatekeeper is the first step in gaining access to a group. According to Lindlof (1995) it is the gatekeeper who can limit the researcher's access to a group. In this researcher the gatekeeper is "Gary". Consent protocol dictates that the identity of individuals must be safeguarded. A copy of the consent form is included in Appendix A.

Gary has been a member of the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan since its founding in 2004. He was first drawn to the group while independently restoring a Triumph café racer and searching for Triumph Motorcycle enthusiasts in Las Vegas to ride with. Gary is not an office holder in the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan. B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan members turn to Gary for customization and repair advice.

Gary is a barber at Rooster's Men's Grooming Center (MGC). Long before an idea for a thesis study, it was during a visit to Rooster's MGC that I made a comment about the beauty of the Triumph Bonneville parked outside the barbershop. The chrome customized 2001 red and black Triumph Bonneville, with a hand tooled black leather seat and clip-on racing bars, encompasses both beauty and danger; it belonged to Gary. Gary began to wax poetically about Triumph motorcycles he has restored and his knowledge about the mechanics of the motorcycles beginning with the 1967 models. After many visits to Rooster's MGC and several conversations about guy stuff, women beer, sports and of course Triumph motorcycles, specifically "Bonnie's" and Thruxtons, Gary offered to introduce me to people he rides with at a gathering at a downtown Las Vegas bar. It was at The Bar Bistro that Gary introduced me to his friends and fellow members of the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan. No formal research procedures have taken place since the initial introduction to B.I.R. members.

### **Validity**

This research adhered to the ethical guidelines put forward by the Institutional Review Board. The rigor in conducting this study is couched in the philosophical assumptions underlying phenomenological epistemology (Merriam, 2002, p. 24). The ideology inherent in the postmodern framework of this study addresses validity through crisis of representation. Crisis of representation refers to what Gubrium and Holstein

(1997) argue as a questioning of authority. Interpretive qualitative research positions reality as an interpretation, thus the findings of this study are interpretations, validity itself is an interpretation so a crisis arises between the researcher, those studied, and representational practice (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p. 10). This approach to validity positions this researcher as a radical relativist. Schwandt (2001) argues that, “The most radical of postmodernists would argue that it is meaningless to talk of a valid account of the world; there are only different linguistically mediated social constructions” (p. 269). Out of regard for modern positivist practices in formulating a thesis, validity will be addressed by peer review. Peer review, is a check of the validity of constructs throughout the research process. Merriam (2002) argues that “all graduate students have a peer review process built in to their thesis or dissertation committee” (p. 26). Peer review will be used to assess the validity of this research. The question of how to assess the validity of this research has been addressed through the established format of formal university practices.

#### DATA COLLECTION

A rapport was established among known members of the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan based on a common interest in Triumph Motorcycles. The intent in writing a thesis on the authenticity of Triumph motorcycles was made clear to the members of the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan. Data was collected during individual, in person depth interviews using a digital recorder and writing concurrent field notes. The conversational nature of the depth interview in a semi-structured format, allowed for data collection to be done at the weekly Bike Night gatherings that took place at the Dive Bar located at 4110 South Maryland Parkway in Las Vegas, Nevada.

To reduce the appearance of intrusiveness, conversations were recorded using the Digital Voice Recorder application on the Samsung Galaxy S5 android phone. The application can save up to two hours of high quality audio recording. The prominence of smartphones in everyday settings reduced the intrusive nature of recording the interviews and set the informant at ease.

The recorded audio files were transferred to a Sony Vaio laptop for archiving and transcription. Transcription was done based on the recommendations of Kowal and O'Connell (2014). Transcription was done word for word by the researcher using literary transcription. The literary transcription takes in to account standard deviations of meaning based on Ehlich's *HIAT* transcription system.

#### SAMPLE

This research sought data saturation by using the snowball sampling technique. Data saturation was used to limit time in the field. The number of Brit Iron Rebel Las Vegas Clan members is limited to 35. All members of the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan are male age 24 to 55. There is no variation in gender among B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan members. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) recommend a flexible research design with no predetermined research sample (p. 92).

Data saturation does not specify an amount of participants. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) argue that, "the actual number of cases studied is unimportant. What is important is the potential for each case to aid the researcher in developing theoretical insights" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 93). What is important in data saturation is the representation of constructs under study, in this research constructs are relative to authenticity and Triumph Motorcycles. The snowball sampling strategy will be employed to recruit

informants. Snowball sampling technique is “getting to know some informants and having them introduce you to others” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 93).

Research will continue until data saturation is identified. Theoretical saturation is, “the point in field research at which data become repetitive and no major new insights are gained” (Taylor & Bogdan 1998, p. 79). In order to determine when theoretical saturation is reached, the analysis of data must be conducted. Belk et al. (2013) argue that “analyzing data as you collect it is essential for shaping the research project” (p. 139). The following section will outline the data analysis process.

## DATA ANALYSIS

This research employs phenomenological data analysis. Roulston (2014) describes the analysis of data from a phenomenological perspective as having three steps after transcribing has taken place. This research will apply a fourth step recommended by Belk et al. (2013) when applicable.

According to Roulston (2014) there are four practical steps to analyzing interview data. The first step is to reduce data. Reducing data involves, “eliminating repetitive statements and data irrelevant to the phenomenon being studied” (Roulston, 2014, p. 304). In this study transcribed interviews will be reduced to statements relative to the perception of authenticity of Triumph Motorcycles and its various components (indexical connection, craftsmanship and downplaying commercial intentions), the concept of community within the Brit Iron Rebels, and community mediated through social media.

The second step involves classifying data. Roulston (2014) explains that in the second step, “findings might be assembled through sorting and comparing data” (p. 305). Roulston (2014) recommends that codes be generated through an iterative process that involves reflecting, and discerning key concepts concerning the topic of interest. For this

research data will be reorganized in to themes that relate to the topic of authenticity in the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan. Roulston (2014) recommends using tables, diagrams and charts to group data in to concepts and themes.

The third step involves interpreting the data. Roulston (2014) explains that in step three “researchers consider assertions and propositions in light of prior research and theory in order to develop arguments” (p. 305). In this step the assertions will be supported by direct quotations from interviews.

Roulston (2014) outlines three steps in phenomenological data analysis. Belk et al. (2013) recommend a fourth step, theory building. Belk et al. (2013) recommend looking for variation in data. Looking for variation alleviates the problem of attempting to force data to fit in to preconceived hypothesis and allows for generating new concepts and build theory. The fourth step is important to this research because it will account for the influence of social media on authenticity and community where applicable.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS OF STUDY

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the authenticity of Triumph Motorcycles within the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan. This thesis sought the responses of B.I.R. members to depth interview questions. Existing literature on the postmodern consumer marketplace positions the concept of authenticity as essential to success.

According to industry reports the American motorcycle marketplace is demonstrating reduced growth (Ulama, 2014). Harley-Davidson motorcycles are synonymous with the American motorcycle marketplace to the extent that Harley-Davidson controls a 47.5% market share in an industry valued at \$6.9 billion. Since 2009 demand for motorcycles has been in decline (Ulama, 2014). Reduced demand is due to aging in the existing consumer base and a failure to communicate value to a younger and more diverse demographic (Ulama, 2014).

Through the employment of open-ended face to face depth interviews with members of the B.I.R. Las Vegas clan, this research sought to understand the authenticity of Triumph Motorcycles. In theory this thesis sought to understand if the preference for Triumph Motorcycles conforms to postmodern consumer culture theory. Results of the interviews demonstrated practical implications for brand managers who attempt to position a product as authentic within a specialized community.

Data analysis of interviews was concurrent with data collection. Identifying data saturation was used to limit time in the field. Respondent reactivity was also identified and used to determine the time to withdraw from the data collection process. Data

analysis resulted in eight classifications of data. The following section will describe the data collection process.

### **Data Collection Process**

Gary, who initially provided an introduction to the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan after discussing a shared interest in Triumph Motorcycles, provided an introduction to Chris. Chris is the local clan Chieftain. A Chieftain in the B.I.R. is the chapter president who is in charge of membership and organization of clan events. The chieftain would facilitate entry into the group facilitating the data collection process. Chris communicated to clan members that I would be attending clan gatherings to collect data regarding clan member's perceptions of Triumph Motorcycles for my thesis.

Data collection took place at gatherings before and after clan rides. Clan rides are when clan members gather together at a designated location or intersection and ride to a designated bar for a particular distance or length of time. I attended a total of 10 gatherings. Data were collected after customary clan rides or during breakfast before the Sunday morning breakfast ride. Data collection happened from August 8<sup>th</sup> to October 10<sup>th</sup> 2014.

After attending seven gatherings I began to notice that the same key members attended and that other members did not attend on a regular basis. Because I am not a clan member I was excluded from events like the 10 year anniversary event or regional rides intended for clan members only. Limitation in clan member participation and non-clan member status limited access to clan members for interviews.

There are 35 total members in the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan. Eight members were interviewed before data saturation and reactivity was identified. There is no gender variance in B.I.R. members in the Las Vegas Clan. Members ranged in age from late 20's to mid 50's. Gary in what he prefers to describe in "the old age of youth," is in the early to mid-40's rides a 2001 Triumph Bonneville. Chris rides both a vintage and a 2004 Triumph Bonneville. Bill is in his early 50's and has a variety of Triumph Motorcycles and has a rare Triumph automobile. Tom Oil is an electrical expert and restores British Motorcycles of all makes but considers himself a Royal Enfield Motorcycle enthusiast. Ace is in his mid 30's and rides a post 2006 Triumph Thruxton. Nick and Matey are in their early to mid 30's and ride newer Triumph Bonneville's. T.T is the youngest rider, in his late 20's and owns a 2006 Triumph Bonneville.

Lack of free time on the part of clan members limited interaction between clan members and the researcher. Limited interaction caused interviews to be conducted at bars where the clan gathered after rides. The bars provided a relaxed atmosphere and clan members were reflexive about their motorcycles after their clan rides. Interviewing periods lasted from 45 minutes to almost two hours. The interviews began to diminish in length after the first five initial interviews. Most clan members preferred to be identified by a nickname.

Although Chris is the local clan Chieftain, there was some resistance from clan members to participating in interviews. During the initial interaction, no members would consent to an interview until the interview with Bill. Bill is a key member of the clan who has a respectable collection of British motorcycles and is considered to have the most knowledge regarding British motorcycle history and mechanics. Bill was initially resistant to an interview, but after a conversation regarding the mechanical specifications

of the 2006 Triumph Bonneville he felt assured of the researcher's knowledge of Triumph mechanics. Bill then became more relaxed and was willing to answer interview questions. After receiving approval from Bill, only then were clan members willing to participate in interviews.

Approval from Bill had both positive and negative consequences. Bill's status as the clan's British motorcycle history expert caused other members to defer to Bill's answer to my questions in his personal interview. Because other clan members were referring to Bill's interview answers it was discerned that clan members began discussing Triumph Motorcycle history and meaning amongst themselves during exclusive clan member gatherings. At this point responses were no longer just personal answers but answers that were influenced by the interaction between researcher and respondent, Gibb (2008) defines this as reactivity. After eight interviews no new theoretical insights were identified and data saturation began to become apparent.

The transcription process took approximately four to six hours for every interview. Transcription took place within two days after the interview so that concepts and field notes correlated with interviews. The length of transcription was due in part to the noise of the bars making it difficult to clearly understand the respondent's answer. The length in transcription was also due to constant rewinding of interviews to accurately transcribe what the respondent said. After transcription the data analysis process began.

Data analysis happened in conjunction to the data collection process. Analysis happened after transcription but before the next interview took place. Data analysis began with reduction and allowed for the identification of saturation and unexpected identification of reactivity. Data were categorized in to eight classifications.

## INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Data were classified according to concepts that relate to the authenticity construct. The first three categories are the attributes that compose authenticity. The fourth and fifth classifications relate to Triumph and social symbolism and self-symbolism. The sixth category dealt with Triumph and self-authentication. The seventh and eighth classification dealt with community and the influence of social media on authenticity. The following section details interview results in order of classification. All interviews were transcribed and then reduced. Reduction refers to eliminating repetitive statements and statements that are not relevant to the topic under study. After reduction classification took place. Classification refers to sorting data in in to key concepts relevant to the topic under study. The final step in the process was interpretation. Interpretations were made based on prior research and established theory. All interviews are personal communications that were collected following I.R.B. protocol. Interviews transcripts can be found in Appendix D through K. Interview respondents were: Gary, Chris, Bill, Tom Oil, Ace, Matey, Nick, and T.T. Interpretations of responses will follow by classification of data.

