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"Communicating Adventure"
A Semiotic Investigation of the UK Adventure Subculture of Motorcycling Consumption

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification at this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Abstract

Changing cultural trends and increasing pressures and constraints on everyday life have led to a proliferation in the uptake of adventure pursuits in Western society. People are increasingly drawn to involvement in subcultures of high-risk extremity and adventure, and manufacturers, marketers and the media are commonly reflecting a discourse that 'commodifies' adventure experience in their wider cultural products and brands. This growth in the consumption of adventure has created an opportunity, and a necessity, for researchers, academics and practitioners alike to become involved in the development of adventure-leisure research and theory.

This study takes the UK motorcycling subculture of adventure consumption as a unit of analysis, and employs a 'holistic' cultural approach to investigate meaningful consumption processes within, and relative to it. Specifically, it focuses on the role of consumers in contributing to the cultural world of motorcycling adventure consumption as well as the significance of manufacturers, service suppliers and marketers in producing and conveying it.

This is achieved through employment of an 'interpretive semiology' research philosophy, in which a number of pioneering semiotic and narrative techniques are used and developed, to identify the key communication codes and myths that drive the construction and movement of meaning within, and relative to this consumption subculture.

An 'outside in' approach is employed to understand the subculture from a wide cross-section of related discourse, and this is combined with an 'inside-out' approach, which focuses on the motorcyclist consumer psyche, on consumer involvement in motorcycling activity and use of signifying props, spaces and stories for the construction and signification of meaningful motorcyclist self-identity. Also this approach examines the role of manufacturers, service suppliers and marketers in constructing and signifying brands that purvey cultural messages and construct categories of motorcycling subculture.

The results highlight that although UK motorcycling adventure subculture is enshrined with a very rich cultural heritage, it is dynamic in nature, and cultural changes can be identified by analysis of key cultural communication codes and myths. These codes and myths are influenced, and driven, by an interrelationship that exists between consumers, manufacturers, service suppliers, marketers and wider popular cultural discourse and media. They all exist in the same culturally constituted world and meaning is generated and signified through common market places and market stimuli.

Overall, this study provides a contribution to adventure-leisure and interpretive, cultural consumer behaviour research and it employs and develops pioneering semiotic and narrative methodologies. It demonstrates how the field of semiotics, with rich theoretical and sometimes complicated underpinnings, can be applied in this context to achieve significant theoretical and practical implications.

Acknowledgments

In the Name of God, the most beneficent and most merciful…

Firstly I would like to thank Professor Norman Marr, my Director of Studies through the largest duration of this study, for his continuous emotional and technical support. Particularly, his experience and knowledge of PhD requirements and formatting detail has been of great benefit to me.

I would like to pay huge tribute to Geoff Crowther, my supervisor, for his unremitting encouragement, patience and subject specific knowledge and expertise. I have thoroughly enjoyed our stimulating discussions, and his passion for involvement in motorcycle and adventure quests always drives me to complete the investigation with maximum theoretical and practical implications for the industry. I am looking forward to working with him on further research and publications in the future.

I would like to thank all company and consumer respondents in the study. I was particularly encouraged by company respondents who showed great interest in the nature and practical outcomes of the investigation. Motorcyclist consumer respondents, as always, were highly welcoming, enthusiastic and motivated to narrate their motorcycle related experiences.

Indebted thanks to my husband Dr. Ehsan Ghurbal. Without his continuous patience, encouragement and emotional support, the completion of this study would not have been possible. We have hopes and dreams together, and with God willing, we will always strive to achieve them. Also, to my son Ali who allowed 'Mama' to leave him to study at every possible opportunity!

Finally, I would like to show my ultimate thanks and appreciation to my parents, John and Angela Smith, whose encouragement and support throughout my life drives me to achieve to the best of my ability. Thank you dad for your 'precise' proof reading, and thank you both for always believing in me and being proud of me.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

"... Ok, you must talk to a million people that go 'yeah I'm an adrenaline junkie, I got balls this big,' but at the end of they day, guys and girls do it for the same reasons, and it is an adventure."

(Consumer interviewee, current study)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces and sets the scene for the current investigation. It begins by providing background information and identifying the key cultural and conceptual areas that have driven the need for the study. It continues by providing a conceptual framework model for the study and stating the aim and objectives. Finally, the format of the thesis is clearly outlined.

1.2 Background and Rationale for the Study

The last twenty years have seen a profound increase in the uptake of adventure leisure pursuits in Western popular culture. In a bid to escape the fetters put on them by the constraints of everyday life, and in a soul-searching quest for meaningful personal identity, people increasingly embark upon dangerous, high-risk adventure activities. Activities such as rock climbing, mountaineering, sky-diving, snowboarding and motorcycling, to name but a few, now occupy key places amongst the leisure pursuits of the young, or the young at heart (Palmer, 2002). The search for and collection of adventurous, novel and exciting encounters into one's self-biography is currently expanding into an experience revolution. This growth has created both an opportunity, and a necessity, for researchers, academics and practitioners alike to become involved with the development of adventure-leisure research and theory (Mitchell, 1983; Ewert, 1985, 1987, 1989; Ewert and Hollenhorst, 1989; Lyng, 1990; Arnould and Price, 1993; Celsi et al, 1993; Holyfield, 1999; Palmer, 2002)

The cultural trend towards increased engagement in specialist cultures of adventure and extremity has certainly been picked up by the non-specialised, wider-cultural media; where discourse reflects images of increasingly 'cool' and sought-after high-risk, extreme sports. Manufacturers/marketers are more commonly employing 'insider' themes for the construction and signification of brands that aim to 'commodify' adventure experience (Palmer, 2002). Ownership and use of these brands allows consumers to buy into, and signify a self-identity that represents membership of extreme, adventure cultures.

Mainstream brands of sunglasses, soft drinks, watches, banking services, alcoholic beverages, clothing and cars are built on a discourse of 'on the edge', adventure behaviour. If one considers the recent proliferation of the sports-utility vehicle (4x4 car) market in the UK, this is a key example. Brands such as the Nissan 'X-Trail', the Land Rover 'Discovery' and the Toyota 'Land Cruiser' are built with a personality of off-road, sporting adventure, although in reality, they are predominantly used for on-road, urban driving. Rinehart (1998) notes that in today's popular culture, promoting images of 'danger' have a high cool factor and that the image of risk-taking is increasingly becoming mainstream.

Recognising these changing cultural trends and the increasing significance of adventure in modern society, opportunity exists to carry out a cultural study that focuses on adventure and meaningful consumption processes. Particularly insightful to the conception of this study is work by Penaloza and Gilly (1999), and Alexander (2000) who highlight a strong interrelatedness that exists between brands, brand communications, culture and the consumer.

When considering culture, Penaloza and Gilly (1999) emphasise that both marketers and consumers belong to the culturally constituted world, and that an interrelationship exists between them through marketplaces and market stimuli. Furthermore, Alexander (2000) claims that popular culture plays a highly influencing role in constructing the consumer, the brand and the company that owns the brand, and that brand communications (all elements of that same popular culture) also play their part in constructing the consumer.

Whereas many consumer research studies focus primarily on consumers and consumption, this study aims to take a 'holistic cultural' approach, that not only includes in it the role of

consumers in contributing to the cultural world, but also the highly significant role of manufacturers/marketers in producing and conveying it. This is made possible by focusing the study on a given sub-group of society, or 'subculture of consumption,' which can be treated holistically as an analytic category to understand the cultural dimensions of both consumer and market behaviour.

As noted in insightful work by Schouten and McAlexander (1995, p. 43) a subculture of consumption is "a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity." Subcultures carry their own common characteristics with unique cultural components such as shared codes of behaviour, dress and language, and common values and ideology. Schouten and McAlexander (1995) note that as an analytic category, the subculture of consumption solves nagging problems inherent in the use of other, a priori, categorisations for the understanding of consumption patterns. They conclude their influential ethnographic study, which focuses on the American Harley Davidson motorcycling subculture of consumption, by highlighting the importance of further study for understanding subcultures of consumption.

The market chosen for investigation in this study is the UK motorcycle market, specifically, the UK adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption. This provides a broader framework for analysis than the work of Schouten and McAlexander (1995), and a UK relevant study, which is particularly pertinent, given current trends in the UK motorcycle market which, with a total value in retail sales of £667 million (April 2006 - Mintel), is seeing an explosion in growth of adventure-sports motorcycle brands. Also it is influenced by wider popular cultural trends towards increasing involvement in adventure subcultures, and specifically, increasingly positive public attitudes towards motorcycling in the UK (Motorcycle Industry Association – MCIA). The adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption provides a particularly interesting and rewarding focus for a cultural investigation due to the rich cultural heritage on which it exists.

To understand the construction, signification and movement of cultural meaning within, and relative to the adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption, this study recognises the potential of *semiotic* principles, philosophy and methodological techniques. Whilst a wide

range of consumer behaviour material exists that pays passing tribute to the term 'semiotics', and recognises the importance of symbolic consumption, very few studies (noted by Mick, 1986; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1993, and more recently Lawes, 2002) actually carry out detailed and systematic inquiry into meaningful consumption processes. Contributions made, which are insightful to this study are from Mick, 1986, and Holbrook and Hirschman, 1993. Notably, with regard to semiotics and consumer research, Mick encourages consumer researchers to investigate and fulfil the promising contribution that semiotics is 'poised' to make.

To summarise, in a popular culture where engagement with extreme, high-risk adventure activities, or products/services that 'commodify' adventure experience, is increasingly sought, opportunity exists to carry out a semiotic investigation that focuses on meaningful cultural consumption processes within, and relative to the UK adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption. Emanating from rich theoretical underpinnings, it is envisaged that a pioneering, developmental methodology will be constructed and applied, with significant theoretical and practical outcomes/implications.

1.2.1 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework model that identifies and illustrates the key conceptual areas of the investigation, and the links and relationships between them is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework Model
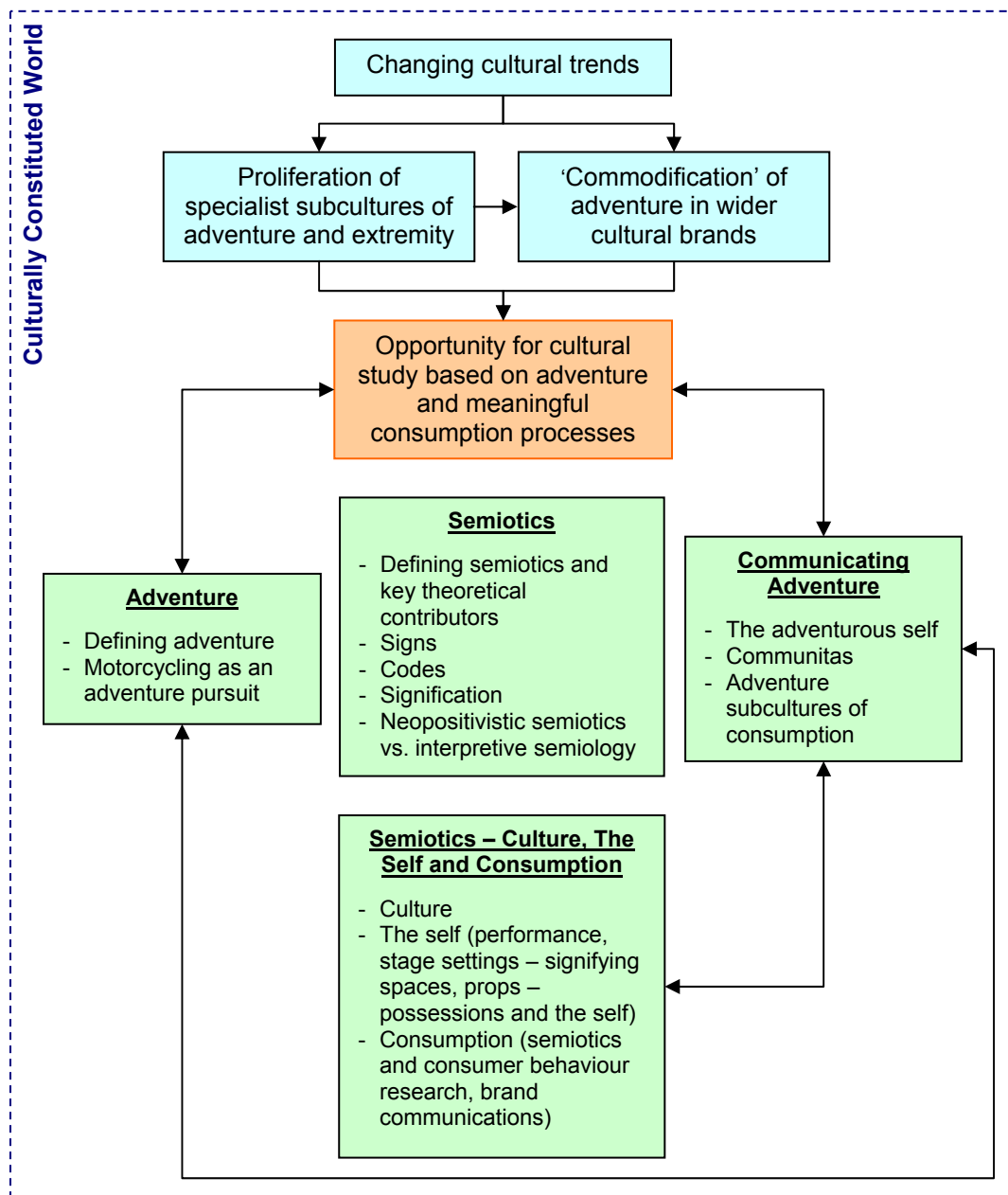
1.3 Aim

To carry out a semiotic investigation to explore the creation, signification and movement of cultural meaning relative to the UK adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption.

1.4   Objectives

Objective 1 -   To identify the key myths/communication codes that drive the construction, signification and movement of meaning relative to the adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption.

Objective 2 -   To explore the motorcyclist consumer psyche, specifically focusing on consumer relationships with, and use of signifying props, spaces, and stories for the construction and signification of meaningful subcultural 'motorcyclist' self-identity

Objective 3 -   To investigate the role/significance of motorcycle related manufacturers, service suppliers and marketers in constructing and signifying brands that purvey cultural messages and construct categories of motorcycling subculture.

1.5   Format of the Thesis

The thesis begins with a literature review which explores and critiques the key conceptual areas relevant to the study; this encompasses chapters two to five of the thesis. Chapter two introduces the concept of adventure, identifies motorcycling as an adventurous pursuit and provides a general overview of trends in the UK motorcycle market.   Chapter three introduces the concept of semiotics and provides a depth overview and critique of semiotic theory.   Chapter four links semiotic theory with key areas which form the focus of the investigation; namely culture, the self and consumption.   Chapter five is of significant importance to the investigation.   Entitled 'Communicating Adventure,' it stems from conceptual areas introduced previously and focuses on literature surrounding the adventurous self and adventure subcultures of consumption.

Chapter six constitutes the methodology chapter. Here the philosophical underpinnings of the investigation are provided along with a description of the emergent primary data collection techniques. The data analysis strategy employed is also highlighted. Chapters' seven to nine constitute the results and discussion of the study. Notably, it was necessary to combine the results and discussion due to the interpretive nature of the research. They have been divided into three separate chapters to provide clarity of analysis and clarity for the reader. Finally, chapter ten concludes the investigation, detailing the theoretical implications and contribution to knowledge as well as significant practical implications and directions for further research.

Chapter 2

Adventure and the UK Motorcycle Market

Adventure and the UK Motorcycle Market

"Adventure is an emotional experience, one that embraces uncertainty. It is the invasion of the unknown that is the nature of adventure".
(Dewey 1916, p. 73).

2.1   Introduction

This chapter begins by defining and discussing the concept of adventure, a concept central to the study. The link between motorcycle activity and adventure is established, and a number of key points are pinpointed which define motorcycling as an adventurous activity. The chapter continues by providing an outline of the UK motorcycle market, including information relating to the market size and trends, market segmentation, supply and distribution, advertising and promotion, and the consumer. This information provides a general background which helps inform the more focused nature of the study.

2.2   Defining Adventure

One of the most recently recognised developments in outdoor recreation is the deliberate seeking of risk and danger. Termed *adventure recreation,* or *risk recreation,* these leisure experiences differ from traditional recreation activities because they pose elements of real or perceived physical danger to the participant. Adventure can be described as the search for competence in a novel environment which offers risk, chance, jeopardy and spontaneity; the ultimate slip through the reality net of everyday life (Ullman, 1964). Ewert (1987) first proposed a conceptual model of adventure recreation. The model (illustrated in Figure 2.1) attempts to describe participant characteristics and patterns of use in adventure recreation activities.

Figure 2.1: Adventure Recreation: A Conceptual Model
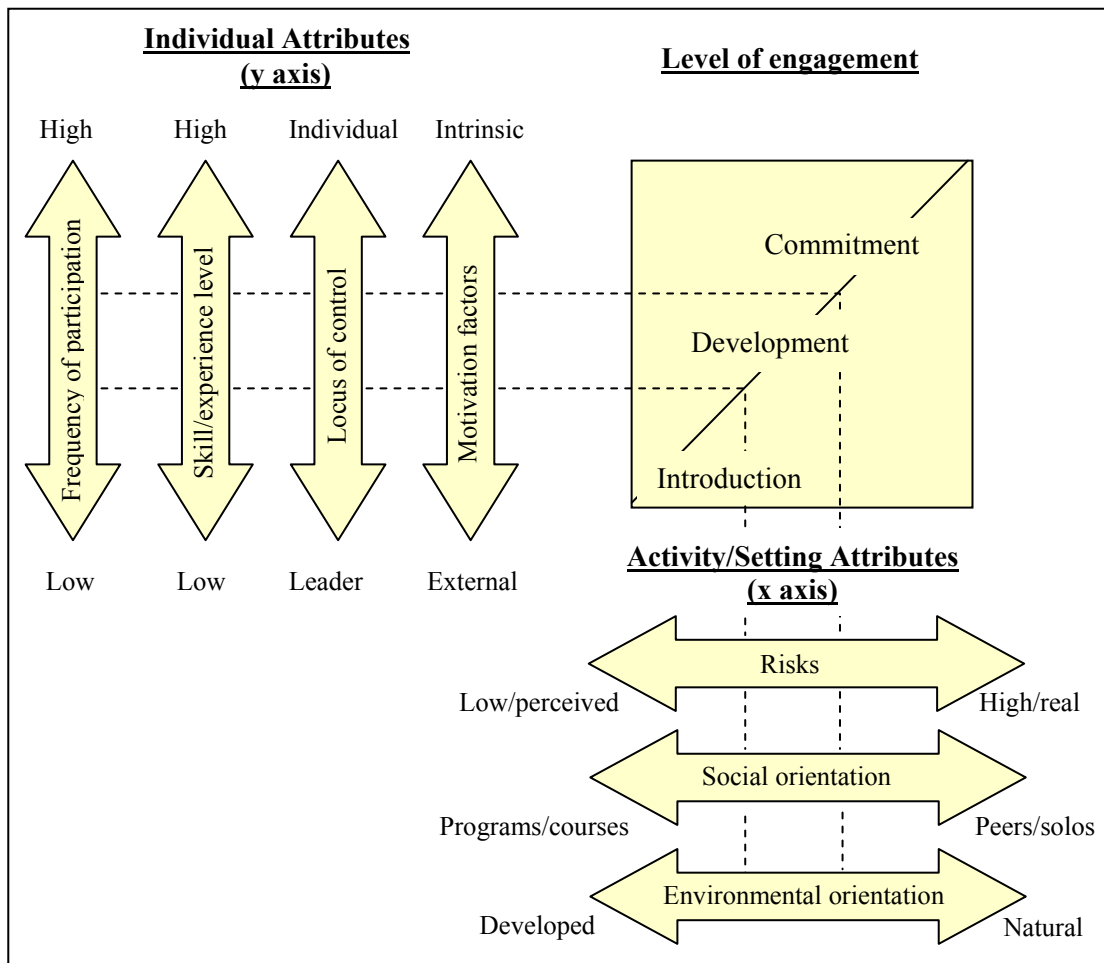
Ewert (1989, p. 6) defines adventure recreation as "a variety of self-initiated activities utilising an interaction with the natural environment, that contain elements of real or apparent danger, in which the outcome, while uncertain, can be influenced by the participant and circumstances." This definition is more recently supported by Holyfield (1999) and Priest (1999). Ewert and Hollenhorst (1989) describe adventure as a search for competence coupled with the valuation of risk and danger. They contend that participants in an adventure experience will select levels of situational risk that suit their perceived levels of personal competence. Both Mitchell (1983) and later, Lyng (1990) contend that what defines and separates voluntary high-risk adventure activities from other freely sought leisure endeavours is the acceptance of physical and psychic risk. Specifically, in high-risk activities

participants knowingly seek danger and risk death or physical injury should they fail to perform adequately in the risk context (Palmer, 2002).

Cheron and Ritchie (1982) previously divided risk into two categories akin to those described by Mitchell (1983) and Lyng (1990); *functional* and *psychological*. Functional risk, they contend, refers to both the potential inability to perform an activity well and the danger of physical injury. Psychological risk refers to participants' fears involving failure to meet personal standards. Also, it refers to the threat of a potential unsatisfactory experience and the associated waste of valuable leisure time. The phenomenon of risk taking appears to become increasingly important as the adventure participant gains experience and skill within his/her chosen adventure activity (Schreyer and Roggenbuck, 1978; Ewert, 1985). Lyng (1990, p.861) terms adventure involvement "edgework" and defines this as the ability to "maintain control over a situation that verges on complete chaos, a situation most people would regard as entirely uncontrollable."

In their study of high-risk leisure consumption through skydiving, Celsi et al (1993) propose an extended model of high-risk leisure consumption (illustrated in Figure 2.2). They set the model in a 'dramaturgical' framework, proposing that in Western society, this framework is a fundamental cultural lens through which individuals frame their perceptions, seek their self-identities, and engage in vicarious or actual behaviours; thus, they propose, the dramatic model is the foundation of the Western imagination. They claim that factors external and internal to the individual coincide to produce high-risk behaviours. At a macro-level, influences resulting from societal and cultural complexities, media enculturation, and technological change create a context that is more or less conducive to a behaviour. Within this context, internal variables such as predispositions, goals, psychological states and, to a large extent, interpersonal influence determine who will actually become a participant.