### **Indexical Connection**

The first classification was labeled indexical connection. Statements in this classification make a reference to a connection Triumph Motorcycles provide to a time and place. Alexander (2009) argues that, “Brands seek their aura of distinction and pedigree though allusions to time and place” (p. 551). When asked: “What do Triumph Motorcycles mean to you?” all respondents referred to the history of Triumph

Motorcycles. Respondents referenced both the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and post WWII England.

The indexical connection provided by Triumph Motorcycles was important to all interview respondents. Tom Oil exemplifies an indexical connection to those engineers who came before him at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through Triumph Motorcycles in his response:

These bikes represent over one hundred years of tradition. I'm an electrician and I tinker here and there with different things and I love my bike. I've spent a lot of time and a lot of money on it but being able to work on it makes me feel connected to that tradition of engineers and tinkerers. Triumph came together in 1897 it puts me in connection with my ancestors with those groups of people who were pushing the envelope at the time. You got to understand that these bikes started off with a guy in a garage just tinkering with things cylinders, pistons, to get it to where it is now. (T. Oil, personal communication, September 13, 2004)

In Tom Oil's response he references the founding of Triumph in 1897 and his connection to his ancestors in his owning and maintaining his Triumph Motorcycle. For Tom Oil Triumph Motorcycles provides an indexical connection to a tradition of engineering that began in 1897.

Gary references the importance of the connection to post WWII England that Triumph represents to him. In response to the meaning of Triumph Motorcycles, Gary responded:

The particular brand Triumph; originally got quite a large influence or acceptance by the younger crowd after WWII. It probably demonstrated freedom, it was inexpensive, and there were a lot of uh, there weren't jobs available. Motorcycles were to be had for cheap and soon the hip thing to do in the late 40's early 50's was to group together and inexpensively party using the motorcycle as the means of movement. That heritage carries in to my own heart today. It represents freedom to me. It represents personality. I've had a lot of older English Motorcycles, they appeal to my heart. They don't change a lot even though they are modernized. (Gary, personal communication, August 6, 2004)

To Gary Triumph Motorcycles provide a connection to post WWII England. The heritage in Triumph Motorcycles being an inexpensive means of transportation and a means to freedom and partying is still represented by Triumph Motorcycles to Gary today. Through his ownership of Triumph, Gary is espousing a connection to the youth lifestyle of post WWII England. The consistency in style throughout the decades was also important to Gary. In his response, Bill elaborates on the style of Triumph Motorcycles from the 1950's on forward.

To Bill, Triumph Motorcycles are industry standard in styling and performance that other motorcycle companies imitate. Bill explains what the Triumph Motorcycles brand is:

It is the oldest continuously operating brand of motorcycles on the planet. They have been the standard of the industry for years in terms of handling, styling, and performance. Particularly styling during the '50, '60's and '70's virtually every motorcycle built was a copy of the Bonneville made by Triumph

and other motorcycles that Triumph made. It always has been the standard of the industry for English made motorcycles. (Bill, personal communication, September 13, 2014)

Triumph Motorcycles are an indexically original item that other companies imitate. The indexical connection to the styling of Triumph Motorcycles from the 1950's on forward positions Triumph Motorcycles as the original that all other motorcycle companies aspire to. Through his ownership of a Triumph Motorcycle Bill is proclaiming his originality that other motorcycle riders imitate.

Triumph Motorcycles provides an indexical connection to two time periods. Through his ownership of Triumph Motorcycles Tom Oil perceived a connection to the engineers at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gary proclaimed a connection to the lifestyle Triumph Motorcycles facilitated after WWII in England. Bill positioned Triumph Motorcycles as an original that other motorcycle companies imitate. By owning, restoring and maintaining Triumph Motorcycles, B.I.R. members are appropriating a connection to England at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the lifestyle Triumph Motorcycles facilitated after WWII. According to theorists of the postmodern condition (Lyotard 1979/1984; Miller 2008; Beverland, Farrelly & Quester 2010), Tom Oil, Gary and Bill choose Triumph Motorcycles because Triumph Motorcycles provide an identity marker, a connection to a time and place.

### **Craftsmanship**

The second classification was craftsmanship. This classification was comprised of statements that deal with the perception of the quality of Triumph Motorcycles and the passion for creating a quality motorcycle over commercial interests. Craftsmanship refers



to, “the sense that a passionate creator is involved in making products, and is motivated primarily by their love of craft, rather than the possibility of financial reward” (Beverland et al., 2008, p. 12). Change in assembly location from England to Thailand in 2006 has had no influence on the perception of craftsmanship and is seen as positive and in keeping of the tradition of Triumph Motorcycles being affordable, quality motorcycles.

Assembly in Thailand is seen as a continuation in the evolution of Triumph. Bill argues that the assembly in Thailand has no effect on the craftsmanship or perception of Triumph Motorcycles being indexically English Motorcycles:

Well it is an English design. It is a continuation of the design of the English parallel twin engine that has been in design since the ‘30’s and ‘40’s. I don’t care where it’s assembled it’s still an English motorcycle. (Bill, personal communication, September 13, 2014)

Bill is a key member of the B.I.R. and his opinion carries weight. Because of the design being English, the assembly location of Triumph in Asia has no effect on the indexical connection or craftsmanship.

Chris, the clan Chieftain proclaims that the assembly location in Thailand has had no effect on the craftsmanship of Triumph. According to Chris assembly in Asia has had positive outcomes:

The new bikes run just as good if not better. You have to understand the technology that goes in to the racing team and innovation still happens in England and they carry it and pass it right along when they built and manufacture the

bikes. It makes the bikes a little cheaper to be manufactured elsewhere. (Chris, personal communication, September 13, 2014)

Because the engineering and development of technology still happens in England the Thai assembled motorcycles are still perceived as being English. According to Chris, the craftsmanship has not suffered since the shift in assembly to Thailand and has had the positive result of keeping the cost of the motorcycles low. As in Gary's previous statement the low cost of Triumph Motorcycles was an appealing feature. Assembly in Thailand continues that tradition of low cost motorcycling.

T.T. makes the same assertion as other B.I.R. members. Since moving assembly location to Thailand there is no negative perception in craftsmanship or indexical connection. T.T. responded:

I know that they are no longer made in England if that's what you are referring to. I don't really perceive a decline in the quality of the bikes though because the tradition of engineering is still there in the fact that they continue to develop new things in England. The racing bikes are still based out of England and the bikes run well. I've never had a problem with mine. (T.T., personal communication, September 20, 2014)

The craftsmanship classification yielded the most surprising answers. Although Triumph is now assembled in Thailand and to some extent parts are manufactured there, B.I.R. members do not perceive a negative effect on the perceptions of craftsmanship and continue to perceive Triumph Motorcycles as indexically English. According to Gary, T.T. and Nick in personal communications the assembly in Thailand is positive and continues in the tradition of keeping Triumph Motorcycles affordable. There is a

perception amongst B.I.R. members that Triumph is still motivated primarily by making a quality motorcycle over financial success. Another category dealing with the financial success of Triumph Motorcycles is downplaying commercial intension.

### **Downplaying Commercial Intentions**

The third classification of data involved answers regarding downplaying commercial intension. Beverland et al. (2008) contend that “using advertising to project authenticity is difficult because methods of mass marketing are believed to undermine such claims” (p. 5). Questions for this classification dealt with advertising and extended to the direct contact from Triumph Motorcycles employees with B.I.R. members and product placement in TV and film.

In regard to advertising, the mass advertising of Triumph would have a negative effect on the perception of authenticity of Triumph. Gary explains why mass advertising would have a negative effect:

I'd probably still ride a Triumph but I think I'd call those people that bought in to the advertising rookies. They are to me, they're just rookies, they are looking for a thrill, and Triumph would be following in the steps of Harley-Davidson. The price would go up because that campaign ad is going to be expensive. Price of the bike goes up and the better clientele comes in the ones that they can market to and could afford the purchase. Price is going to go up and all you get is a bunch of rookies. (Gary, personal communication, August 6, 2014)

Gary attests to the negative effects mass advertising would have on his perception of Triumph Motorcycles. As previous research demonstrates, (Holt 2002) (Beverland et al.,

2008) mass advertising of Triumph Motorcycles would have a negative impact on the authenticity of Triumph.

The direct involvement of brand representatives in brand communities is recommended by marketing scholars (Stockburger-Sauer, 2010). Sincere interest in the brand community being engaged is essential to success. Interview responses reaffirm the belief that genuine interest in the group over marketing and selling is essential to involvement, “The people who we ride with are allowed in to the club because they have an interest in the style and performance of these bikes. We wouldn’t let anyone in who only cared about selling stuff” (Nick, personal communication, September 21, 2014). Nick reaffirms the belief that genuine interest in a brand community assures success.

Product placement has been a successful strategy for Triumph Motorcycles. The association with Marlon Brando and Steve McQueen is referenced time and time again by B.I.R. members. The association with the wrong type of celebrity would negatively affect the authenticity of Triumph. T.T. explains, “Well that’s where I saw my first Triumph so it’s not so bad. I hope the marketing guys are smart enough to not let someone like Miley Cyrus sit on one” (T.T., personal communication, September 20, 2014).

Downplaying commercial intentions by limiting advertising exposure contributes to the perceptions of authenticity of Triumph Motorcycles. Product placement has been a successful strategy for Triumph, though the association with Steve McQueen and Marlon Brando. Associating the brand with a contemporary mainstream celebrity would have a negative effect on the authenticity of Triumph. Similarly mass advertising would diminish the perceptions of authenticity because minimal advertising creates an air of

exclusivity. Exclusivity assists Triumph riders in differentiating between those who are in the “in” group and those who are not, to an extent making sense of the social world.

### **Triumph and Social Symbolism**

A classification dealing with making sense of the social world resulted in a pronounced differentiation between Triumph Motorcycle riders and Harley-Davidson Motorcycle riders. According to Elliot (1999), in postmodern consumer culture, consumption serves two purposes, “in constructing the social world, social symbolism and inward in constructing our self–identity, self-symbolism” (p. 113). Although there was some distinction between sport bike riders and Triumph Motorcycle riders there is a large cultural differentiation between Triumph Motorcycle riders and Harley-Davidson Motorcycle riders.

In every question regarding the category of making sense of the social world, B.I.R. members associated negative connotations with Harley-Davidson Motorcycle riders. The mainstream uniform culture of Harley-Davidson does not appeal to Bill:

Harley-Davidson Motorcycles has made more money selling the culture through related items than they have selling the motorcycles. Shirts, hats, boots, jeans and they have done a good job at it. Creating a lifestyle, a culture that revolves around Harley-Davidson. They all look the same. Most of them have a ponytail or a beard. They all have a vest. They all have protective boot. They all look the same. They decided to become a part of the Harley culture. That’s what Harleys represent to me, a culture. I wouldn’t ride a Harley-Davidson, I wouldn’t own one. (Bill, personal communication, September 13, 2014)

The uniformity of the Harley-Davidson culture is not appealing to those who prefer to be different yet original. Through the ownership of Triumph Motorcycles Bill sees himself as different and original. Bill differentiates between his position to those who prefer the Harley-Davidson culture of uniformity. Differentiation between Triumph Motorcycles riders extends to sport bike riders as well.

Triumph Motorcycle riders associate a social symbolism of reckless danger with sport bike riders. Ace explains:

The sport bike guys are thrill seekers. Not that I am not, but those guys must need an adrenalin rush often. Every time you read about a motorcycle accident here in Vegas it's someone on a fast bike because those guys want to go fast and don't really know how to control the bike or show off and unfortunately it causes really serious accidents. (Ace, personal communication, September 24, 2014)

Ace associates sport bike riders with lack of control and an association with serious accidents. Ace differentiates between Triumph and sport bike riders and sport bike riders who he associates with lack of control and accidents.