Figure 2.2: An Extended Model of High-Risk Leisure Consumption
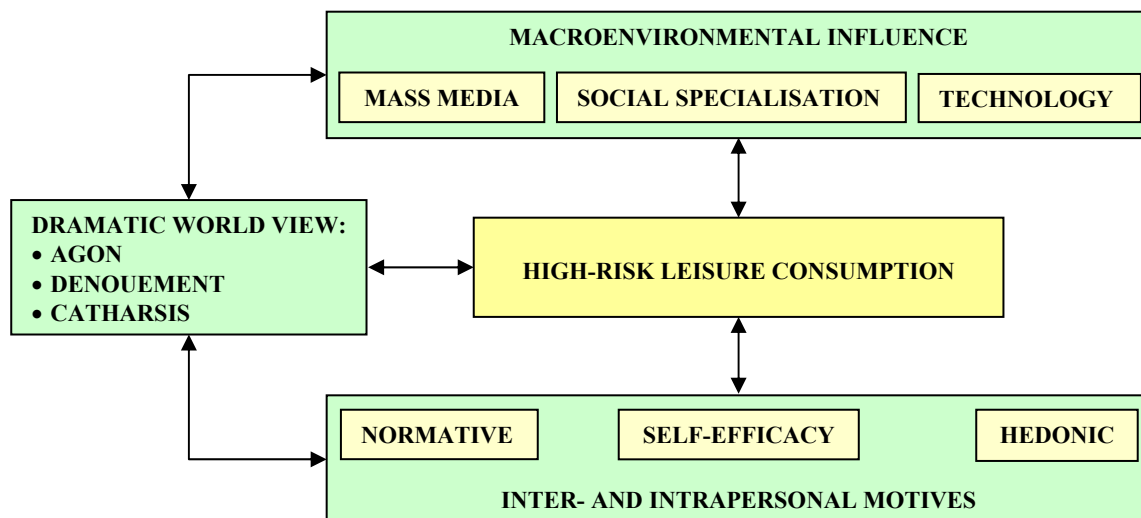
Source: Celsi et al (1993, p.3)

In their influential study of river-rafting experience, Arnould and Price (1993) describe the core themes of *harmony with nature, freedom from obligations, communitas* and *personal growth and self-renewal* that motivate and represent consumer involvement in this kind of extraordinary hedonic, adventure experience.

2.2.1 Motorcycling as Adventure

Motorcycling, across the range of market sectors, can be regarded as a high-risk, adventure activity. It is a self-initiated, voluntary pursuit that requires interaction with the natural environment. A risky and dangerous pursuit, the motorcyclist searches for increased competence, skill, mastery and control to minimise uncertain outcomes and to gain ultimate satisfaction from the experience. Motorcycling offers the opportunity for spontaneity, and escape from the constraints of everyday life.

2.3   The UK Motorcycle Market

2.3.1 Market Size and Trends

The UK motorcycle and scooter market as a whole has shown a steady period of growth over the last five years. Department for Transport (DfT) statistics show that at the end of 2005, there were almost 1.1 million motorcycles and scooters on the roads in the UK, some 30% more than the same time in 2000. According to the Motorcycle Industry Association (MCIA), a realistic estimate of the number of powered-two wheelers in use during the peak summer months is likely to increase to around 1.5 million. This is due to a relatively large number of seasonal leisure riders who take advantage of better weather during the summer months and licence their motorcycles for six months of the year; hence, DfT statistics (illustrated in Figure 2.3) were accumulated out of season, in December.

Figure 2.3: Two-Wheeled Vehicles in Use by Engine Size, 2001-2005
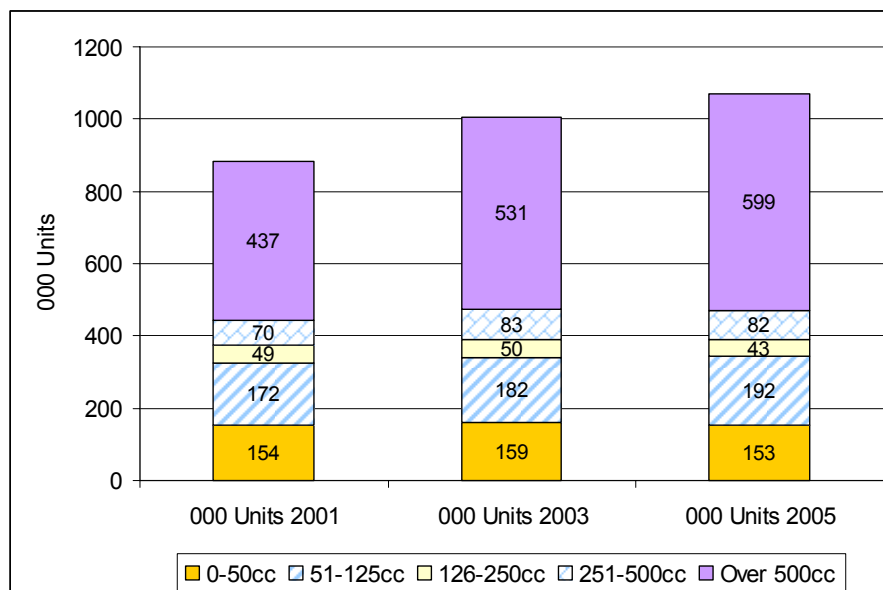
Source: Mintel (April 2006)

The total market value (retail sales) at the end of 2005 was £667 million. It is the larger-capacity machines (over 500cc) that have shown the most significant growth over this period, up by nearly 40% between 2001 and 2005 alone. According to Mintel (2006) the average

price of a motorcycle and scooter in the UK broke through the £5000 barrier for the first time in 2005. This reflects a trend towards increasing purchases of more expensive motorcycle categories such as touring and adventure-sports. This is illustrated in Figure 2.4

Figure 2.4: Average Price Per Vehicle, at Current and Consistent Prices, 2001-2005
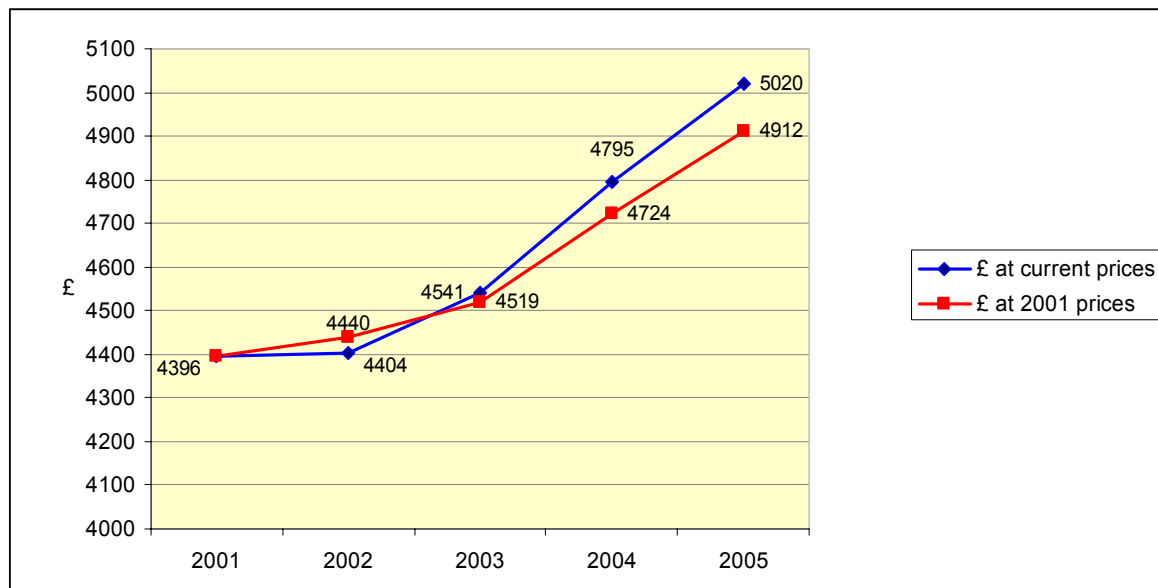
Source: Mintel (April 2006)

The Economic Picture

The health of the UK economy and the resulting consumer confidence have a significant impact on consumers' propensity to make major considered purchase decisions, such as buying a motorcycle or scooter. Levels of disposable income certainly determine whether consumers have funds available to make a purchase, and high levels of consumer confidence encourage people to be more willing to go into debt in order to fund large purchases. Table 2.1 illustrates, and predicts increasing personal disposable income and consumer expenditure, which reflects a relatively healthy economic picture. This is likely to support the growth of the UK motorcycle market.

Table 2.1: Personal Disposable Income (PDI) and Consumer Expenditure, at Constant 2000 Prices, 2000-2010

	PDI			Consumer expenditure			Savings ratio
	£bn	**Index**	**% annual change**	**£bn**	**Index**	**% annual change**	**%**
2000	659.8	100	-	609.2	100	-	5.0
2001	689.3	104	4.5	628.0	103	3.1	6.5
2002	703.1	107	2.0	648.8	107	3.3	5.3
2003	721.4	109	2.6	663.9	109	2.3	5.5
2004	752.0	114	4.2	696.8	114	5.0	6.6
2005 (est)	776.8	118	3.3	719.8	118	3.3	6.9
2008 (proj)	855.4	130	3.5	779.7	128	2.5	8.6
2010 (proj)	916.4	139	3.5	815.9	134	2.2	10.6

Source: Mintel (April 2006)

2.3.2 Market Segmentation

The most meaningful way of segmenting the motorcycle market is by product type. The MCIA provides a clear classification of motorcycle product categories; illustrated in Table 2.2. This classification is used for the duration of this study.

Table 2.2: UK Motorcycle Market - Product Categories

Supersports	These machines are designed to mimic or directly replicate racing bikes. They normally have full fairings and low handlebars and are sometimes referred to as race replicas.
Naked	Machines are built to a basic specification with no fairing (or only a small handlebar fairing) and an upright riding position. Engines are large to medium and often called retro.
Trail/Enduro	These bikes encompass trials, enduro and trail bikes with an off-road or cross-country capability.
Sport/Touring	Machines that fit between Supersport and Touring bikes categories. Typical features include full or partial fairings and practical rider and pillion seating with low to medium ride handlebars. Tend to have medium to large capacity engines.

Adventure-Sport (including Supermoto)	These bikes are similar in style to enduro motorcycles but are predominantly designed and capable for on-road use. Often they will have features similar to machines included in the Touring category, e.g. fairings, luggage carrying capacity etc.
Custom	These machines include 'cruisers' and 'choppers'. They have flat but typically feature high handlebars, low seat height and forward footrests. Body panels and fittings contain high polished chrome content.
Touring	Bikes generally have large engines and are designed for long-distance riding. Typical features include a more comfortable seating position for rider and pillion, luggage carrying capability and weather protection, such as fairings with a fixed or adjustable windscreen.
Scooters	Have an engine, as an integral part of the rear suspension or the chassis is a step-through type, irrespective or cc or wheel size. Includes all types of transmission.
Mopeds	In law, a motorised two-wheeled vehicle with an engine capacity of less than 50cc and a maximum speed capacity of 30mph, riders must be aged 16 or over. Mopeds are available in Motorcycle and Scooter Styles.

Source: www.mcia.co.uk

Supersports motorcycles represent the largest sector in this increasingly fragmented market, accounting for 23% of total motorcycle market share in 2005. A pie-chart representing percentage market share by product category is provided in Figure 2.5. The next largest market sector is that of naked bikes (with 18.5% market share) followed by scooters (17% market share), and then trail/enduro, adventure-sport, sports touring and custom, each commanding around 10% market share. Finally, touring represents 3% of market share and 'unspecified' motorcycles represent 0.1%.

Although, on the whole, this mature market shows a period of slow overall market growth, it is interesting to consider a number of dynamic trends within the product categories. Whereas the supersports sector is certainly, and has been for some years, the largest market sector, it has shown signs of levelling out, and even decreasing over recent years; in 2005 total registrations for machines in this product category fell by 0.8%. The most recently conceived product category, that of adventure-sports motorcycles however, showed a significant increase in market share of 28%; if one considers the sales figures for adventure-sports

machines over the past five years (illustrated in Figure 2.6), a dramatic rate of market growth can be appreciated.

Figure 2.5: Percentage Market Share by Product Category
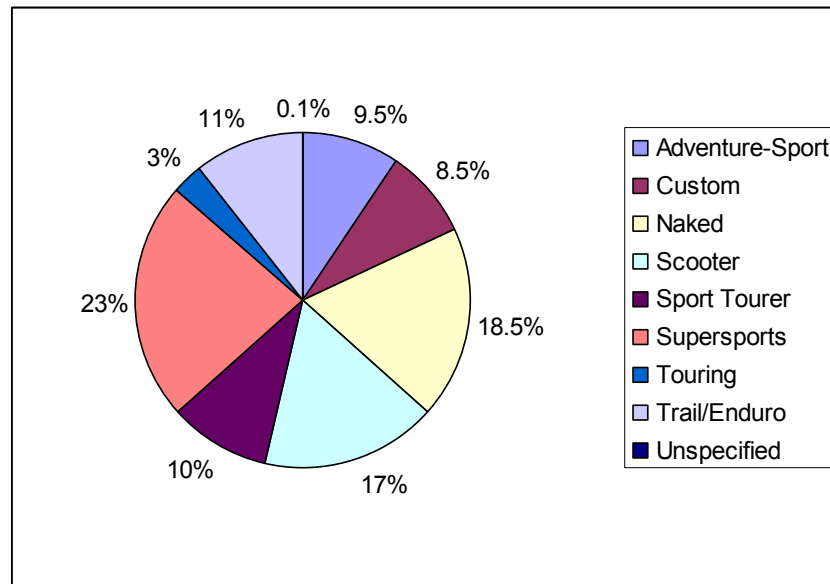
Figure 2.6: Adventure-Sports Motorcycle Sales
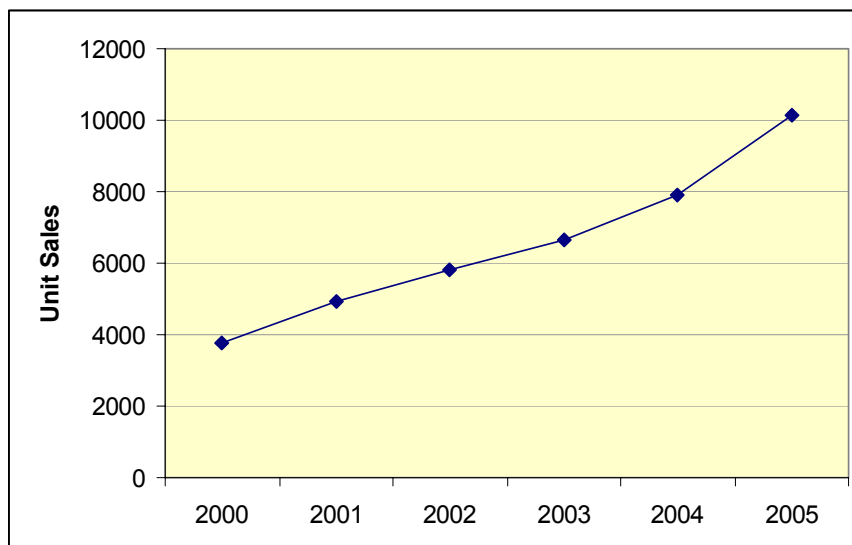
As well as adventure-sports machines, in 2005 naked motorcycles showed a significant increase in market share, of 17%, and custom motorcycles showed an increase of 8%. Interestingly, although only currently accounting for 0.1% of total market share, unspecified machines increased by 120%. This is due to the beginnings, and growth of motorcycle imports from China. Certainly Chinese 'imitation' brands look set to penetrate the UK market for motorcycles as they have done in other consumer markets over the past decade.

2.3.3 Supply and Distribution

Major Companies and Brands

Table 2.3 outlines manufacturer shares and unit sales of manufacturers' brands for the UK motorcycle and scooter market in 2005. Certainly, it is evident from this that Japanese manufacturer, Honda is the clear market leader, with a share of nearly a fifth of all sales of motorcycles and scooters in the UK. Honda (UK) Ltd, which is the UK subsidiary of the giant Japanese corporation, is a long established player in the UK motorcycle market, having entered and built its reputation on numerous racing successes in the 1960s. The company derives its position from having market leadership of several key sectors and a strong presence in many others, as a result of a broad and comprehensive product offering. Suzuki (GB) plc, like many of its rivals, is long-established in the UK market and, with a 13.5% market share, has built its reputation around sporty, larger-capacity motorcycles.

Piaggio Ltd is the UK subsidiary of the Italian, Piaggio Group. Ownership of its own scooter brand, along with a number of other brands (namely: Aprilia, Gilera, Moto Guzi and Derbi) gives it a market share which makes it the third largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters in the UK. Along with Honda and Suzuki, Yamaha and Kawasaki belong to a group of Japanese manufacturers known as the big four. Together they make up 50% of the total market share. Slightly smaller than Suzuki in sales terms, Yamaha Motor UK Ltd is strongest in the sports sectors and also has a significant presence in the naked and trail/enduro sectors. After a difficult period, Kawasaki Motors UK recently reorganised its UK operations and this paid off in 2005, with sales increases of nearly a quarter. The company derives its position from a broad range of products that sell consistently across the board (Mintel, 2006).

Table 2.3: Manufacturer Shares of the UK Motorcycle and Scooter Market, by Number of New Registrations, 2005

Manufacturer	Unit Sales	% Market Share
Honda	24,595	18.5
Suzuki	17,902	13.5
Piaggio, *of which:*	17,468	13.2
Piaggio	*9,904*	*7.5*
Aprilia	*4,506*	*3.4*
Gilera	*2,216*	*1.7*
Moto Guzzi	*301*	*0.2*
Derbi	*541*	*0.4*
Yamaha	16,195	12.2
Kawasaki	7,665	5.8
Peugeot	6,000	4.5
Triumph	5,667	4.3
Harley-Davidson, *of which:*	5,572	4.2
Harley-Davidson	*4,948*	*3.7*
Buell	*624*	*0.5*
BMW	5,614	4.2
Ducati	1,773	1.3
Total top ten	**108,451**	**81.7**
Others	24,352	18.3
Total	**132,803**	**100.0**

Source: Mintel (April 2006)

Popular niche brands that target a smaller number of market sectors include Peugeot, Harley-Davidson (including the Harley-Davidson and Buell brands), BMW and Ducati. Notably, with its focus on triples (three-cylinder engined bikes) and parallel twins, Triumph Motorcycles Ltd is the only remaining significant volume producer of motorcycles in the UK. In 2005 BMW (UK) Ltd increased its market share by nearly 21% (Mintel, 2006). This is largely as a result of its dominance of the adventure-sport sector where, with its R1200 GS brand it outsold its nearest competitor by nearly three times. Key brands which contribute to the adventure-sports market sector include BMW (GS and GS Adventure ranges), Honda

(XL, FMX and Varadero ranges), Suzuki (V-Strom), Triumph (Tiger), Yamaha (DT and XT ranges), Aprilia (Caponord and Pegaso ranges) and KTM (Adventure).

Distribution

The retailing of motorcycles has undergone a number of significant changes over the past five years. The traditional motorcycle dealer model is that of a multi-franchise outlet that sells both new and second hand models from several manufacturers, and derives a significant proportion of its revenue from areas such as servicing, repairs and warranty work. 2001 saw the introduction of the 'motorcycle supermarket' concept. This was pioneered by the Motorcycle City and Carnell operations, which had been acquired by the successful car retailing company Dixon Motor Group. Dixon attempted to apply car retailing principles to the retailing of motorcycles by using the volume of machines being sold to obtain good discounts from manufacturers, but customers were reluctant to sign up to point-of-sale finance agreements, a key profit generator in the wider automotive industry. This proved unsuccessful and subsequently, in October 2003, the business collapsed.

In contrast to this, recent years have seen a clear trend towards leading manufacturers opting for 'solus' dealerships, which sell exclusively for one manufacturer. These outlets are perceived to offer a better level of service-quality than multi-franchise dealerships, and allow for the development of personal relationships with customers (Mintel, 2006).

2.3.4 Advertising and Promotion

The level of main media advertising expenditure supporting motorcycle and scooter brands has traditionally been low when expressed as a percentage of the total market value, and this trend has become quite accentuated in recent years (Mintel, 2006). This is demonstrated in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7: Main Monitored Media Advertising Expenditure on Motorcycles and Scooters, 2001-2005
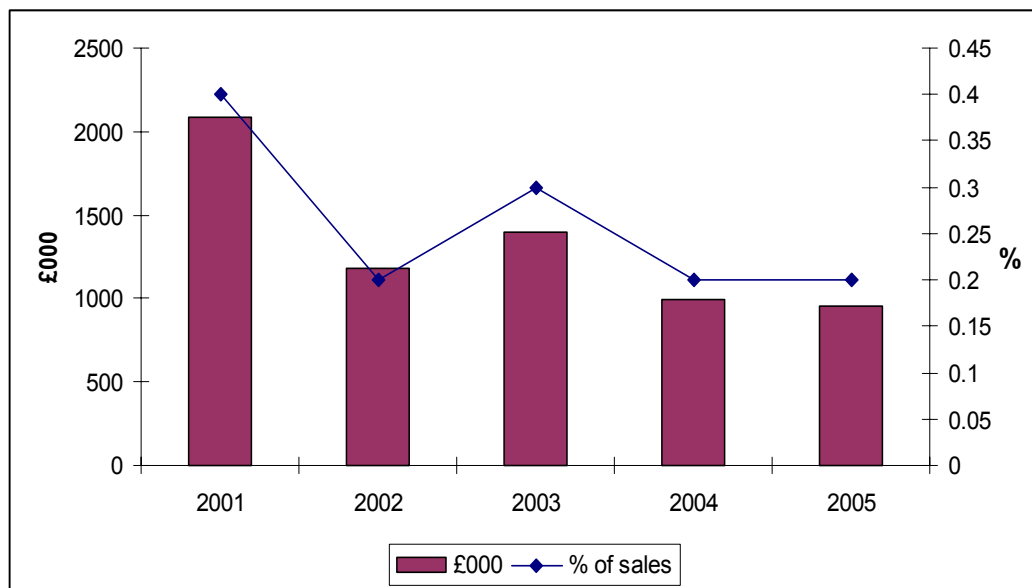
Source: Mintel (April 2006)

The level of spend in 2005 was only slightly over a third of that invested in the category in 2001, and fell below £1 million for the first time in many years (Mintel, 2006). Manufacturers have begun to find that it is more effective to spend their money in other ways, such as proving their machines through sponsorship of professional racers and works teams in top level competition. Also they are investing in events, shows and exhibitions where potential customers can actually see, feel and experience the machine they are interested in. Certainly, increasingly interactive manufacturer websites are playing a more central role in the marketing of motorcycles and scooters. The significance of these factors is considered in more detail in the subsequent Results and Discussion chapters.

By far the most popular medium for advertising and promotion of motorcycles and scooters is press advertising; as illustrated in Table 2.4. Although spend on press has fallen significantly, it remains the primary advertising tool of choice. Specialist motorcycle magazines account for the bulk of press spending, although newspapers are also used (Mintel, 2006). In 2005, the only other form of above-the-line advertising employed was that of television media.