Triumph Motorcycle riders also consider themselves more egalitarian and less bourgeois than Norton Motorcycle riders. Like Triumph, Norton is a British motorcycle company. Triumph riders differentiate between the more egalitarian Triumph brand and the bourgeois Norton, "The great thing about Triumph is that I can afford it. I can fix it, I can customize it and it won't cost me a whole lot. I'd love to ride a Norton but it's just too expensive" (Nick, personal communication, September 24, 2014). Nick distinguishes between Triumph being affordable and Norton being expensive.

Brand preferences help B.I.R. members make sense of the social world. The social symbolism inherent in Triumph is seen as different from that of the sport bike riders who are seen as reckless. Norton is another British brand of motorcycles as storied as Triumph but Norton is seen as bourgeois, Gary refers to them as “the nouveau riche bikes” (personal communication, August 6, 2014) because of cost while Triumph is seen as being more egalitarian. The most pronounced differentiation was between Triumph riders and Harley-Davidson riders who are described as uniform and at times referred to as “knuckle draggers” (Chris, personal communication, September 13, 2014). B.I.R. members discussed the social symbolism inherent in other brands. The following section will discuss the self-symbolism that Triumph holds for B.I.R. members.

### **Triumph and Self-Symbolism**

Elliot’s theory of brands and postmodern consumer culture theory (2010) argues that brands aide in identity construction. Questions regarding Triumph Motorcycles communicating something about the self, generated the most discomfort. At times respondents did not know how to respond or did not wish to answer that question. Those who did respond reported positive associations of the self with Triumph Motorcycles.

Matey noted some confusion when responding to questions regarding Triumph Motorcycles and self-symbolism. As he continued he elaborated:

I am a guy who likes to not be like everyone else but has a love for things that last. It is very rare that things last. Triumph has lasted through hard times, just like me. It’s a smart choice, a choice not to be like the Harley guys, different, smarter. (Matey, personal communication, September 20, 2014)

Matey associates Triumph Motorcycles with being different and smarter. In the statement Matey also differentiates between himself and Harley-Davidson riders. Matey also says that reflects that he is different and smarter.

Ace also associates Triumph with being different than mainstream motorcycle riders. Ace notes what he communicates by choosing Triumph,

I think it says that I am a little bit different. I am a little bit dangerous but I am not a bad ass with a vest and Ape Bars. It says that I am into the classics, but I like to have a thrill now and again. (Ace, personal communication, September 21, 2014)

Ace notes how he is different, dangerous but not the same as riders with vests and ape bars, a slight at Harley-Davidson riders. Triumph Motorcycles hold social symbolism and self-symbolism to members of the B.I.R. Triumph helps B.I.R. members distinguish between social others and communicates to others who they are. Ownership of Triumph Motorcycles is not the guarantee of an authentic personality. B.I.R. members also refer to the acts that reaffirm the authenticity of their personality.

### **Triumph and Self-Authenticating Acts**

Ownership of Triumph Motorcycles is a resource in identity construction. Responses from B.I.R. clan members indicated that in order to be truly authentic clan members must perform authenticating acts. In his research of consumer resistance Holt (2002) argues that brands are a resource in identity creation. Gary's response (2014) reaffirms:

I watched a guy almost fall off his motorcycle at a light the other day. I can't understand what he is doing on the road with those of us who have packed



sleeping bags and traveled though out the west on these bikes. Years from now, I might say shame on me because he might have traveled maybe, and he may have gotten the opportunity to do all the things that I've done throughout the years. As for now, they are all just rookies and they crack me up. (Gary, personal communication August 6, 2014)

The ownership of a Triumph Motorcycle does not guarantee the communication of an authentic personality. The performance of authenticating acts is necessary to communicate an authentic personality. Matey elaborates on the communication of "cool". Matey explains:

Well just because you own the bike it doesn't mean you're cool. Just like with us. Yeah you can ride with us if you have a Triumph or a British bike but you have to be able to keep up, fix it. If it breaks down on you, with us, we can help you fix it but you have to ride with us, hang out, and have a beer. (Matey, personal communication 2014)

Essential to the communicating of an authentic or cool personality is the ability to control the motorcycle and repair it. To perform the authenticating acts there must be an entity that reaffirms status and position. The B.I.R. Las Vegas clan facilitates authenticity by providing the means for identity construction through community.

### **Triumph and Community**

The seventh classification of data deals with the concept of community facilitated by ownership of Triumph Motorcycles. Results of these questions dealt with a perceived sense of belongingness facilitated by an interest in Triumph Motorcycles. Brand

community researchers argue that, “the decline of traditional markers of identity such as local communities and institutions consumers have renewed links to time and place by engaging in communities of consumption” (Beverland et al., 2010, p. 690). Association with the B.I.R. provides members with a sense of belonging.

The sense of belonging goes beyond a shared interest. Ace elaborates:

It’s a comradery brought together by our shared interest in these bikes but it goes deeper than that because I can get together with these guys to drink a beer and relax. We talk about these bikes but we also hang and talk about, trouble with the kids, just guy stuff but we come together because of these bikes. (Ace, personal communication, September 20, 2014)

For Ace, membership in the B.I.R. is more than just a group where he can get advice on repairs and maintenance. Membership in the B.I.R. provides Ace relaxation and people to turn to for advice in his personal life. Although the group has interaction offline, a lot of the interaction happens on the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan Facebook page. The following section will detail the influence of social media on perceptions of authenticity.

### **Influence of Social Media on Perceptions of Authenticity**

The final classification dealt with the influence of social media on perceptions of authenticity. The final classification was generated to attempt to find an extension of theory as recommended by Belk et al. (2013). There is no academic research that focuses on the influence of social media on perceptions of authenticity. Results of interview questions indicate that social media has no effect on perceptions of authenticity, however to effectively communicate through social media with brand community members, brand

representatives must show a genuine interest in the brand community over communicating commercial interests.

All members of the B.I.R. Las Vegas clan have an active presence to varying degrees on various social media outlets. The key factor in social media having no effects on perceptions of authenticity is the ability of clan members to disengage brand representatives if the member perceives that the interest of the brand representative is solely to advertise or generate sales. When asked if direct engagement through social media from a Triumph Motorcycle brand representative would have an effect on his perceptions Tom replied:

No, because I can ignore him if it is not relevant to my projects or if I have a question I can go right to him. I have my sources and it's nice that I can reach them online when I need to and leave them alone when I don't. It's a good thing to be in touch. (T. Oil, personal communication, September 13, 2014)

Chris concurs with Tom's response and sees social media contact with Triumph Brand representatives as a positive. Chris explains:

I can have a direct tie and response to someone who can get me an answer that I need. I still write letters to get answers and I get what I want, but it's nice to be able to have that direct contact with someone who can get you an answer. (Chris, personal communication, September 13, 2014)

The proliferation of social media has generated acceptance. The attributes of authenticity can be communicated via social media without having a detrimental effect on perceptions of authenticity. The following section will summarize this and other classifications

## SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the interpretation of responses to depth interview questions from members of the B.I.R. Las Vegas clan. Following the research design, depth-interviews were collected in face to face interactions for two months during B.I.R. club events. Eight members of the group were interviewed before data saturation and reactivity were identified.

Responses were delineated along eight classifications of data. All classifications related to the authenticity of Triumph Motorcycles. The indexical connection of Triumph Motorcycles was important B.I.R. members to such an extent that the relocation of assembly location to Thailand from England has had no effect on the perception of craftsmanship. The authenticity of Triumph Motorcycles conforms to postmodern consumer culture theory. Downplaying commercial intentions gives Triumph Motorcycles an air of exclusivity and contributes to the differentiating between social groups. Findings of the study concur with postmodern consumer culture theories. Communication through social media has had no effect on B.I.R. members' perceptions of Triumph Motorcycles.

This thesis concludes with the following chapter. The final chapter will summarize the findings of each classification of data, and then relate those summaries to the theory informing this study in terms of both reinforcing and, if warranted, extending existing theory. The chapter will also examine the field method used for this study, and assess both strengths and shortcomings in the approach. Finally, recommendations for future research on authenticity and specialized communities will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Globalization and technological innovations have facilitated the decline in legitimacy of traditional identity markers, traditional identity markers such as time and place. The decline in legitimacy of traditional identity markers is a part of the incredulity toward metanarratives that marks the postmodern condition (Lyotard 1979/1984). Miller (2008) argues that people have been freed from the context of tradition, time and place in a process of individualization. Through the consumption of brands marketed as authentic individuals are finding the traditional identity markers used to create an identity.

Scholars of postmodern consumer culture (Elliot 1999) argue that branded goods serve a dual purpose, social symbolism and self-symbolism. Social symbolism refers to making sense of the social world, differentiating between those who hold similar views and others. Self-symbolism refers to identity construction. Positioning a brand as authentic provides both social symbolism and self-symbolism. To be successful in the postmodern consumer market, branded goods must be perceived as authentic. Beverland and Farrelly (2009) argue that “the loss of traditional sources of meaning and self-identity associated with postmodern market characteristics (globalization, de-territorialization and hyperreality) has encouraged consumers to become active and adept in appropriating authenticity” (p. 839). This thesis sought to understand authenticity in specialized communities.

This thesis undertook an interpretive qualitative research study of the Brit Iron Rebels Las Vegas Clan. The epistemological perspective undertaken was phenomenological. According to Belk et al. (2013) phenomenology is concerned with

“the life-world of individuals and that the meanings of people’s experiences are always situated in their current experiential context and coherently related to their ongoing life projects” (p. 21). The method was the depth interview method. Depth interviews were conducted with members of the Brit Iron Rebels Las Vegas Clan.

This thesis contributed to the scholarship of authenticity by understanding the preference for Triumph Motorcycles in The Brit Iron Rebels Las Vegas Clan, a specialized community. Existing literature in the field of authenticity and specialized communities has not focused specifically on motorcycle brand communities. Since the economic recession of 2009 growth in the American motorcycle marketplace has been in decline due to a failure to diversify from an aging consumer base and a failure to communicate existing values to a younger more diverse demographic (Ulama, 2014). In practice this thesis found that a genuine interest in a specialized motorcycle community must trump commercial intentions. The following section will summarize the findings of depth interviews conducted over two months.

## DISCUSSION

Phenomenological analysis of data resulted in eight data classifications. This section will summarize the findings of each classification of data. Each classification will be tied to the theory informing this thesis.

The first classification was indexical connection. Indexical connection according to Grayson and Martinec (2004) refers to a spacio temporal connection. The indexical connection inherent in Triumph Motorcycles proved to be the most valued attribute of authenticity. In all interviews, when asked “ What does Triumph mean to you?” all B.I.R. members referred to the importance of the history of Triumph Motorcycles and the

connection they felt when riding or maintaining their Triumph. All B.I.R. clan members positioned Triumph Motorcycles as the original innovator in terms of both performance and styling that has been imitated by other motorcycle manufacturers from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century forward. Triumph Motorcycles provides a connection to a time and a place, turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century England and Post World War II England. For B.I.R. members, Triumph Motorcycles provide two of the identity markers that Beverland et al. (2010) argue are lacking in postmodern society. The indexical connection is also associated with what Elliot (1999) termed self-symbolism. The indexical connection was so strong for B.I.R. members that it trumped associations with craftsmanship.

Craftsmanship was the second classification of data. Beverland et al. (2008) argue that, “authenticity comes from the sense that a passionate creator is involved in making products, and is motivated primarily by their love of craft, rather than the possibility of financial reward” (p. 12). Since 2006 Triumph has been assembled in Thailand. Since the move in assembly location, there has been no negative perception in craftsmanship. The move to Thailand has been tied to the tradition in Triumph Motorcycles being an affordable quality motorcycle. The acceptance of the assembly location is a testament to the strength of the indexical connection but also to what Grbich (2004) argues as the economic arrangements and political values of modern capitalism that are an intrinsic part of postmodernism. For brand managers who are attempting to position a brand as authentic, emphasizing the indexical connection can overcome any negative associations related with switching assembly locations. Currently Harley-Davidson Motorcycles plans to open an assembly location in India. Craftsmanship is tied to downplaying commercial intentions, the third classification of data.