Table 2.4: Main Monitored Media Advertising Expenditure on Motorcycles and Scooters, by Media, 2001-2005

	2001 £000	%	2002 £000	%	2003 £000	%	2004 £000	%	2005 £000	%
Press	2,088	79	1,181	82	1,399	68	995	93	959	98
Radio	-	-	4	0	28	1	16	2	-	-
Outdoor	143	5	60	4	235	11	1	0	-	-
TV	187	7	134	9	157	8	46	4	22	2
Direct mail	215	8	55	4	249	12	10	1	-	-
Total	**2,633**	**100**	**1,433**	**100**	**2,076**	**100**	**1,068**	**100**	**980**	**100**

Note – figures subject to rounding

Source: Mintel (April 2006)

Whereas specific television media advertising only accounted for 2% of advertising spend in 2005, virtually all the major companies and brands benefit greatly from media coverage of motorcycle sport. Through their professional racer and team sponsorship, their products are broadcast to millions of people worldwide. Motorcycling is, in fact, the seventh-most broadcast sport from the combined coverage on UK terrestrial, satellite and cable television channels and had almost 1500 hours of coverage in 2005 (Mintel, 2006). Major championships that are broadcast include the World Superbike Championship, the British Superbike Championship, the MotoGP series as well as leading American races. Total television coverage of motorcycle sport increased by nearly 30% between 2000 and 2005, providing more opportunity for manufacturers to promote their machinery through racing success than ever before (Mintel, 2006). The significance of motorcycle sport sponsorship is considered in more detail in Section 7.2.2 and Section 9.3.

2.3.5 The Consumer

It is certainly true that the motorcycle market is dominated by male riders; according to the MCIA, around 80% of riders are, in fact, male. Demographic figures (provided in detail in APPENDIX A) reveal that, while there is certainly a youth bias in the demographic profile of riders in scooters and the lower engine capacities, there is an older profile to riders of motorcycles with larger engines, particularly in the 500cc+ category. For example, while 37% of scooter/moped owners are aged 15-24, some 40% of riders of bikes with an engine

capacity of over 500cc are aged 35-44 and nearly a quarter are aged 45-54. Documented in more detail in Section 7.2.2 these middle-aged men are likely to have higher levels of disposable income, to be free from the responsibilities of child rearing, and to have a passion for the freedom and adventure associated with recapturing their youth.

2.4   Chapter Summary

Within this chapter the concept of adventure has been defined and discussed. It was recognised that adventure is a self-initiated, voluntary activity that involves the deliberate seeking of risk and danger, and the search for competence, skill, mastery and control in a novel/natural environment that offers chance, jeopardy and spontaneity. The outcome, while uncertain is influenced by the adventure participant and the circumstances. The link between motorcycling and adventure was affirmed, and motorcycling was clearly defined as an adventurous activity.

The chapter continued by providing a general overview of the UK motorcycle market. This provided a background for the level of depth analysis required later in the study. It was recognised that the well established, mature UK motorcycle market is in a period of slow but steady growth. With a total market value (retail sales) of £667 million, it is predicted that in the summer months there are around 1.5 million motorcycles on UK roads. The market is characterised by increasing fragmentation, and whereas the highest selling supersports market sector has recently seen a levelling out, or even decrease, in sales, the recently conceived adventure-sports sector, along with the naked and custom sectors have seen significant sales increases. The dramatic growth rate of the adventure-sports market sector was stressed.

The market is dominated by the big Japanese four manufacturers (Honda, Suzuki, Yamaha and Kawasaki) who between them own 50% of total market share. It was found that leading manufacturers maintain their position through offering broad and comprehensive product ranges. Other popular niche brands that target a more defined number of market sectors include Triumph, Harley-Davidson, BMW and Ducati. A significant growth of BMW's market share (21%) in 2005 was attributed to its dominance of the adventure-sports market

sector. It was recognised that the retailing of motorcycles has undergone a number of significant changes over the last five years, where the 'motorcycle supermarket' concept was introduced and subsequently failed, and is now being replaced by more focused, solus dealerships.

Analysis of trends in manufacturer media advertising spend revealed significant decreases in the amount of spend over the last five years. Of that spent, press advertising remains the primary advertising tool of choice and manufacturers tend to focus on specialist motorcycle magazines. It was found that, increasingly manufacturers rely on attendance at events, shows and exhibitions and the communication opportunity gained from motorcycle sports sponsorship to generate consumer awareness and interest in their brands. Finally, demographic profiling of the motorcyclist consumer revealed that the majority of motorcycle owners are, in fact male. Younger, pre-family aged consumers tend to purchase smaller motorcycles whereas older, more affluent males, free from the responsibilities of child-rearing tend to go for higher capacity, 500cc+ machines. With a greying UK population this represents a market opportunity.

Chapter 3

Semiotics

Semiotics

"Semiotics… aims to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: those constitute, if not language, at least systems of signification."

(Barthes, 1964/1967, p. 9)

3.1   Introduction

The area of semiotics forms a vein which runs throughout this study, forming a central part of the research objectives, methodological development, data collection, analysis and representation, and reader interpretation of the results. It is therefore essential to gain a thorough conceptual understanding of the field. This chapter achieves this by providing depth discussion and analysis of semiotic theory. The term *semiotics* is used, in the chapter, to refer to the study of signs as a whole. Firstly, the field of semiotics is introduced and several definitions are provided along with its philosophical underpinnings. A discussion of the key contributors to the field is then provided, particularly noting significant contributions made by Saussure ([1916] 1983) and Peirce (1931-58).

The chapter continues with focused technical discussion of signs, codes and signification. Several models of signs and meaning are provided, particularly emphasising Saussure's dyadic model of the sign, and Peirce's triadic model. Also, Peirce's sign categories of icon, index and symbol are identified as well as the scale of motivation and the organisation of signs into paradigms and syntagms. Codes are defined and their characteristics and functions addressed. Within signification, denotation, connotation and myth are discussed as well as the key tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. Finally, but of significant methodological importance to the study, the American tradition of neopositivistic semiotics is compared and contrasted with the Continental tradition of interpretive semiology.

3.2   Semiotics Defined

The terms *semiotics* and *semiology* derive from the ancient Greek word *semeion,* which means *sign*. Its roots can be traced back to the pre-Socratic era, where Hippocrates ([ca. 450–440 BC] 1939) identified bodily manifested symptoms (signs) as conveyors of messages about physical and mental states. Hippocrates' term sema ('signs' in Greek) was later introduced into philosophical inquiry by the British philosopher Locke ([1690] 1975) who defined semiotics as the "doctrine of signs" (Locke, [1690] 1975, p. 720).

The twentieth century witnessed a rapid development in semiotic theory and method. Saussure ([1916] 1983) employed the term *semiology* to refer to the study of signs. He ([1916] 1983, p.15) states "It is… possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life… We shall call it semiology. It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them." Eco (1976, p.7) states "semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign." It involves the study, not only of what are referred to as signs in everyday speech, but also of anything which stands for something else.

Semiotic methods analyse the structure of meaning producing events, both verbal and nonverbal. Sebeok (1976) contends that the scope of semiotics and its subject matter includes the exchange of any messages, and of the systems of signs that underlie them, with the sign always the fundamental concept. Ransdell (1977) proposes that semiotics takes two forms; firstly a general semiotics that seeks to answer, 'What is the nature of meaning?' and secondly a specific semiotics that asks, 'How does human reality – words, gestures, myths, products/services, theories – acquire meaning?' To address these questions, semioticians investigate the sign systems or codes essential to all types of communication for the latent rules that facilitate sign production and interpretive responses.

Semiotics sees communication as the generation of meaning in messages, whether by the encoder or the decoder. Meaning is not an absolute, static concept to be found neatly parcelled up in the message. Meaning is an absolute process and semioticians use verbs like 'create,' 'generate,' or 'negotiate' to refer to this process. Meaning is the result of the

dynamic interaction between sign, interpretant, and object; it is historically located and may well change with time (Fiske, 1990).

Semiotic theory and method is traditionally grounded in structuralist philosophy. Insights are gleaned into the human meaning-quest by studying the distinct meanings that are generated through the world's various systems of everyday life. Semiotics focuses on the recurring patterns of meaning that are captured and expressed by means such as languages, narratives, and works of art, which are culture-specific reflexes of universal patterns in the human psyche. The structuralist perspective adopts the viewpoint that virtually any object, custom, or artefact can be fruitfully studied in terms of its role in a sign process (Barthes, 1964/1967; Eco, 1976; Coward and Ellis, 1977; Culler, 1981; Bowlby, 1985). Cultures are seen as huge templates, each with its own particular configuration of openings through which these patterns take on specific forms.

Danesi (1999, p.24) states, "Semiotically, culture can be defined as a container of the meaning making strategies and forms of behaviour that people employ to carry out their daily routines." Humans transmit what they have learned, not through the genetic code, but through the cultural codes that underpin the customs, traditions, language, art works, and scientific practices that fill the world's containers. These may differ substantially in content, and may show considerable variation from one historic epoch to another, but at their core they are all reflexes of a universal need for meaning. Danesi (1999) contends that exploring the world's sign systems provides an opportunity to solve the riddle of culture and for probing the mystery behind the human quest for meaning.

Semiotic philosophy assumes that reality is a system of signs, it is a construction and people play roles in constructing this reality. Information or meaning is not 'contained' in the world or in books, computers or audio-visual media. Meaning is not 'transmitted' to people; they actively create it according to a complex interplay of codes or conventions of which they are normally unaware. People live in a world of signs and there is no way of understanding anything except through signs and the codes into which they are organised (Chandler, 2002).

3.3   Semiotics – Key Contributors

Although contributions to the study of signs have emerged from Austria (Bűhler, 1934), Scandinavia (Hjelmlev, 1961), Northern Europe (Jakobson, 1971; Matejka and Titunik, 1976) and elsewhere, most commentators agree that key contributions to the development of this field were initially provided by the independent works of Swiss Linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure ([1916] 1983) and American Philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce (1931-58).

Saussure provided early groundbreaking developments in semiotic theory through his book *Course in General Linguistics* ([1916]1983). He viewed linguistics as only one part of a much broader science, which he predicted would one day exist, a science which he called *semiology*.   Saussure believed that language is made up of signs which communicate meanings, and that all kinds of other things which communicate meanings could potentially be studied in the same way as linguistic signs. He proposed that people's perception and understanding of reality is constructed by the words and other signs that are used in a social context.

Saussure's chief contribution to the study of signs resided in shifting a longstanding philosophical emphasis on the nature of things, in and of themselves, to a relational worldview whereby meaning derives from the priorities human beings construct and perceive among signs in a system. Saussure's argument was very surprising and revolutionary for it's time because it implies that signs shape people's perceptions rather than reflecting a reality that already exists.   He proposed that words are not labels that are attached to things that already exist in a pre-given 'natural' state; nor are they labels attached to ideas that already existed in the human mind before language came along. Instead, language and the other communication systems which are collectively used, provide the conceptual framework in, and through which, reality is available to people. This reverses the common sense view that reality exists before language gives words to it. Instead, the language system which humans use creates their concept of reality. It is not possible to think or speak about something for which there are no words in a language (Bignell, 1997).

Saussure's semiological method proposes that consciousness and experience are built out of language and the other sign systems circulating in society that exist before people take them up and use them. Language exists before people are born, and human lives are lived through the signs which language gives them to think, speak and write with. Human thought and experience, people's very sense of identity depends on the systems of signs already existing in society which give form and meaning to consciousness and reality. People think of themselves as individuals, whose beings are not divided, and who are the unique subjects of their own life experience. According to Saussure ([1916] 1983), semiology shows that this impression is created by language, which gives people the word 'I' to refer uniquely to themselves, and gives them words which divide up their reality in particular ways.

Unaware of Saussure's ideas, American linguist Sapir (1929) and later his student Whorf (1940) recorded and analysed North American Indian languages from synchronic and structuralist perspectives. They developed the notion of relativity of culture and promoted the idea that a culture's life patterns are determined, or at least structured, according to its language. Sapir (1949) contends that human beings do not live in the objective world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. The 'real world' is therefore, to a large extent, built up on the language habits of the group. People see, hear and experience very largely as they do because the language habits of their community predispose certain choices of interpretation. Sapir and Whorf's work supports Saussure's philosophy, maintaining that communication is not just a mere conduit of information and meaning, but a process that actually establishes reality.

Around the same time that Saussure was formulating his model of the sign, of semiology and of a structuralist methodology, independent work was in progress by philosopher and logician, Peirce (1931-58) who formulated his own model of the sign, of semiotics and of the taxonomies of signs. Peirce was primarily concerned with people's understanding of human experience and the world around them. He adopted a vision of semiotics and took a logic-centred, hypo-deductive orientation grounded in empirical observation to examine "the essential nature and fundamental varieties of possible semiosis" (Peirce, 1931-58 vol.5,

paragraph 488). Peirce's primary interest was in the generation of meaning, which he found in the structural relationship of signs, people and objects.

Subsequent to the work of Saussure and Peirce, various theorists from a wide spectrum of disciplines have made contributions to, and employed semiotic theory and method in their work. A number of philosophers (Cassirer, 1955, 1966; Whitehead, 1968), linguists (Halliday, 1978, 1981, 1989; Jakobson, 1971, 1985), structural anthropologists (Lévi-Strauss, 1970, 1973, 1978, 1981, 1985; Singer, 1981; Geertz, 1993) and sociologists (Warner, 1953) have argued for the primacy of signs in human experience, particularly the symbolic dimension. In addition, theoretical and methodological positions espoused by field theorists (Lewin, 1952), symbolic interactionists (Blumer, 1969, 1986; Gallant and Kleinman, 1983), ethnomethodologists (Garfinkel, 1967, 1986), phenomenologists (Schutz 1974), conversation analysts (Sacks 1992, 1995) and socialisation theorists (Goffman, 1957, 1963) share various affinities with semiotics.

It should be noted that followers of Saussure's approach to semiology constitute what is now recognised as the *Continental tradition* and followers of the Peircian approach to semiotics constitute what is recognised as the *American tradition*. Several theorists from the Continental tradition have made significant contributions in bringing semiotics to contemporary public light. Perhaps the person most responsible for this is Barthes (1964/1967, 1964/1968, 1972, 1977, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987). Also Eco (1976, 1978, 1979, 1984, 1999) and Sebeok (1972, 1976, 1979, 1981) stand as two of the predominant semioticians in an enveloping, interdisciplinary doctrine that now includes a wide range of topics in both human and nonhuman communication.

In the latter part of the twentieth Century many discussions adopt one term such as *semiotics* (Eco, 1976; Matejka and Titunik, 1976; Sebeok, 1981; Silverman, 1983) or *semiology* (Barthes, 1964/1967, Guiraud, 1975) to cover both the American and Continental traditions so as to move toward integrating the diverse origins of the study of signs into one unified field of inquiry. For example, Guiraud (1975, p. 2) employs the term *semiology* but insists that "today the words semiology and semiotics refer to the same discipline; Europeans using the former term, Anglo-Saxons the latter."

Opposing this syncretic tendency, however, Singer (1984, p. 41) more recently argues that "the differences between semiotics and semiology are equally important and not so frequently recognised." Singer claims that because the two terms derive from different intellectual and practical traditions, and in their modern form are associated with different theories of signs (Peirce's semiotics and Saussure's semiology), it is useful to compare and contrast the two theories from the perspective of problems of meaning and communication. Singer (1984, p. 41) goes on to state that "In spite of the shared aim of both semiotics and semiology to become general theories of all kinds of sign systems, in actual practice the two theories differ in subject matter and method, in specific concepts and 'laws,' as well as epistemology and ontology." The penultimate section of this chapter (3.7) compares and contrasts Continental semiology with American semiotics. Note, the term *semiotics* is used throughout the chapter to refer to the study of signs as a whole.

It should be recognised that semiotics is not without its critics (Sperber, 1974; Pettit, 1975). Sperber (1974) claims that semioticians assume that the human environment overflows with meaning, a premise he maintains is no less ethnocentrically arbitrary than the symbols in which semioticians find so much arbitrary meaning. Despite such criticism, the field of semiotics continues to grow and provide influence in a wide range of disciplines.

3.4 Signs

3.4.1 Signs and Meaning

Fiske (1990, p. 41) defines a *sign* as "something physical, perceivable by our senses; it refers to something other than itself; and it depends upon a recognition by its users that it is a sign." Danesi (1999) contends that a sign can be identified by virtue of three dimensions, a *physical* dimension, a *referential* or *representational* dimension and a *conceptual* dimension. The physical dimension, which refers to the words written on a page, the sounds that comprise a word, the movements that define a gesture, for example, is called interchangeably the *signifier*, the *representamen*, or even just the *sign*. The referential/representational dimension

refers to the actual function of the sign, by which it directs attention to some entity (such as an object, event, idea or being). The conceptual dimension is the dimension by which the sign evokes in different people diverse thoughts, ideas or feelings. This dimension is alternatively known as *signification, interpretation*, or simply *meaning*.

Models of meaning produced by both the Continental and American traditions share a broadly similar form. Each is concerned with elements of: the sign, that to which the sign refers, and the users of the sign. Saussure ([1916] 1983) offers a dyadic or two-part model of the sign. He claims that the sign is composed of a *signifier* and the *signified*. This is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Saussure's Elements of Meaning
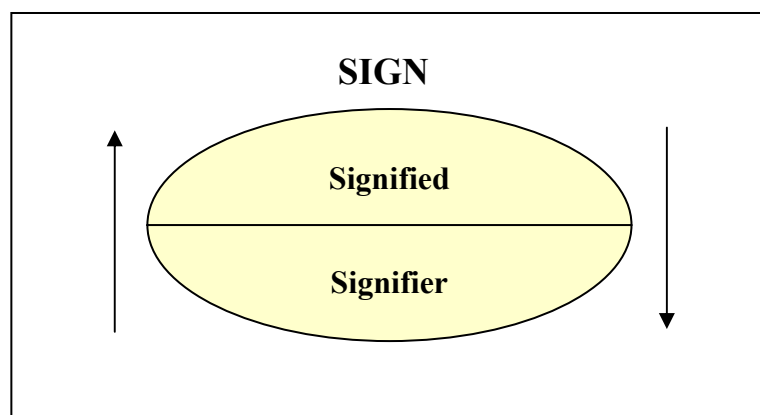
Source: Based on Saussure, F. ([1916] 1983, p. 67)

A signifier is the vehicle which expresses the sign, like a pattern of sound which makes up a word, or the marks on paper which are read as words, or the pattern of shapes and colours which photographs use to represent an object or person. The signified is the concept that the signifier calls forth when a person perceives it. For example, if one is to perceive the sign 'cat' written on this page, a group of marks are perceived, the letters 'c', 'a' and 't', which constitute the signifier. This signifier is the vehicle which immediately calls up the signified or concept of cat in one's mind. The sign is the inseparable unity of the signifier with the signified and it is not possible to have one without the other. With regard to the signifier and signified, Saussure ([1916] 1983, p. 66) states "the two elements involved in the linguistic sign are both psychological and are connected in the brain by an associative link. This is a

point of major importance." The relationship between the signifier and the signified is referred to as *signification* and this is represented in the Saussurean diagram (illustrated in Figure 3.1) by the arrows.

Once Saussure had divided the sign into signifier and signified, it became possible to describe how language divides up the world of thought, creating the concepts which shape actual human experience. According to his model of meaning, the signifieds are the mental concepts which people use to divide reality up and categorise it so that they can understand it. The boundaries between one category and another are artificial, not natural, for nature is all of a piece. Signifieds are made by people, determined by the culture to which they belong. Signifieds are part of the linguistic or semiotic system that members of a culture use to communicate with each other.

According to Saussure ([1916] 1983), meaning is defined by the relationship between a sign and other signs in the same system. The difference between one sign and other signs in the same system gives it *value*, and it is this value that primarily determines meaning. A sign can have no absolute value independent of its context. This concept is illustrated in Figure 3.2. To further illustrate this, Saussure uses an analogy of the game of chess, noting that the value of each piece depends on its position on the chessboard; just as in a language each term has its value through its contrast with all the other terms. Also, the sign is more than the sum of its parts. Whilst signification, what is signified, clearly depends on the relationships between the two parts of the sign, the value/meaning of the sign is determined by the relationships between the sign and other signs within the system as a whole. Meaning is better defined by the relationships of one sign to another than by the relationship of that sign to an external reality.

To illustrate the distinction between signification and value, Saussure ([1916] 1983) uses the example of the French word mouton, which he stresses, may have the same meaning as the English word sheep but does not have the same value. He contends that there are various reasons for this, but in particular is the fact that the English word for the meat of this animal, as prepared and served for a meal, is not sheep but mutton. The difference in value between

sheep and mouton hinges on the fact that in English there is also another word, mutton for the meat, whereas mouton in French covers both.

Figure 3.2: Saussure's 'Value' of the Sign
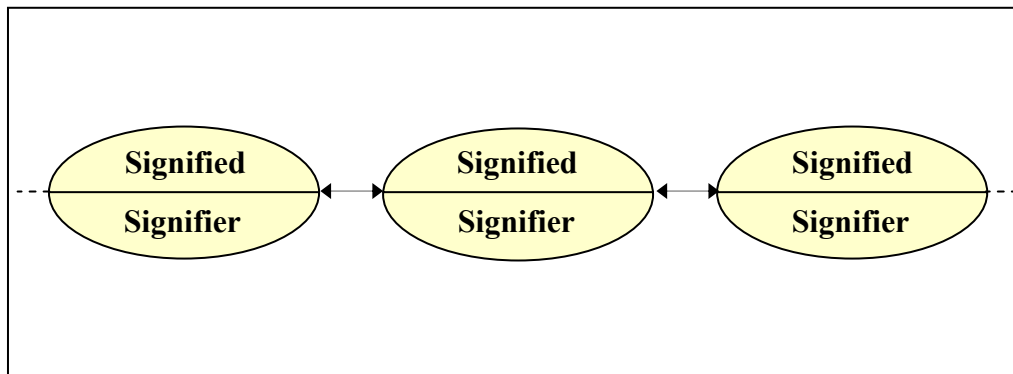
Saussure's relational conception of meaning is specifically *differential*, he emphasises the differences between signs. Language for him is a system of functional differences and oppositions. He states ([1916] 1974, p. 121), "In a language, as in every other semiological system, what distinguishes a sign is what constitutes it." He draws an important distinction between *langue* and *parole*, the former standing for the abstract rules and conventions of language that pre-exist any individual's use of it, and the latter representing the manipulation of the language system via individual utterances in everyday situations. For Saussure, parole is the level at which meaning emerges due to the existence of differences among words in a language as they are chosen and combined in actual verbalisations. Supporting this, Sturrock (1979) contends that a one-term language is an impossibility because its single term could be applied to everything and differentiate nothing; it requires at least one other term to give it definition. Advertising proves to be a good example of this notion since what matters in 'positioning' a product is not the relationship of advertising signifiers to real-world referents, but the differentiation of each sign from others to which it is related (Chandler, 2002)

In their work, both Saussure and Peirce placed an emphasis on structural relationships. Saussure placed a synchronic emphasis on structure which involved focusing on the relationships between signs and other signs in the same system. Peirce, however, was more concerned with semiosis as a process of dialogical thought. He (1931-58, 6. 338) states, "All

thinking is dialogic in form. Your self of one instant appeals to your deeper self for his assent." For Peirce, semiosis is the process of communication by any type of sign, a sign being anything that stands for something (its object), to somebody (its interpreter), in some respect (its context). Like Saussure, Peirce explained sign processes in terms of relations but he spoke of triadic rather than dyadic relations (Peirce, 1931-58, 5. 484). He states (1931-58, 2. 228) "By 'semiosis' I mean, on the contrary (to dyadic relations), an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of three subjects such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs." Thus, Peirce's triadic model of meaning is illustrated in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Peirce's Model of Meaning
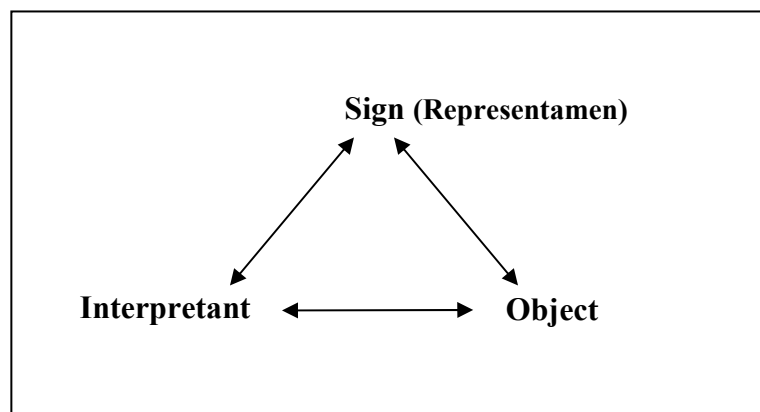
Source: Peirce, C. (1931-58), adapted from Fiske (1990, p. 42)

To explain his model, Peirce (1931-58, 2. 228) states, "A sign (in the form of a representamen) is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object." The interaction between the representamen, the object and the interpretant is referred to by Peirce (1931-58, 5. 484) as "semiosis". The double-ended arrows within the model emphasise that each term can be understood only in relation to the others. A sign refers to something other than itself, the *object*, and is understood by somebody; that is, it has an effect in the mind of the user, the *interpretant*.