Data analysis of questions regarding downplaying commercial intentions resulted in implications for brand managers seeking to position their brand as authentic within specialized communities. Beverland et al. (2008) contend that using advertising to project authenticity has the opposite result than desired. Downplaying commercial intentions relates to Elliot's theory (1999) of postmodern consumer consumption where consumption of goods serves in making sense of the social world. Maintaining an aura of authenticity through limited advertising communicates that only those who are "truly in the know" prefer Triumph Motorcycles. Limited advertising helps B.I.R. members differentiate between themselves and those who are not knowledgeable of the origins of motorcycle performance and styling. Questions regarding the interaction of Triumph Motorcycle brand representatives off line or through social media demonstrated that a genuine interest in the group or the individual B.I.R. member's project must trump commercial intentions as B.I.R. members are quick to distinguish and expel those who are not genuinely interested in the group or Triumph Motorcycles. Triumph Motorcycles helps B.I.R. members make sense of the social world. Data analysis resulted in a pronounced differentiation between Harley-Davidson Motorcycle riders and Triumph Motorcycle riders in the fourth category of data.

The classification Triumph and Social Symbolism dealt with making sense of the social world. Although there was a differentiation between Triumph Motorcycle riders and riders of Norton Motorcycles and sport bike riders, no differentiation was as pronounced as the differentiation between Triumph Motorcycle riders and Harley-Davidson Motorcycle riders. B.I.R. Las Vegas clan members associated negative connotations with Harley-Davidson Motorcycles. This thesis was anchored to postmodern theory and cites Baudrillard (1976/1993) as an influential postmodern



theorist. In an analysis of Baudrillard's (1976/1993) *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Kellner (2002) explains that in the society of simulacra, "identities are constructed by the appropriation of images and codes and models determine how individuals perceive themselves and relate to other people" (p. 62). Data analysis demonstrated that through the appropriation of Triumph Motorcycles, B.I.R. members associated positive attributes to Triumph Motorcycles riders, regardless of membership status, and an association with Harley-Davidson determined negative perceptions. According to Elliot (1999) the postmodern consumer uses branded goods to make sense of the social world. Elliot's theory of postmodern consumption (1999) was also used as the theory to reinforce the fifth data classification.

Triumph and Self-Symbolism was the fifth classification of data. According to Elliot (1999), brand consumption in postmodern society aids in identity construction. Questions related to this classification of data generated some discomfort among respondents. Respondents who answered the question "Do you think Triumph communicate something about who you are?" responded with positive attributes about their personality resulting from preferring Triumph Motorcycles over other brands.

The sixth classification of data was Triumph and Self-Authenticating Acts. Holt (2002) argues that, "The postmodern branding paradigm is premised upon the idea that brands will be more valuable if they are offered not as cultural blueprints but as cultural resources" (p. 83). Simply owning a Triumph Motorcycle does not guarantee authenticity. Owning a Triumph Motorcycle is a resource to the goal of a more authentic self that can happen through self-authenticating acts, notably maintenance and participation in community. To B.I.R. members Triumph Motorcycles are a resource. Triumph Motorcycles provide a reference point to authenticity but in order to be as

authentic as Triumph Motorcycles an owner must be able to maintain and spend a significant amount of time and miles riding. Participation in community facilitates authenticity.

Triumph and Community was the seventh classification of data. Results of this category demonstrated the perceived sense of belongingness facilitated by Triumph Motorcycles. Beverland, Farrelly and Quester (2010) argue that, “the postmodern consumer often finds authenticity in communities of consumption including those that are based around a focal brand” (p. 698). Responses indicated that the sense of community went beyond interest in Triumph Motorcycles. Participation in B.I.R. gatherings provided members with a sense of community. At those gatherings B.I.R. members find support and advice in matters beyond the B.I.R. and Triumph Motorcycle maintenance. Although membership in the B.I.R. happens through off line interaction, the B.I.R. have a significant presence online through a B.I.R. webpage but also through social media.

The final data classification was the Influence of Social Media on Perceptions of Authenticity. This classification attempted to find an extension of theory as there is no existing literature on social media and perceptions of authenticity or social media and brand communities. Results indicate that social media have no effect on perceptions of authenticity. Miller (2008) argues that social relationships are being mediated more and more via mobile phones, mobile technology and social media profiles. The interaction between brand and consumer must be perceived as having a genuine interest in the community or current project in order for communication between brand and consumer through social media to be effective.

This thesis attempted to understand authenticity in the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan. Analysis of data revealed that Triumph Motorcycles provides traditional identity markers that have degenerated in value in postmodern society. Analysis also indicated that emphasizing the indexical connection provided by a brand can overcome challenges resulting from a change in assembly location. Practical implications also indicated that interaction between brand and consumer through social media has no effect on perceptions of authenticity. Data were collected from in-depth interviews with members of the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan over two months. The following section will discuss the limitations of the field method used for this study.

### LIMITATIONS

The strength of the study lay in the thorough inquiry done in to the research traditions that were the methodological foundation of this study. The limitations were found in the access to B.I.R. members in the field. When assessing the quality of qualitative research Trainor and Graue (2013) recommend aligning the methodology, epistemology and method to form a coherent argument. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998) methodology is “the way in which we approach problems and seek answers” (p. 3). The method is the step by step process by which data are collected.

This research employed qualitative research methodology. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) define qualitative methodology as, “research that produces descriptive data- people’s own written or spoken words and observable behavior” (p. 7). Interpretive qualitative methodology undertakes research from the perspective that all meaning is not an empirical positivist modern phenomenon. Since there is no single positivist modern phenomenon to meaning or reality, all meaning is socially constructed. This research was

grounded on the standpoint that qualitative interview research would generate a richer description of authenticity in specialized communities.

Conducting the interviews in an academic and more sterile environment could generate different results. Heider (1988) resolves disagreements between ethnographers and ethnographic approach with the argument that disagreements reflect, “one’s basic position on truth, reality and the scientific method” (p. 73). Interview responses changing according to interview location was noted when the length of interview was significantly longer and easier to transcribe after comparing Gary’s interview which took place at his barbershop in comparison to the other interview respondents where the interview took place at bars.

Interview responses were limited to two months in the field. After attending seven B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan events it became apparent that the same key members attended events regularly. Interview responses were limited to those members who attended B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan events regularly. The location of the interview also posed a limitation.

Because of the limited availability of interview respondents participating in B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan events interview locations were restricted to bars where B.I.R. members were gathering. The interview location posed a challenge for transcription. Background noise from a bar made it more difficult to transcribe interviews. Respondents were willing to participate in interviews but were also eager to relax and drink a beer with fellow clan members limiting some of the richness of the detail to their answers. The influence of other clan members was also a limitation on the responses they would provide.

After several interviews reactivity began to be identified. Because of the structural nature inherent in community, several clan members began to defer to the responses that clan members with higher status had provided. It was apparent that B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan members began to discuss the meaning and history of Triumph Motorcycles amongst themselves. Reaction to the researcher, as an outsider began to be identified. Research was also limited to the researcher being excluded from B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan member's only events. The following section will outline recommendations for future for future research.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The limitations of this study dealt with constraints inherent in the modern positivist format in formal university research. To gain a more detailed in depth understanding of authenticity in specialized communities an etic ethnographic approach with funding for participating in the group under study would be recommended. Once membership in a group is secured broader insight could be gained through access to online group discussions only accessible to group members. Photos of B.I.R. members and their Triumph Motorcycles would add to the detail of the study. Leigh et al. (2006) undertook a five year ethnographic approach that revealed rich detail on the topic of authenticity in car restoration subcultures. McAlexander et al. (1995) secured funding to purchase Harley-Davidson Motorcycles in an ethnographic study of the H.O.G. brand community. Extended time in the field and funding are two factors that all researchers dream of in any field of study.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to understand authenticity in the Brit Iron Rebels Las Vegas Clan. This thesis contributed to the scholarship of authenticity in specialized communities with a focus on motorcycle brand communities and an extension on the influence of social media on perceptions of authenticity. Since the economic recession of 2009 motorcycle industry profits have been in decline (Ulama, 2014). This thesis found practical implications for brand managers who wish to position their brand as authentic in a period where iconic motorcycle brands are at a renaissance. Analysis of data revealed that Triumph Motorcycles provides consumers with traditional identity markers that postmodern scholars argue are degenerating in value in society.

## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT



#### Department of Journalism and Media Studies

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**TITLE OF STUDY:** UNDERSTANDING AUTHENTICITY: AN INTERPRETIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE BRIT IRON REBELS LAS VEGAS CLAN

**INVESTIGATOR(S):** Dr. Paul J. Traudt (Principal Investigator) and Mr. Sullivan Charles (Student Investigator). For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Paul J. Traudt at (702) 895-3647. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.**

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

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of study is to understand how brands are used in specialized communities. This research will contribute to the scholarship of brands in theory and in practice. In theory, this research will attempt to understand if the preference for the Triumph motorcycle brand is consistent with existing consumer culture theory. In practice, this research will explore implications for brand managers who attempt to position brands.

#### **Participants**

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit these criteria: You are a member of a specialized community focused on the Triumph motorcycle brand.

#### **Procedures**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: Answer a series of questions regarding your perception of Triumph motorcycles.

#### **Benefits of Participation**

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn how you perceive Triumph motorcycles. .

#### **Risks of Participation**

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. You may become uncomfortable when answering some questions.

**Cost /Compensation**

There is no financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take 60 minutes of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

**Confidentiality**

Given the nature of this study, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, you will be referred to in this study by a randomly assigned number, or you may be referred to in the study by a pseudonym or nickname of your choosing. There is a section lower on this page asking how you want to be referred to in any reporting of results from this study. The researchers will use your designated reference in any reporting of results. All recordings from interviews will be erased consequent to transcription. All transcriptions will be locked in a cabinet in the principal investigator’s office (GUA, #2124) and shredded after three years.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with UNLV. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

**Participant Consent:**

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form will be giving to me at the earliest future date.

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name (Please Print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Audio/Video Taping:**

I agree to be audio or video taped for the purpose of this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name (Please Print)

\_\_\_\_\_



Signature of Participant

Date

**Reference to be used in Reporting Results:**

A random number will be used to refer to you in all reporting of results from the study. However, you may fill out the following section if you want to be referred to by a nickname or pseudonym.

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Nickname or pseudonym to be used in reporting (Please Print)

## APPENDIX B

### RECRUITMENT SCRIPT FOR POTENTIAL STUDY RESPONDENTS

You are invited to participate in a research study to understand how brands are used in specialized communities

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit these criteria: You are a member of a specialized community focused on the Triumph motorcycle brand.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer a series of questions regarding your perception of Triumph motorcycles.

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn how you perceive Triumph motorcycles. .

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. You may become uncomfortable when answering some questions.

There is no financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take 60 minutes of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

Given the nature of this study, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, you may be referred to in the study by a pseudonym. You will sign a consent form if you choose to participate in this research. The consent form will include a section asking how you want to be referred to in any reporting of results from this study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study.

Would you like to participate in this research?

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions

1. What do Triumph Motorcycles mean to you?
  - 1a. If respondent begins to speak about history of Triumph:

Does the history matter to you?
  - 1b. If respondent does not talk about history of Triumph:

What do you know about the history of Triumph?
  
2. Do you know where Triumph is manufactured?
  - 2a. Does the manufacturing location matter to you?
  
3. Do you know where Triumph is assembled?
  - 3a. Does the assembly location matter to you?
  
4. What does Harley-Davidson represent to you?
  - 4a. If respondent begins to talk about the outlaw image of Harley-Davidson:

Davidson:

How does the outlaw image come in to play when you think about buying a motorcycle?
  
5. Do you prefer Triumph over other British motorcycles?
  
6. Does the assembly location play a role in your perception of the way Triumph is manufactured?

7. What do you think of when you think of the way Triumph is manufactured today?

7a. Does that matter to you?

8. How does customization come in to play when you consider the craftsmanship of Triumph?

9. How did you find out about Triumph Motorcycles?

10. Would the involvement of a Triumph salesman in B.I.R. effect your perception of Triumph?

11. Would it matter to you if Triumph embarked on a wide advertising campaign?

12. How do you feel about the product placement of Triumph in movies/TV shows?

13. Do you think Triumph communicates something about who you are?

13a. If so, how?

13b. Can you explain?

14. Do you think people view you differently because you chose Triumph over

14a. Harley-Davidson?