It should be noted that the interpretant is not the actual user of the sign, but what Peirce calls elsewhere 'the significance effect.' It is a mental concept produced both by the sign and by the user's experience of the object. It is not fixed, defined by a dictionary, but may vary within the limits according to the experience of the user. These limits are set by social convention and the variation within them allows for the social and psychological differences between the users (Fiske, 1990).

When comparing the models of meaning developed by Saussure and Peirce, it can be noted that the object featured in Peirce's model does not feature directly in Saussure's model. The representamen is similar in meaning to Saussure's signifier and the interpretant is similar in meaning to Saussure's signified (Silverman, 1983). However, Peirce's interpretant has a quality unlike that of the Saussure's signified; it is itself a sign in the mind of the interpreter. Discussing Peirce's interpretant, Eco (1984) notes that the meaning of a representation can be nothing but a representation and any initial interpretation can be re-interpreted. Eco (1984, p. 2) uses the term "unlimited semiosis" to refer to the way in which this could lead to a series of successive interpretants, potentially ad infinitum.

Ogden and Richards ([1923] 1949) were early British workers in this field who corresponded regularly with Peirce. Their concern reflected the legacy of logical positivism associated with the American tradition and its preoccupation with verifiable truth values (Carnap, 1956). They developed a very similar triadic model of meaning to that of Peirce. This is illustrated in Figure 3.4. Their *referent* corresponds closely to Peirce's object, their *reference* to his interpretant, and their *symbol* to his sign. In their model, referent and reference are directly connected, so too are symbol and reference. However, the connection between symbol and referent is indirect or imputed. This shift away from the equilateral relationship of Peirce's model brings Ogden and Richards closer to the work of Saussure who also relegated the relationship of the sign with external reality to one of minimal importance. Like Saussure, Ogden and Richards put the symbol in the key position and they contend ([1923] 1949) that symbols direct and organise people's thoughts or references, and their references organise their perception of reality. Ogden and Richard's symbol and reference are similar to Saussure's signifier and signified.

Figure 3.4: Ogden and Richards' Model of Meaning
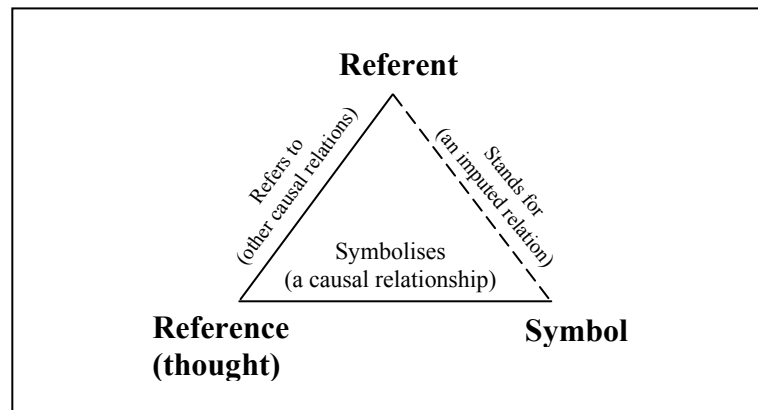
Source: Ogden, C. and Richards, I. ([1923] 1949, p. 11)

Morris (1938/1970, 1946, 1964, 1971, 1976) was one of the chief exemplars of the American school of semiotics. His aim was to apply scientific methods to fuse semiotics with developments in the social sciences to produce a comprehensive science of signs. He based his work on the triadic Peircean formulation and proposed that meaning could be determined by subdividing semiotics into *syntactics*, *semantics* and *pragmatics*. Syntactics is the study of sign-sign relations, semantics is the study of sign-object relations and pragmatics the study of sign-interpretant relations. He also noted that each of the subdivisions of syntactics, semantics and pragmatics, and so semiotics as a whole can be *pure*, *descriptive* or *applied*. Pure semiotics elaborates a language to talk about signs, descriptive semiotics studies actual signs, and applied semiotics utilises knowledge about signs for the accomplishment of various purposes.

In pursuing his behaviourally oriented scientific impulse, Morris (1964) embraced Osgood et al's (1957) work on representational mediators. This led to the development of the semantic differential scale as a method for data collection. This, along with his trichotomy of syntactics-semantics-pragmatics is likely to be the most enduring part of Morris's semiotic legacy (for example, in sociolinguistics, Greenburg, 1964; in marketing, Holbrook, 1978a). However, Morris's work has received some criticism due to the infusion of behavioural psychology into his semiotics. Some theorists allege that his misapplications of Peircian concepts have tended to diminish his position in contemporary semiotics (Steiner, 1978; Rochberg-Halton and McMurtrey, 1983; Singer, 1984).

3.4.2 Categories of Signs

In the positivist American tradition, Peirce (1931-58) was a compulsive taxonomist who offered several logical typologies of signs. Originally he defined around sixty thousand types of signs, which he later narrowed down to sixty-six. Unfortunately, the complexity of such typologies rendered them nearly useless as working models for others in the field (Sturrock, 1986). However, one of Peirce's basic classifications has been very widely used and referred to in subsequent semiotic studies. This classification is based on the relationship between sign and object and in it, he classifies signs into three basic types; *icon, index* and *symbol*. These can be modelled on a triangle, as illustrated in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5: Peirce's Categories of Sign Types
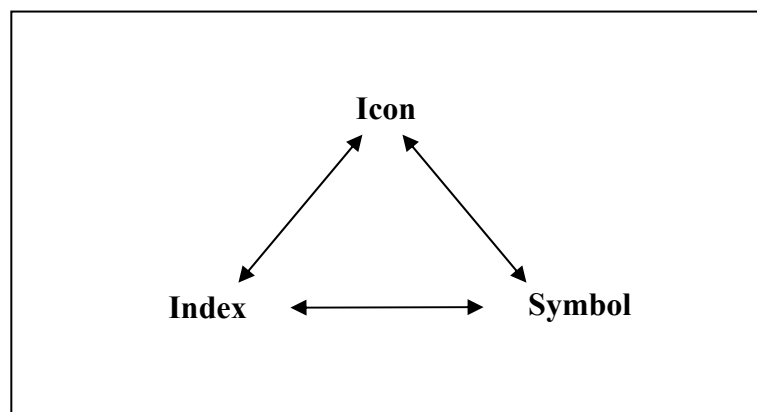
Source: Adapted from Peirce, C. (1931-58, 3.361)

Peirce believed that this was the most useful and fundamental model of the nature of signs. He (1931-58, 3. 361) states, "every sign is determined by its object, either first, by partaking in the character of the object, when I call the sign an *Icon*; secondly, by being really and in its individual existence connected with the individual object, when I call the sign an *Index*; thirdly, by more or less approximate certainty that it will be interpreted as denoting the object in consequence of a habit… when I call the sign a *Symbol*."

Regarding icons, Peirce believed that an iconic sign represents its object mainly by its similarity with that object. Icons have qualities which resemble those of the objects they represent, and they "excite analogous sensations in the mind" (Peirce, 1931-58, 2. 299).

More recently, Danesi (1999, p. 34) sates, "An icon is a sign that stimulates, replicates, reproduces, imitates or resembles properties of its referent." An icon resembles its object in some way and this is often most apparent in visual signs such as photographs, maps and diagrams but may also be verbal. Onomatopoeia is an attempt to make language iconic; for example, the phrase 'the hum of the bees' makes the sound of the word 'hum' resemble the sound of the bees. Words such as drip, bang and screech imitate certain sounds. Music, such as Rossini's William Tell Overture, often contains icons of natural sounds and some perfumes are artificial icons of animal smells indicating sexual arousal.

An index is a sign that has a direct existential connection with its object, thus it indicates something. For example, smoke is an index of fire, a clock is an index of the time of day, spots may be an index of measles. Peirce (1931-58) offers various criteria for what constitutes an index. He contends that there is a genuine relationship between the sign and the object which does not depend purely on the interpreting mind. The index is connected to its object as a matter of fact and whilst it necessarily has some quality in common with it, the signifier is really affected by the signified; there is an actual modification involved.

A symbol is a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object (Peirce, 1931-58). It is a sign whose connection with its object is a matter of convention, agreement, or rule. Symbolic usually refers to visual signs that are arbitrarily linked to referents. Words are normally symbols and so are numbers. There is no reason why the shape '2' should refer to a pair of objects, it is only by convention or rule in the culture that it does. The Roman number II is, of course, iconic.

It should be noted that signs do not fit necessarily into one particular category. A sign can be an icon, a symbol and an index, or any combination of these. Considering the road sign illustrated in Figure 3.6, the red triangle is a symbol, by the rule of the Highway Code it means 'warning'. The cross in the middle is a mixture of icon and symbol; it is iconic in that its form is determined partly by the shape of its object, but it is symbolic in that people need to know the rules in order to understand it as 'crossroads' and not as 'church' or 'hospital'.

In real life, the sign is an index in that it indicates that a person is about to reach a crossroads (Fiske, 1990).

Figure 3.6: Icon-Index-Symbol

Source: Highway Code (1998, p. 59)

Maps have indexical, iconic and symbolic properties. They are signifying systems by which cultures represent territories and boundaries. They have indexical properties in that they indicate to viewers where places are located. They have iconic features since they represent places in spatial relation to each other. However, a map is overall a symbolic system of representation in which the user must have knowledge of the notational system with which the map is constructed, known as the legend, in order to use it (Danesi, 1999).

As a linguist and interpretivist, Saussure ([1916] 1983) made no attempt to categorise signs. However, some consistencies can be found between Peirce's symbols and icons, and Saussure's postulations. Saussure's primary concern was with symbols, for words are symbols. He also recognised that the physical form of the sign, the signifier, and its associated mental concept, the signified, can be related in an iconic or an arbitrary way. In an iconic relationship the signifier looks or sounds like the signified and in an arbitrary relationship the two are related only by agreement among the users. What Saussure terms iconic relations between signifier and signified correspond precisely to Peirce's icons and what he terms arbitrary relations correspond precisely to Peirce's symbols (Fiske, 1990).