- 14 a1. If so, how?
- 14b. Indian Motorcycles?
  - 14b1. If so, how?
- 14c. Norton Motorcycles?
  - 14c1. If so, how?
- 15. How do you feel about people who ride Triumph motorcycles?
- 16. How do you feel about people that ride Harley-Davidson?
- 17. How do you feel about people that ride Yamaha Motorcycles?
- 18. What does membership in the B.I.R. mean to you?
- 19. Do you use social media?
  - 19a. Do you use Facebook?
    - 19a1. If no, why not?
    - 19a2. If so, how do you use it?
  - 19b. Do you use Twitter?
    - 19a1. If no, why not?
    - 19a2. If so, how do you use it?
  - 19c. Do you use Instagram?
    - 19a1. If no, why not?
    - 19a2. If so, how do you use it?
- 20. Do you know if Triumph uses social media?
- 21. If a Triumph brand representative engaged in direct communication with the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan through social media would it affect your perception of Triumph?
  - 21a. Of the Brit Iron Rebels?

## APPENDIX D

### Transcript of Interview with Gary

Interviewer: What do Triumph Motorcycles mean to you?

Gary: They are heritage, vintage.

Interviewer: What does the heritage mean to you? When you talk about heritage?

Gary: The particular brand Triumph; originally got quite a large influence or acceptance by the younger crowd after WW2. It probably demonstrated freedom, it was inexpensive, and there were a lot of uh, there weren't jobs available. Motorcycles were to be had for cheap and soon the hip thing to do in the late 40's early 50's was to group together and inexpensively party using the motorcycle as the means of movement. That heritage carries in to my own heart today. It represents freedom to me. It represents personality. I've been riding now for 37 years. I've had a lot of older English Motorcycles, they appeal to my heart. They don't change a lot even though they are modernized.

Interviewer: Is there anything specific that appeals to your heart about the English bikes?

Gary: The sound. It's completely about the sound. Sound is what it is all about.

Interviewer: What about the sound?

Gary: It is a response it is a control.

Interviewer: Would you say that it is more of a factor the sound than the heritage? Both together? or what?

Gary: They go hand in hand absolutely. You hear a motorcycle whether it be on film four years ago, fifty years ago or you hear it today in the garage you get the same feeling. So that heritage is also just carried forward to today. You are hearing what somebody heard years ago that excited them the same way.

Interviewer: Do you know where Triumph is manufactured?

Gary: Well unfortunately, or fortunately they are assembled in Asia as of late 2006.

Interviewer: Does it matter to you that they are assembled in Asia?

Gary: It does, but I don't allow it to bother me because my motorcycle is older. Mine was assembled in England. Where I can just imagine the way the English put these together. They'd think about it.

Interviewer: The whole history with the Hinckley plant.

Gary: Those guys they worked there for years they probably had an interesting life, the guys that made the changes in those bikes. It was probably interesting times. They would go and have a pint. That sounds good, let's try it tomorrow.

Interviewer: Now I am going to ask you questions about other brands of motorcycles. What does Harley-Davidson mean to you?

Gary: Well, I've owned several Harley- Davidson's. They to, were about sound and freedom. I did all my early travels on one particular Harley-Davidson. It always gave me trouble on the road but I was also able to fix it on the road. It taught me a lot about nurturing a bike and enjoying it until it broke.

Interviewer: How would you compare the Triumph to the Harley?

Gary: Well they are completely different animals, the two bikes. They steer differently. They run differently in different temperatures. English bikes love the wet cold. My bike runs incredible in the San Francisco area but it doesn't run well here in the desert. It doesn't like it at all. The Harley-Davidson is more of an all season bike. They are big couches as far as I'm concerned. Some of them are so large. It's a cushy way for somebody to go down the road. One of these days I might fall back in to it. The Harley's I rode back when I was young were all hard tails or choppers. A little more hard core and no frills what so ever. No frills at all.

Interviewer: How does the outlaw image come in to play when you think of buying a motorcycle? You know Harley-Davidsons are associated a lot with the Hells Angels.

Gary: I don't think it does, I don't think it effects. The Harley-Davidson brand is no longer a brand to be feared. It's a doctor's brand to me.

Interviewer: A doctor's brand?

Gary: Absolutely, it's a wealthy boy's brand. It is notoriously known for expensive replacement parts, could only be afforded by someone doing very well. Triumph could be had by any one and fixed by any one, Harley-Davidson, not quite the same story. Harley is very good at their marketing, incredible. Right down to the shelves and isles, they are never over eye level. You could always see beyond to see something new when you are shopping for a cap or a hat or a jacket or whatever it's very well laid out at the store. If you go to buy a part let's say something broke and its part of your instrument cluster, with Harley-Davidson you have to buy a whole new dashboard not just the part that broke. That's what makes it expensive to own. Everything is always the whole thing. Even their frame doesn't detach, because if it's dented in an accident, your whole frame has to be replaced. A lot of bikes are integrated, a frame part could be replaced, Harley-Davidson, the whole frame has to be replaced.

Interviewer: Let me ask you a question about other British motorcycles. Do you prefer Triumph over other British motorcycles? How do you compare them?

Gary: I like a lot of the new-riche motorcycles. The new money motorcycles are the Nortons, that's a gorgeous bike that they've rebuilt and introduced this year 2014. That bikes all there, that bike is everything that a sport bike isn't. It's already ahead of its time. It has the best handle, the best in suspension. It has a great power plant, it is all modernized, electronic, wonderful bike. It looks quite retro. Retro, everything that is old is new again. It appeals to people. It draws people in a little bit, to have something vintage.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Gary: Association with comfort maybe.

Interviewer: Association with comfort?

Gary: These are difficult times whether you want to believe the media or not. I think we have been humbled through this recession. Adversity comes in the form being able to afford a motorcycle, but not a Harley-Davidson, where five years ago I could have bought two Harley-Davidsons. I'm humbled by what I have gone through since 2008. It's been six years, it was rough times. I am appreciative and humbled and like the feeling of comfort that comes from owning a vintage style motorcycle. Something makes me very happy there. I found out who I was through this recession and this bike helped. By force I took it to L.A. because of my sick mother because I could only afford that much gas. The bike became a part of me, it really did. I washed it for the second time this year. I washed it yesterday morning. It doesn't get a lot of love but it gets a lot of miles.

Interviewer: Here is another question about assembly and you kind of touched on it a little bit. Does the assembly location, play a role in your perception of craftsmanship? The way the bike is put together?

Gary: Well I believe that things break when they are new. A firm believer, when it is new that's when it will break. I don't buy extended warranties. I think things are going to break apart when they are new. With that said, if I were to purchase a brand new Asian built Triumph, I'd probably run through it with my wrenches and sockets. I probably would, I just would.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit more about the way that Triumph is manufactured today? Does it matter to you?

Gary: As long as the parts are manufactured in England, and I believed they are sourced, from original subcontracted parts makers, assembly makes sense to me, saves money; keeps dollar costs down on the motorcycle. If you look at the pound in Britain, I think we'd be paying a lot of money for a Triumph here in the United States if they hadn't cut



the cost somehow. So no, it doesn't bother me that they are assembled in Asia. I don't want one until I completely check it out.

Interviewer: So how does that customization come in to play when you consider the craftsmanship of Triumph?

Gary: Because I've been on a motorcycle, parts have backed out, bolts have backed out, parts have fallen off, things happen to motorcycles that seem to be put together in third world countries, communist countries. The workmanship isn't there, it's just a job.

Interviewer: When did you first here of Triumph motorcycles? How did you first here of Triumph?

Gary: Well, when Johnny rode in the *Wild One*. That would be my earliest recollection of the motorcycles. Just the fact that at 14 here in Vegas, we were able to get motorcycle licenses. The Honda era had just caught on '69, '70 and English bikes were really cheap. So I bought a few through those years. You could buy a bike for 75, 80 bucks and it was a damned good bike. A Honda would cost you \$600 for a new one. You could buy a lot of Triumphs, they were all over the place in the '60's.

Interviewer: Would the involvement of a Triumph salesman in the Brit Iron Rebels effect your perception of triumph? If there was a Triumph brand guy; that somehow directly worked for Triumph, would that effect your perception of Triumph?

Gary: There are groups of people like that do ride with the Brit Iron Rebels. They are superficially brand driven. If it doesn't say Triumph they won't buy it. I understand it, I do. Buying the brand and being close to someone that works for the brand will help my bike look aesthetically correct.

Interviewer: Would it effect your perception of Triumph if Triumph engaged in a wide advertising campaign? Magazine ads? Billboards? You name it. Would it change your perception?

Gary: I'd probably still ride a Triumph but I think I'd call those people that bought in to the advertising rookies. They are to me, they're just rookies, they are looking for a thrill, and Triumph would be following in the steps of Harley-Davidson. The price would go up because that campaign ad is going to be expensive. Price of the bike goes up and the better clientele comes in the ones that they can market to and could afford the purchase. Price is gona go up and all you get is a bunch of rookies. I've mentioned to you that I backed away from the BIR a little bit because of all the newer riders. I watched a guy almost fall off his motorcycle at a light the other day. I can't understand what he is doing on the road with those of us who have packed sleeping bags and traveled though out the west on these bikes. Years from now, I might say shame on me because he might have traveled maybe and he may have gotten the opportunity to do all the things that I've done throughout the years. As for now, they are all just rookies and they crack me up.

Interviewer: So you talked about *The Wild One* a little bit. How do you feel about the product placement of Triumph in Movies and TV shows?

Gary: They've done a good job slowly as of late. The café movement has really come on strong. The café race is back and as many of your friends and you and I know it came from racing from café to café during the duration of a song for kicks and often death. That's the stuff I get thrilled on, I'll take a ride around the airport and the backside of Seven Hills, I'll be doing 110 mph. The retro bike is back but I think it's more of a result of economics. What's old is new again. What's old is cool again.

Interviewer: Do you think Triumph communicates something about who you are?

Gary: It has to, because a lot of people say "nice bike" "I had one of those" I want one of those" and I have one of those and that feels good.

Interviewer: Do you think people view you differently because you choose Triumph over Harley-Davidson?

Gary: They must be very jealous because I have picked an independent brand, not a mainstream brand, although, Triumph is slowly becoming mainstream.

Interviewer: How so?

Gary: Advertising in movies, through their racing program. The Triumph triple does really well, the Daytona is a fast fucking bike. Triumph has brought a name worthy of being in a showroom and when you see all that they make and the value that you get compared to a Harley-Davidson, you might stop right there and buy that. The number \$23,000 always sticks in my head. If you want a nice Harley you better have \$23,000 that's what buys a nice Harley now. The newest Harley, it is a \$30,000 Harley, very few of them around town.

Interviewer: What about Indian Motorcycles? How does Indian compare to Triumph?

Gary: I think they've done a really nice job with the retro looking bikes but the price point isn't there. I was told in conversation, that it is an expensive bike.

Interviewer: How do you feel about other people who ride Triumph motorcycles?

Gary: There is an association. That word is important to me. If there is something we both like, we are instant friends. That tends to happen with a Triumph. Instant friends, absolutely. I've met a lot of people and become friends simply because I pull up to a gas station and they are riding a Triumph.

Interviewer: Do you have that same association with people who ride Harley-Davidsons? Or how do you feel about people who ride Harley-Davidsons?

Gary: There are so many of them that I don't know what walk of life they are going to be from. They sometimes want to portray the hard ass. I don't approach people like that. Harley-Davidsons are one of two types of guys. The hard core, bike goes in the living room every night and wealthy people that can afford them. I've never met any middle of the road Harley people unless he's grown up with Harley's and he's done well for himself professionally. The only time you meet any cool Harley people is when you meet a professional who has been riding a long time. You get the guy who know where all the meth labs are or the guy who is the Dr. who is writing all the prescriptions one of the two.

Interviewer: What about people who ride the sports bikes? The Yamahas? The Kawasaki?

Gary: They are exhilarating. They are death traps to me. Simply because they accelerate so quickly. They are by far the most dangerous motorcycle to ride. I read an article where if you take all the motorcycle accidents here in town, the highest percentage was sport bikes.

Interviewer: What does membership in the Brit Iron Rebels mean to you?

Gary: It used to mean brotherhood but I am afraid that with the introduction of more and more Triumph riders and the acceptance of the club to not be selective with new riders, the club for me is disappearing. I am a key member but the club is not as special, special as it used to be. I hate when things become political.

Interviewer: If a direct representative of Triumph engaged directly through social media with the Brit Iron Rebels, would it effect your perception of Triumph?

Gary: No, because, because he has all that Triumph paraphernalia we all want and to be that much closer to it feels alright.

## APPENDIX E

### Transcript of Interview with Chris

Interviewer: What do Triumph Motorcycles mean to you?

Chris: That's a big question. It means history. These bikes have a long history. They are the original bad boy. We got Harley beat by a year. Johnny in *The Wild One* rode a Triumph. Those who know that Triumph is the original rebel. Over all, it's the look. The look of a Triumph has stayed classic and consistent, original.

Interviewer: Do you know where Triumph is assembled?

Chris: I do, my bike is an older bike it's an '05 and I cherish my bike a little bit more for that but at the same time the new bikes run just as good if not better. You have to understand the technology that goes in to the racing team and innovation still happens in England and they carry it and pass it right along when they built and manufacture the bikes. It makes the bikes a little cheaper to be manufactured elsewhere. India, Thailand? Somewhere in that region and I like the way that it keeps the cost down. What's great about these bikes is that out of the box, you get a good bike at a good price where with a Norton or a Harley you're almost paying double for a new one and even more for replacements or parts. The design and concept still come from England.

Interviewer: What does Harley-Davidson represent to you?

Chris: Well, I originally started riding a Harley. I rode with a lot of the 1%'s and I just got tired of the drugs and Booze that went along with it, maybe not the broads. I originally wanted to be a part of that scene.

Interviewer: Do you prefer Triumph over other British Motorcycles?

Chris: For me it's the look. I grew up with the Harley's. There's something about the 19's on both wheels the stance of a Triumph. The first sportster was made to look like a British Bike. Triumph set the standard for style. I own a Norton, I never thought I would own one but there's something about the style of the Triumph that sets the standard.

Interviewer: How did you find out about Triumph?

Chris: Johnny on *The Wild One*. The original rebel.

Interviewer: Would the Involvement of a Triumph salesman in B. I.R effect your perception of Triumph?

Chris: No, there's some of them that ride with us and they are guys just like us. They love the bikes, just like we do. I think it's good that they ride with us it shows that they believe in what they are selling.

Interviewer: Would it matter to you if Triumph embarked on a wide advertising campaign?

Chris: No, I think the write people are drawn to Triumph for the write reason. Harley is everywhere, if they simply wanted to get a bike, they would go pick up a Harley. It is a certain type of person that would be attracted to a Triumph and I think that if they are planning to invest money in one they would look in to it and find out about the history on their own because that won't fit on an ad.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the product placement of Triumph in movies/TV?

Chris: Well, I think that the guys who are in charge of that stuff would know better than to just slap someone down on a Triumph to make them look cool. They won't let the bikes just be anywhere on TV.

Interviewer: Do you think Triumph communicates something about who you are?

Chris: Well I think so. I chose Triumph over Harley because I didn't want to be a part of that culture of being hard or tough. I just want to ride a bike and be able to fix it without the pressure or being associated with drugs and booze or being hassled by the cops.

Interviewer: Do you think people view you differently because you choose Triumph over Harley?

Chris: Yeah, I'm not some knuckle dragger. I look like a guy who is just looking for a ride.

Interviewer: What does membership in the B.I.R. mean to you?

Chris: What this is a bout is an ongoing comradery. You have it around a brand, it helps bring people together. I don't think that its necessarily something passed down but you get together with likeminded people and talk about bikes and fix problems drink a beer go to breakfast. When I first came to Las Vegas I had no desire to put a club together. I just wanted to ride my bike. I saw as I was riding a couple other ones here and there and I thought what it would take to get people together. I ran in to Bill at this shop and at the same time the Brit Iron Rebels came together in England so I found out about it online, it made sense and as long as it's not too complicated. If it gets too complicated I'm out. For me it's about the comradery not the club. If you look at other clubs they have patches, sox scarfs and miles and miles of t-shirts. Here we just want to ride and work on bikes. As long as I am running it, it will be like that. What's nice about B.I.R. is that they leave the clans to do what they want. They don't mandate on patches or colors or anything like that, we are not an MC we are a rider's club. I don't want to be part of a rigid organization. I just want to ride. Like I said, in Arizona or California if they want to wear scarves and patches good for them. Here, we just want to ride drink a beer hang out.

Interviewer: Do you use social media?

Chris: I do, I use it to organize information about the group. I don't mind it as long as you don't get too caught up in it, but I am little older so it doesn't matter to me. I get info about Triumph and Triumph events. I use it as a communication tool more than anything.

Interviewer: If a Triumph brand representative engaged in direct communication with the B.I.R. La Vegas Clan through social media would it effect your perception of Triumph?

Chris: No, because I can have a direct tie and response to someone who can get me an answer that I need. I still write letters to get answers and I get what I want but it's nice to be able to have that direct contact with someone who can get you an answer.

## APPENDIX F

### Transcript of Interview with Bill

Interviewer: What do Triumph Motorcycles Mean to you?

Bill: It's the oldest continuously operating brand of motorcycles on the planet. They have been the standard of the industry for years in terms of handling, styling, and performance. Particularly styling during the '50, '60's and '70's virtually every motorcycle built was a copy of the Bonneville made by Triumph and other motorcycles that Triumph made. It always has been the standard of the industry for English made motorcycles.

Interviewer: You kind of touched on it a little bit. Do you know where Triumph is manufactured now? Does it matter to you?

Bill: No, it doesn't matter.

Interviewer: Why not?

Bill: Well it is an English design. It is a continuation of the design of the English parallel twin engine that has been in design since the '30's and '40's. I don't care where it's assembled it's still an English motorcycle.

Interviewer: Why does the fact that it is an English motorcycle appeal to you?

Bill: I guess there is a certain group of people like us that have an affinity for things English. I drive a Triumph TR 6 automobile, I have two Triumph Motorcycles and I have an English Norton. I guess it's a spinoff of when I was a young man my dad owned 12 different versions of English cars. It's something that I have carried through.

Interviewer: What does Harley-Davidson represent to you?

Bill: A life-style, a culture. Harley-Davidson has made more money selling the culture through related items than they have selling the motorcycles. Shirts, hats, boots, jeans and they have done a good job at it. Creating a lifestyle, a culture that revolves around Harley-Davidson motorcycles. When you picture a Harley-Davidson rider in your mind, what do you see?

Interviewer: I think of an outlaw, Hell's Angels type of guy.

Bill: Exactly, they all look the same. Most of them have a ponytail or a beard. They all have a vest. They all have protective boot. They all look the same. They decided to become a part of the Harley culture. That's what Harleys represent to me, a culture. I wouldn't ride a Harley-Davidson, I wouldn't own one.

Interviewer: Why not? You don't like the culture?

Bill: They don't fit the style of motorcycle that I prefer.

Interviewer: Do you prefer Triumph over other British Motorcycles? I am referring to the new Norton motorcycles. There are some Royal Enfield motorcycles out there and I think they are bringing back Matchless motorcycles.

Bill: I ride a Triumph Motorcycle because they are attainable price wise. They ride forever. They are good value for the money. I can afford it. I can't afford a Norton. The base price on one of those is 15-18 (thousand) for a new one. A Bonneville is 10 (thousand) or less out the door. A Royal Enfield right now is a one cylinder 500 cc (cubic centimeters) bike that might run 60-65 miles per hour. That's not the style that I am looking for. I don't know when Matchless is launching. I know that they launched clothing but I don't know when the bikes will be out. Norton did the same. They partnered with Clark's shoes. I know the owner of Norton and he is a smart cookie. He's merchandised a line of clothing with the bike.

Interviewer: What do you think of the way that Triumph is manufactured?

Bill: John Bloor, spent an enormous amount of money developing the new version of the bike. My bike has 32,000 miles. Some of the other guys we ride with have 100,000 miles on their bike. The bottom line is the engineering of this motorcycle is far and away better than it ever was.

Interviewer: How does customization come in to play when you consider the way the bike is put together?

Bill: To me, no. To some of the guys it does. I like the classic styling.

Interviewer: How did you first find out about Triumph?

Bill: I bought my first one in 1979. We all rode them.

Interviewer: Would the involvement of a Triumph salesman in the B. I. R effect your perception of Triumph?

Bill: No, because if that person cared about the bikes or the club it might make it easier on us to get any new info or help with repairs.

Interviewer: Would it matter to you if Triumph embarked in a wide advertising campaign.

Bill: They already have to some extent. They are in a lot of the motorcycle magazine and in some other English publications. They've spent a lot of money.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the product placement of Triumph in movies and TV shows?



Bill: It makes me feel good because I'm part of that movement I guess. Bob Dylan rode one, and that is cool I guess.

Interviewer: Do you think Triumph communicates something about who you are?

Bill: I don't know how to answer that. Who I am is a guy who prefers English things.

Interviewer: Do you think people view you differently because you prefer Triumph over Harley-Davidson?

Bill: Yes, because I'm part of a different culture than the Harley guys. Triumph riders thumb their nose at Harley riders because Triumph is the original. We are the original cool guys.

Interviewer: How do you feel about other people who ride Triumph Motorcycles?

Bill: I view them favorably because we fit together. We are of the same breed.

Interviewer: What about sport bike riders? Yamahas? Hondas?

Bill: They are nice, I had a Yamaha, a Ducati but I sold them and bought a Triumph, it fits more with why I ride.

Interviewer: What does membership in B.I.R. mean to you?

Bill: It's a comradery, it transcends generations. It affords me the opportunity to get together with likeminded people. I get to eat, ride, drive, travel, and socialize with people who have a common thread. The common thread that runs through this group, there is a common bond with these motorcycles. We get together drink a beer and ride.

Interviewer: Do you use social media?

Bill: Not really but I like to check in on those groups online, those forums, everyday someone from New Zealand, Canada, Australia this country, someone logs on who has a problem with their bike and sometimes I can help or sometimes I can kind of see a common pattern that these motorcycles are displaying. I can get help if I am having a similar problem.

Interviewer: If a Triumph brand representative engaged in direct communication with the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan through social media would it affect your perception of Triumph?

Bill: No, because it shows a direct interest in the club and it is a resource that we can use for information on repairs.

## APPENDIX G

### Transcript of Interview with Tom Oil

Interviewer: What do Triumph Motorcycles mean to you?

Tom: These bikes represent over one hundred years of tradition. There are the Hinckley Triumphs, which were made in the Hinckley factory and the ones that were manufactured in Asia. Is it Thailand? Well wherever it is the new bikes are a continuation of that tradition of engineering. I'm an electrician and I tinker here and there with different things and I love my bike. I've spent a lot of time and a lot of money on it but being able to work on it makes me feel connected to that tradition of engineers and tinkerers. Triumph came together in 1897 it puts me in connection with my ancestors with those groups of people who were pushing the edge at the time. My father used to race British Motorcycles. Motorcycles are a test bed for all sorts of things, aviation, automobiles. Orville Write had a motorcycle brand of his own and he held the land speed record that stood for 30 years. He built a motorcycle built with an airplane engine in it. You got to understand that these bikes started off with a guy in a garage just tinkering with things cylinders, pistons, to get it to where it is now. The new bikes run pretty good. I love all the technology that goes in to them. Technology is always changing and developing. I like the electric start, the new bikes just keep running.

Interviewer: Does the assembly location matter to you?

Tom: No because it is a part of the evolution of the bikes. The engineering happened in England and the assembly happens by people. These bikes are made by people, they aren't made by robots. Anywhere you make it, you buy a bike made on a Monday you're going to have problems. Engineering is an interesting business. Everything that was done before brought us to this point here.

Interviewer: What does Harley- Davidson represent to you?

Tom: You got the guys with the vests and the booze and the long hair and that attitude. You never know with those guys cus a lot of the times you have the real tough guys or the rich lawyers who have the midlife crisis. I'm just a guy who likes to ride, I like to work on my bike. You got to have a hobby.

Interviewer: Do you prefer Triumph over other British motorcycles?

Tom: I have quite a few bikes. I have a Royal Enfield with quite a few vintage parts and brass fixtures that I had imported from India. I've spent a lot of hours on that bike and it's been pretty cheap that's my project, that's my ongoing project. But to answer your question, what I like about Triumph is the tradition in engineering. That appeals to a guy like me, cus I can work on it.

Interviewer: How did you find out about Triumph Motorcycles?

Tom: Steve McQueen. He rode a few of them. The Great Escape. You have to understand that in the 60's and 70's McQueen was the guy. Triumphs were everywhere and if it was good enough for him than that was cool for me.

Interviewer: Would the involvement of a Triumph salesman in B.I. R effect your perception of Triumph?

Tom: No, we have a few guys like that here and at the end of the day they are guys who just want to ride. They are never pushy. If we need something we go to them they don't come to us. If they were anything like that we'd boot them out. They'd be right out of here. Who wants to ride with any one like that. The guys we have are alright. They sit down have a beer and we talk about other stuff not just bikes.

Interviewer: Would it matter to you if Triumph embarked in a wide advertising campaign?

Tom: I don't pay attention to stuff like that. We look at who rides with us and who we don't want riding with us. Business is business, you have to sell bikes.

Interviewer: How do you feel about product placement of Triumph?

Tom: Its ok I guess. It's nice to see the bikes continue on. Not everyone will notice that but the guys that do if they want to get one good for them.

Interviewer: Do you think Triumph communicates something about who you are?

Tom: I don't know how to answer that. Does Triumph Communicate something about who I am? Well I communicate who I am. I'm obviously not choosing a Harley. You get Harley guys, I've been through those bikes but these bikes you know the history. You know the development and what made them decide to make the bike the way it was. What the trends were at the time. You get an inside on how the bikes were made. It takes you back in time a little bit. The development the engineering is a fascinating business.

Interviewer: Do you think people view you differently because you choose Triumph over Harley-Davidson?

Tom: Harley guys look the same and they are tough or pretend to be tough. I'm not that kind of guy. I hope they see me as a guy on a nice bike without the attitude or problem.

Interviewer: What does membership in B.I.R. mean to you?

Tom: It's a common thread of guys who appreciate the history. Especially in a group like this, we appreciate the history of these bikes and we can help each other out with questions on how to fix them or other problems. Some of the associations came from needing to come together because some of the bikes were unreliable and you needed to

talk to someone who know how to fix this or fix that, modify that or have this part. So you became a part of an association of people that helped you keep the damn thing running.

Interviewer: Do you use social media?

Tom: Well it's not for me. I don't have time. What brought people together at first in groups like this was because the bikes were running bad they turned to the internet for helps and tips. In that sense I don't mind it I can use it as a resource. I certainly have used it to get some of the parts for my bikes.

Interviewer: If a Triumph representative engaged in direct communication with the B.I. R through social media would it affect your perception of triumph?

Tom: No, because I can ignore him if it is not relevant to my projects or if I have a question I can go right to him. I have my sources and it's nice that I can reach them online when I need to and leave them alone when I don't. It's a good thing to be in touch.

## APPENDIX H

### Transcript of Interview with Ace

Interviewer: What do Triumph Motorcycles mean to you?

Ace: To me Triumph is original. They were the first bikes to look bad (good). These guys started making bikes back in the day when guys were strapping on whatever contraption they came up with in their garages to go farther and faster. They have been a leader in development and style. Almost every bike that came out in the 60's and 70's was a copy of the T120. The style has not changed and there is something classic that appeals to me in the clean and simple design that has carried out throughout the years.

Interviewer: Do you know where Triumph is manufactured.

Ace: Well the new ones are built in Asia, somewhere. I have both a vintage Triumph Bonneville and a new Triumph and I love them both. I ride both of them on different days. My T120 I take out on special occasions or when I'm having a bad day. I like to work on that bike a lot. I put a lot of love in that bike and it's a part of me, I've grown with that bike as a person because it has taken a lot of patience and nurturing. It makes me feel good. My 2011 bike that's my daily driver; that is my long haul, long drive bike. It's dependable, and I have never experienced a problem with it that I can't fix, or that is too expensive to fix. That's another thing I love about Triumph when it comes to maintenance and parts it won't cost you a month's salary to fix. That's important especially for me since I drive mine to and from work a lot. I can't spend a month's salary to fix the parts like with a Harley, or a performance bike. It's going to cost you quite a bit and some time to find the parts to get the bike fixed.

Interviewer: Does the manufacturing location matter to you?

Ace: No, it does not because it keeps the bike and repairs more affordable. The fact that the bike is more affordable is a part of the history and tradition of the bikes. Back after the war (WW2) it was the only thing that guys that worked in the factories and in rebuilding could afford to get to work. Then their kids got a hold of them and supe-ed them up a little bit. I've never had a problem that I can't fix with the new bikes. You got to understand John Bloor is a smart guy and he's not going to put out an inferior product because it will cost him more money in the end. I think he loves the tradition and the English pride that comes with the Triumph name. There was a history there that he rescued and continued. All the engineering and development still happens in England, they just put it together in Asia. It's a bigger world now and we got to make room for everybody else, it makes them money and it keeps the bike at a lower cost. It gives a job to a guy over there and some guy here on some doc gets to have a job to, I just want to be able to ride my bike.

Interviewer: What does Harley-Davidson represent to you?

Ace: Well, Harley used to be the bike for the bad ass. Now it seems that you can look like a bad ass or feel like a bad ass if you can afford to buy the bike. The bikes are expensive, the repairs are expensive. I don't even want to talk about customizing it because that's even more expensive and in the end everybody and almost every bike ends up looking the same. You got the guy with the pony tail and vest and the ape handle bars and he's probably never driven that thing farther than Barstow he probably won't go anywhere near Laughlin for fear of running in to the real bad asses. But, he rides his bike with his buddies and they'll put on the vest and patches. There's nothing wrong with that but most of the time people who ride Harleys just want to look like bad asses.

Interviewer: Do you prefer Triumph over other British Motorcycles?

Ace: I'd like to get my hands on a new Norton they just are so expensive. They are fast and they are mean but Triumph has a place in my heart because I can just ride it without having someone try to race me, most of the time they just say hey nice bike. The Royal Enfields are nice they just don't have the power that they used to have they are a single cylinder bike and it might meet someone's needs but I like that my Triumph has more power.

Interviewer: How did you find out about Triumph motorcycles?

Ace: I had seen a guy riding a really nice bike one day at the gas station. He didn't really look like one of these, bad ass Harley guys so I asked him about his bike and he told me it was a Triumph. I kind of had an itch to get one but I didn't want to get a Harley because of all the bad asses and I'm not really one of these Kawasaki ninja fast and the furious guys. Not that there is anything wrong with Japanese bikes. I have seen some really nice Honda café's and there is the Japanese Bosozoku culture, which in a lot of ways came out around the same time as café racer culture in England. I guess kids just want to piss off their parents and ride their bikes anywhere you go.

Interviewer: Would the involvement of a Triumph salesman in B.I.R. effect your perception of Triumph?

Ace: No, there is a guy like that with us and he is the same as us. Anytime some ones says nice bike, we tell them go see him over at Liberty bikes. He's just a guy who rides the bikes, same as us.

Interviewer: Would it matter to you if Triumph embarked on a wide advertising campaign?

Ace: I kind of get it, you got to sell bikes but at the same time these bikes aren't for everyone. I like feeling a little bit different and independent because I don't ride a Harley and everybody else does. I like to be a little bit different and if they advertised a lot it would change my perception. The bikes sell themselves, I didn't look at an ad I just saw a Bonneville and it drew me in on its own.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the product placement of Triumph in movies/TV shows?

Ace: It's cool to see a cool Triumph every once in a while and you don't see them everywhere you kind of have to keep your eyes open for one. When I see them it's like they are trying to make the person in the show look cool if he is riding one. I think that the people who know what it is will appreciate it, those who don't will just think it's a Harley.

Interviewer: Do you think Triumph communicates something about who you are?

Ace: I think it says that I am a little bit different. I am a little bit dangerous but I am not a bad ass with a vest and Ape Bars. It says that I am in to the classics, but I like to have a thrill now and again.

Interviewer: Do you think people view you differently because you choose Triumph over Harley-Davidson?

Ace: Yeah, this guy's not gonna try to punch me or sell me drugs. He just enjoys riding his motorcycle.

Interviewer: How do you feel about people who ride Triumph motorcycles?

Ace: Most of the time Triumph riders are approachable, someone you can have a conversation with and drink a beer because you have that in common.

Interviewer: How do you feel about people that ride Harley-Davidson?

Ace: I don't really know any guys that do. Most of the time a Harley rider won't even look at you when you're riding a Triumph. "You're not a bad ass, get yourself some Ape Bars and then you can talk to me," kind of a thing. And I'm like, ok guy see you next week, your kid and my kid are both in the same daycare."

Interviewer: How do you feel about people that ride Yamaha Motorcycles?

Ace: Well the sport bike guys are thrill seekers. Not that I am not, but those guys must need an adrenalin rush often. Every time you read about a motorcycle accident here in Vegas it's someone on a fast bike because those guys want to go fast and don't really know how to control the bike or show off and unfortunately it causes really serious accidents.

Interviewer: What does membership in the B.I.R. mean to you?

Ace: It's a comradery brought together by our shared interest in these bikes but it goes deeper than that because I can get together with these guys to drink a beer and relax. We talk about these bikes but we also hang and talk about, trouble with the kids, just guy stuff but we come together because of these bikes.

Interviewer: Do you use social media?

Ace: I'm on Facebook, I don't tweet and I'm not on any of the other ones. I don't have much time and a lot of the time people just show you what they want you to see and that's cool. It's nice to keep in touch but you can't get too deep in to that.

Interviewer: If a Triumph brand representative engaged in direct communication with the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan through social media would it effect your perception of Triumph?

Ace: If he was being pushy yeah, but I could just ignore his ass. There are some guys that work for Triumph around B.I.R. and they are just like the rest of the guys here. It's nice when you can reach out to someone about questions but you can always ignore them if they seem pushy or like they only care about selling you stuff and not really being a part of the conversation.



## APPENDIX I

### Transcript of Interview with Nick

Interviewer: What do Triumph Motorcycles mean to you?

Nick: They are beautiful bikes with a history in racing and performance.

Interviewer: Is the history important to you?

Nick: For over 100 years Triumph has made machines that outperform or outclass other motorcycles. For a while the Japanese bikes were outperforming every other motorcycle out there. Recently Triumph has made a comeback in the racing circuit. If nothing else the bikes are beautiful to look at. They have a classic look that has been copied since motorcycles became popular.

Interviewer: Do you know where Triumph is manufactured?

Nick: Yes, I have one of the newer bikes and it was assembled in Asia but I have no complaints about that. The bike has always performed the way that I wanted it to perform. Like some of the other guys have said before, the engineering and inventing still happens in England for the racing team. When they come up with something new they figure out how to mass produce it and incorporate it in to the Bonneville and the Thruxtons.

Interviewer: Does the manufacturing location matter to you?

Nick: No, I have never had a problem with my bike. I have modified my bike to make it perform faster. These bikes have remained popular because they are made well at a good price and look good.

Interviewer: What does Harley-Davidson represent to you?

Nick: That's where I was about to go next. Harleys are nice bikes but everyone has one. I don't want to be like the next guy. I don't want to blend in. I want the performance of a sport bike but the tradition of a company that has been around. Triumphs are in some ways a gentleman's bikes where Harleys are for tough guys. I'm not looking to ride in to the sunset like an outlaw. I'm not an outlaw, I'm a guy who has a job, a mortgage and a family and I want to do my thing when I get a chance to. I want to be able to go in to the garage and mess around with my bike. I want to take a quick trip by myself I can jump on and ride.

Interviewer: Do you prefer Triumph over other British Motorcycles?

Nick: I love my Triumph. I ride a Thruxton I am not done with it, making it look the way I want it to look. The great thing about Triumph is that I can afford it. I can fix it, I can customize it and it won't cost me a whole lot. I'd love to ride a Norton but it's just too

expensive. I know Ducati just released the new Scrambler, which in a lot of ways looks like a Triumph Scrambler. Maybe one day when I am a little bit more, established I can own one or two different bikes. I believe Bill has a Norton if you want to talk to him.

Interviewer: How did you find out about Triumph motorcycles?

Nick: I started looking online for bikes. I didn't want a Harley because I'm not one of those guys, I had a couple of buddies who ride Yamahas but I didn't want something like that. I wanted something different I saw a Thruxton and I started looking in to the history and style of Triumph and it fit the bill.

Interviewer: Would the involvement of a Triumph salesman in B.I.R. effect your perception of Triumph?

Nick: No, not really. The people who we ride with are allowed in to the club because they have an interest in the style and performance of theses bikes. We wouldn't let anyone in who only cared about selling stuff. We all have them anyway, what is he gonna sell?

Interviewer: Would it matter to you if Triumph embarked on a wide advertising campaign?

Nick: I believe they already do. I've seen a couple of ads in a few magazines but I think that the right people are drawn to them. Everyone wants a Harley. I call them the midlife crisis bikes. They want to feel like they don't have one foot in the grave yet so they get a bike to feel alive again.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the product placement of Triumph in movies/TV shows?

Nick: I think it's something that has worked well for them. Everyone here talks about Brando in the *Wild Ones*.

Interviewer: Do you think Triumph communicates something about who you are?

Nick: Yes, I am different. I'm not a mainstream guy going with the herd.

Interviewer: Do you think people view you differently because you choose Triumph over Harley-Davidson?

Nick: People always compliment me on my bike. A lot of the times they don't know what it is because it doesn't look like all the other ones.

Interviewer: How do you feel about people who ride Triumph motorcycles?

Nick: I feel a connection to them because we choose something out of the mainstream. I feel like I can say, hey nice bike. With the Harley guys you never know if they will

acknowledge you, don't know if that is because they want to feel like tough guys or if their brains are rattled from their loud mufflers.

Interviewer: How do you feel about people that ride Yamaha Motorcycles?

Nick: The sport bikes are nice. I never got in to that because I began to notice that a lot of the time the fatalities here in Nevada were associated with the sport bike riders. It might be that those guys just want to ride fast and it's not necessarily the company's fault but I don't want to feel like when I pull up next to another guy in a Yamaha or a Hyabusa he wants to race me. I just want to go for a ride. Do I ride fast? Sometimes, but when I'm alone on an empty road, not down the freeway when people are trying to get to work.

Interviewer: What does membership in the B.I.R. mean to you?

Nick: It's nice to have a group of friends that I can turn to. We go on rides together and we talk about the history of these bikes, developments. We share a bond with these bikes and how they maintain them through the years. Some of these guys have done a really nice job restoring their bikes and I'd like to do that someday.

Interviewer: Do you use social media?

Nick: Everyone does now a days. Can't get away from it.

Interviewer: If a Triumph brand representative engaged in direct communication with the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan through social media would it effect your perception of Triumph?

Nick: No, I think it shows an interest in the group. I like information about the new bikes that come out. If I don't like them I can ignore them on my feed.

## APPENDIX J

### Transcript of Interview with Matey

Interviewer: What do Triumph Motorcycles Mean to you?

Matey: These motorcycles have a pedigree. There is a history of development and technological engineering that have made Triumph as great as it is. It is one of the oldest companies of motorcycles still in production.

Interviewer: Is that important to you?

Matey: I like to think so. I like knowing that because this company has lasted for so long that they build a quality product that has stood the test of time. I know they had trouble there for a bit but they got it back on track and they are making bikes better than they have ever made them at a price that is still affordable compared to other motorcycles.

Interviewer: Do you know where Triumph is manufactured?

Matey: I do but that doesn't bother me. I know that the people who are in charge of developing the technology are top guys who are interested in making a good bike. I know that it's probably cheaper to make them in India and ship them here because I believe the U.S is and always was the biggest market for these bikes since the 1960's. I have a newer bike and I love it. These guys will tell you that they run the best they have ever run. You can get a brand new Bonneville for less than \$10,000 where a new Harley will cost you more than that and it won't have all the bells and whistles you will still lose your bike in the parking lot. When I'm in the store and I look out I can always tell which one bike is. There it is, it's right there. "Where's your Harley? It's the one over there, that's chopped up" Which one there are five of them over there. So to answer your question no it doesn't bother me that it is made in India. It's still a Triumph, it runs great and it is still a part of that tradition of cool, reliable motorcycles.

Interviewer: What does Harley-Davidson mean to you?

Matey: It's a main stream bike. It's the bike that everyone rides and everyone wants because you want to rebel. You're having a midlife crisis and you want to feel like a rebel so you buy a big bad Harley and suddenly you're a tough guy. It really doesn't matter, you can't buy cool, you got to be cool.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Matey: Well just because you own the bike it doesn't mean your cool. Just like with us. Yeah you can ride with us if you have a Triumph or a British bike but you have to be able to keep up, fix it. If it breaks down on you, with us, we can help you fix it but you have to ride with us, hang out have a beer. We'll teach you all about them. There are guys here who can tell you what bikes from what year have carburation and fuel injection, the cubic

engine size and when they changed. You don't need to know all that but at least learn how to change your own oil. That's how you keep your bike on the road and how these bikes have stayed alive. One guy knowing how to fix something and helping the other guy so he can keep it on the road.

Interview: Do you prefer Triumph over other British motorcycles?

Matey: Well this group is about riding British motorcycles but if you notice most of us ride or own at least one Triumph. That is because Triumph has been copied by every motorcycle company since the 50's. When the Japanese bikes took over in the 70's and 80's they looked like T100's until they took over on the racing circuit and everyone started copying what they were doing. Then in the early 2000's John Bloor brought back the Bonneville and now you have the Norton, and even Ducati is making a classic scrambler. Moto Guzzi has an out of the box café racer but once again, it all starts with Triumph because Triumph has that classic style that has not changed too much in terms of looks since the 50's and everyone likes that.

Interviewer: How did you find out about Triumph Motorcycles?

Matey: When I was younger all the older kids rode them. So I remember being around them as a kid as I got older and was able to acquire one, I did.

Interviewer: Would the involvement of a Triumph salesman in B.I.R. effect your perception of Triumph?

Matey: No, as long as they genuinely cared about their bikes and about the group. If they were being pushy they wouldn't be around for long. Most of us just want to ride our bikes and grab a beer we don't have time for someone trying to talk about things you're not interested in. The only reason why I'm talking to you is because you seem to have an interest in the bikes. If I thought you were up to something I wouldn't give you the time of day.

Interviewer: Would it matter to you if Triumph embarked in a wide advertising campaign?

Matey: I don't think everyone wants the same thing. If we did, we'd all dress the same, look the same ride the same bike already, or be married to brunettes. I think here in America, Harley will always be the top dog. Those who want a good bike for a good price will find it.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the product placement of Triumph in movies/ TV shows?

Matey: Brando rode one, Mc Queen, you can find them on TV if you look. It's not bad. You can always pick out who the real guys are though and the guys who just get paid to stand next to one.

Interviewer: Do you think Triumph communicates something about who you are?

Matey: I think this is one of the questions that's supposed to make me uncomfortable. I am a guy who likes to not be like everyone else but has a love for things that last. It is very rare that things last. Triumph has lasted through hard times, just like me. It's a smart choice, a choice not to be like the Harley guys, different, smarter.

Interviewer: Do you think people view you differently because you choose Triumph over Harley- Davidson?

Matey: Yes, I'm not riding up in a big beard and big bike. People come up to me and ask me about my bike. I'm approachable, I'm like them (other people) except I ride a nice bike.

Interviewer: How do you feel about people who ride Triumph motorcycles?

Matey: I see a few of them around. I have always felt like I can always ask them a question about their bike if it looks nice. We always nod to each other at a light if I don't know the guy. A Harley, won't even look in your direction.

Interviewer: How do you feel about people who ride sport bikes?

Matey: Those guys always drive off. They will look at you rev up and take off. Like, "My bike is faster than yours". Good for you, I hope they don't have to scrape you off the pavement after you take off doing over 100.

Interviewer: What does membership in the B.I.R. mean to you?

Matey: They are good guys. I can go ride with them any time. Good people to know if I have questions about my bike.

Interviewer: Do you use social media?

Matey: Yes, I do. I don't have much to share or that I want to share. If you know me you'll probably see me most of the time any fun stuff I do is with these guys any way.

Interviewer: If a Triumph brand representative engaged in direct communication with the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan through social media would it effect your perception of Triumph?

Matey: There are guys like that here already. It doesn't because the guys that we let in or hang with us we get to know. It wouldn't affect me.

## APPENDIX K

### Transcript of Interview with T.T.

Interviewer: What do Triumph Motorcycles Mean to you?

T.T.: There is a tradition, of engineering and styling.

Interviewer: Is that important to you?

T.T.: It shows that something about these bikes has lasted through the decades.

Interviewer: Do you know where Triumph is manufactured?

T.T.: I know that they are no longer made in England if that's what you are referring to. I don't really perceive a decline in the quality of the bikes though because the tradition of engineering is still there in the fact that they continue to develop new things in England. The racing bikes are still based out of England and the bikes run well. I've never had a problem with mine.

Interviewer: What does Harley-Davidson mean to you?

T.T.: I have been riding for a little while, not as long as some of these guys but when I first went to get a bike I looked at Harley and the sales guy just kept pitching me as if I had anger management issues or like I wanted to ride off like an outlaw and I wasn't in to that. Those bikes are expensive even though they try to pitch you as if you can be monsters who will kidnap a baby and sell it for meth in the middle of the night. I wanted a cool bike and I kept looking at stuff on the internet and I ran across a photo of Steve McQueen on a Triumph and I remember watching movies that guy was in with my dad. I remembered my dad. I thought it was a cool bike. Looked it up on the internet picked one up and been riding it ever since.

Interviewer: Do you prefer Triumph over other British motorcycles?

T.T.: I haven't been riding for that long. I've seen some of the bikes that these guys have and they are nice and I am getting to know a little bit more about British bikes in general. It's just cool to have a beer with these guys and learn about things I can do to my bike. Things these guys have done to theirs and places where I can get parts for my bike.

Interviewer: How did you find out about Triumph Motorcycles?

T.T.: On the internet, comparison shopping and you know reminiscing about watching movies with my dad, just the association Triumph has with Steve McQueen. That's the kind of guy you can pop a brewski with and chill out. That would be cool.

Interviewer: Would the involvement of a Triumph salesman in B.I.R. effect your perception of Triumph?

T.T.: Not at all, I bought a bike over at Freedom and that guy rides with us he's cool. I can always ask him about stuff and he's not pushy. He encouraged me to learn how to change the bike oil myself. I watched them do it.

Interviewer: Would it matter to you if Triumph embarked in a wide advertising campaign?

T.T.: Well it would suck if everyone started to ride a Triumph. I feel like I'm a bit independent and not mainstream but this is America and everyone wants a Harley so it's nice to be out of the box.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the product placement of Triumph in movies/ TV shows?

T.T.: Well that's where I saw my first Triumph so it's not so bad. I hope the marketing guys are smart enough to not let someone like Miley Cyrus sit on one. It be nice to see her in nothing but a Triumph T-shirt though.

Interviewer: Do you think Triumph communicates something about who you are?

T.T.: Yeah, I'm a bit old school and Indy I'm not a typical biker with a chain wallet and a bad attitude.

Interviewer: Do you think people view you differently because you choose Triumph over Harley- Davidson?

T.T.: Yes, they aren't afraid I'm going to steal their baby in the middle of the night like in that Nicolas Cage movie, Raising Arizona. I hope they say, that guy has a nice bike and some blond girl asks if she can ride on the back of it.

Interviewer: How do you feel about people who ride Triumph motorcycles?

T.T.: Well I met these guys when I was riding my bike. They looked like nice people I can talk to. I started riding with them and it's been fun since.

Interviewer: How do you feel about people who ride sport bikes?

T.T.: Those things are dangerous there's no need to do 160 on the 15 during rush hour. I don't want that helmet with the faux hawk on it.

Interviewer: What does membership in the B.I.R. mean to you?

T.T.: It's cool to drink a beer with these guys and ride. My other friends don't ride so it's cool that I can get together with these guys and drink a beer and ride. They have taught me a lot about fixing the bikes and we talk about life in general.



Interviewer: Do you use social media?

T.T.: Yeah, Facebook, I don't tweet as much as I used to I Instagram. No, Snapchat though it's a bit douche-y still for me. It's useless.

Interviewer: If a Triumph brand representative engaged in direct communication with the B.I.R. Las Vegas Clan through social media would it effect your perception of Triumph?

T.T.: No, like I said there's a guy that I talk to and it's nice that I can turn to them instead of dialing a number or writing an email. I can just hit them up and I can get an answer. It shows a connection, every one's doing it why not, as long as we all don't go jump off cliffs I guess.

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