3.4.3 The Scale of Motivation

Two theorists from the Continental school who have developed Saussure's ideas are Guiraud (1975) and Barthes (1964/1967, 1964/1968, 1972, 1977, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987). In studying the relationship between the signifier and the signified they employ the terms *arbitrary, iconic, motivation* and *constraint,* all terms which are closely interconnected. As previously mentioned, the term *arbitrary* implies that there is no necessary relationship between signifier and signified; the relationship is determined by convention, rule or agreement among the users. Saussureans use the term *iconic* in a Peircian sense, claiming that the iconic sign is one where the form of the signifier is determined to some extent by the signified.

The terms *motivation* and *constraint* are used almost interchangeably to describe the extent to which the signified determines the signifier. A highly motivated sign is one that is very iconic in nature, such as a photograph. A relatively unmotivated sign is one that is arbitrary/symbolic in nature. The term *constraint* can be used to refer to the influence that the signified exerts on the signifier. The more motivated the sign is, the more its signifier is constrained by the signified. For example, a photograph of a woman is highly motivated/constrained because what the photograph looks like is determined by what the woman herself looks like. A cartoon of a woman is less motivated/constrained because the cartoonist has more freedom, or less constraint, in making the subject appear the way he wants her to. An unmotivated, arbitrary sign consists of the letters that make up the word 'woman'. The less motivated/constrained a sign is, the more important it is for people to have learnt the conventions agreed among the users. Without them, the sign would remain meaningless (Guiraud, 1975; Barthes; 1964/1968, 1972; Fiske, 1990).

The term *convention* refers to the social dimension of signs; it is the agreement amongst the users about the appropriate uses of, and responses to a sign (Fiske, 1990). The more arbitrary a sign is, the greater the degree of convention is necessary in order for it to be generally understood. At its most formal level, convention describes the rules by which arbitrary signs work. For example, there is a formal convention that the sign 'dog' refers to a four-legged

animal and not something else. The scale of motivation illustrated in Figure 3.7 clarifies the above points.

Figure 3.7: Scale of Motivation
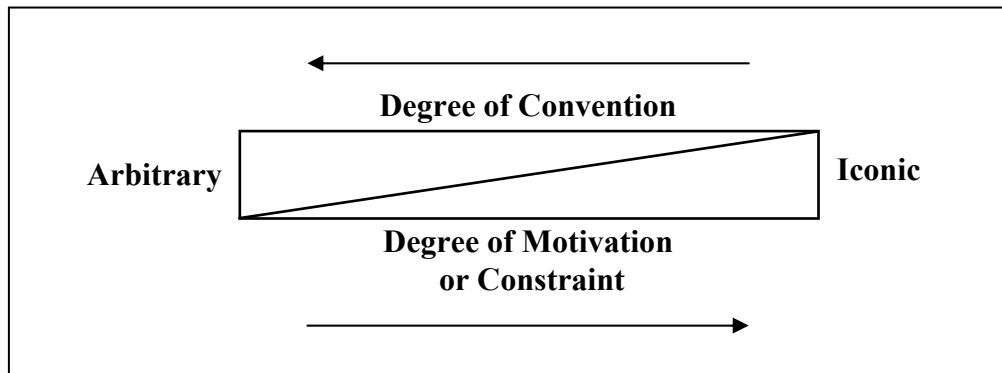
Source: Fiske (1990, p.56)

3.4.4 The Organisation of Signs: Paradigms and Syntagms

Saussure ([1916] 1983) emphasised that the generation of meaning is specifically differential, and that meaning arises from the differences between signs within a system. He also noted that these differences can be classified into two kinds, *paradigmatic* (concerning substitution) and *syntagmatic* (concerning positioning). These two dimensions can be presented as axes where the horizontal axis is the syntagmatic and the vertical axis the paradigmatic. This is illustrated in Figure 3.8. The plane of the paradigm is that of the selection of *'this-or–this-or-this'* (for example, the replacement of the last word in the same sentence with 'died' or 'sang') whereas the plane of the syntagm is that of the combination of *'this-and-this-and-this'* (as in the sentence, 'the man cried'). Whilst syntagmatic relations are possibilities of combination, paradigmatic relations are functional contrasts that involve differentiation (Chandler, 2002).

A *paradigm* is a set of signs from which a choice is made and only one unit from that set may be chosen. All units within a particular paradigm must have something in common; they must share characteristics that determine their membership of that paradigm. Taking the alphabet as an example, the letters form the paradigm for written language. It is commonly

recognised that 'B' is a letter and thus a member of the alphabetic paradigm, and it is equally recognised that '6' is not. Each unit within a particular paradigm must also be clearly distinguished from all others in that paradigm. So, 'A' is different from 'B' which is different from 'C' and so on. Paradigmatic relations are those that reveal the oppositions and contrasts between signs in a set. In the development of advertising messages, for example, scenes or background settings such as beach, kitchen, or city street form an important paradigm from which a key selection is made (Mick, 1986). A paradigmatic choice conveys meaning through the differences between the sign selected and those not selected.

Figure 3.8: Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Axes
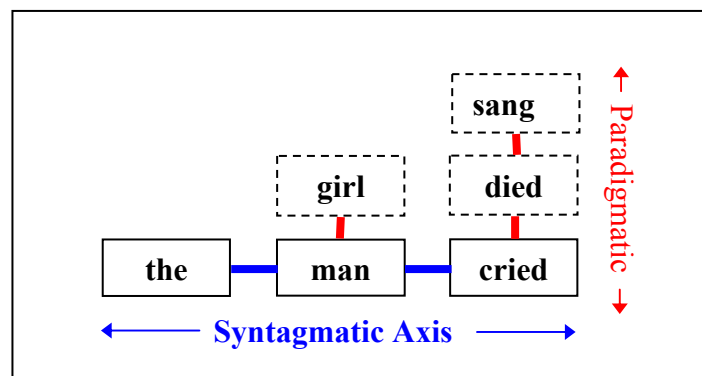
Source: Chandler (2002, p.80)

Once a unit has been chosen from a paradigm it is normally combined with other units. This combination is called a *syntagm*. Thus, a written word is a visual syntagm composed of a sequence of paradigmatic choices from the letters of the alphabet. A sentence is a syntagm of words, as illustrated in the sentence 'the man cried' in Figure 3.8. The way a person chooses to furnish a room is a syntagm of choices from the paradigms of chairs, tables, settees and carpets for example.

Barthes (1985) outlined the paradigmatic and syntagmatic elements of the 'garment system'. The paradigmatic elements, he contends, are the items which cannot be worn at the same time on the same part of the body such as trousers, shorts and a skirt, and the syntagmatic dimension is the juxtaposition of different elements at the same time in a complete ensemble from hat to shoes. Culler (1985) uses the 'food system' and puts on the syntagmatic axis the

combinations of courses which can make up meals of various sorts. Each course or slot can be filled by one of a number of dishes which are in paradigmatic contrast with one another and would be alternatives on the menu. These dishes, which are the alternative to one another, often bear different meanings in that they connote varying degrees of luxury or elegance for example. Syntagms and paradigms provide a structural context within which signs make sense. They are the structural forms through which signs are organised into codes.

3.5   Codes

The concept of the *code* is fundamental in contemporary semiotics. Saussure ([1916] 1983) sowed the seeds of this concept by taking the overall 'code of language' and stressing that signs are not meaningful in isolation, but only when they are interpreted in relation to each other. Later, another linguistic structuralist, Jakobson (1971) emphasised that the production and interpretation of texts depends upon the existence of codes or conventions for communication. More recently, Hall (1980) stressed that there is no intelligible discourse without the operation of a code. Codes are sets of practices familiar to users of the medium operating within a broad cultural framework. They are the systems into which signs are organised and these systems are governed by rules which are consented to by all members of the community using that code (Fiske, 1990). Since the meaning of a sign depends on the code within which it is situated, codes provide a framework within which signs make sense. Chandler (2002) contends that it is not possible to grant something the status of a sign if it does not function within a code.

Examples of codes employed within a culture may include the 'legal code', the 'code of manners', 'dress codes', 'fashion codes', 'food codes', 'codes of looking' and 'codes of touching'. The study of codes frequently emphasises the social dimension of communication. Almost any aspect of social life which is conventional, or governed by rules consented to by members of the society can be called *coded*. Semioticians seek to identify and examine codes, and the tacit rules and constraints which underlie the production and interpretation of meaning within them.

3.5.1 Characteristics and Functions of Codes

All codes share a number of common characteristics. They have both a *paradigmatic* and a *syntagmatic* dimension. The paradigmatic dimension refers to a number of units that they encompass from which a selection is made. These units may be combined by rules or conventions, known as the syntagmatic dimension. All codes convey meaning; their units are signs which refer, by various means, to something other than themselves. All codes depend upon an agreement amongst their users and upon a shared cultural background. Codes and culture interrelate dynamically. All codes perform an identifiable social or communicative function and also they are transmittable by their appropriate media and/or channels of communication.

In providing a classification of codes, Hall (1980) distinguishes between *representational* and *presentational codes*. Representational codes are used to produce texts, that is, messages with an independent existence. A text stands for something apart from itself and its encoder, and is composed of iconic or symbolic signs. Presentational codes are indexical in nature and are limited to face-to-face communication, or at least the presence of the communicator. They cannot stand for something apart from themselves or their encoder and they indicate aspects of the communicator and his/her present social situation. Non-verbal communication such as gestures, eye movements and qualities/tones of voice are carried in presentational codes.

A famous classification of codes appears in previous work by Bernstein (1973). A socio-linguist, he draws a distinction between *restricted* and *elaborated code*. He claims that restricted code is used in informal situations and is characterised by a reliance on situational context, a lack of stylistic variety, an emphasis on the speaker's membership of a particular group, simple syntax and the frequent use of gestures and tag questions such as 'Isn't it?' Elaborated code however, is used in formal situations and is characterised by less dependence on context, wide stylistic range, more adjectives, relatively complex syntax and the use of the pronoun 'I'. Fiske (1990) contends that elaborated and restricted codes share equal importance within society, performing differing but equally important functions.

Elaborated and restricted codes are defined by the nature of the code itself and by the type of social relationship it serves. *Broadcast* and *narrowcast codes*, however, are defined by the nature of the audience (Fiske, 1990). Broadcast codes are shared by members of a mass audience; they are the means by which a culture can communicate with itself. They share many characteristics with restricted codes; they are simple, have immediate appeal, they do not require an education to understand them, they are community oriented, appealing to what people have in common, tending to link people to their society. The popular television soap opera Coronation Street provides a good example of the application of restricted, broadcast codes. Narrowcast codes are aimed at a defined, limited audience, one which has usually decided to learn the codes involved. Corresponding with elaborated codes, the audience expects to be changed or enriched by the communication and they expect differences between the communicator and the audience, if only that the communicator knows more, or sees and feels differently.

3.6   Signification

Emanating from the work of Saussure, members of the Continental tradition have played an influential role in bringing contemporary semiotics to public light by recognising that multiple levels of meaning exist within sign systems (Hjelmslev, 1961; Barthes, 1964/1967, 1964/1968, 1972, 1977, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987; Burnham, 1973; Eco, 1976; Silverman, 1983). Particularly influential is the contribution made by Barthes.

3.6.1   Orders of Signification

Barthes (1964/1967, 1964/1968, 1972, 1977, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987) recognises that beyond the literal meaning of something, further levels of meaning exist. He terms these levels *orders of signification*, calling the first order *denotation,* and the second order *connotation*. Meaning includes in it both denotation and connotation. This is illustrated in Figure 3.9. Barthes believed that at the first order of signification, that of denotation, there is a sign which consists of a signifier and a signified. Denotation can be described as the definitional, literal, obvious or commonsense meaning of a sign (Fiske, 1990; Chandler, 2002). In the

case of linguistic signs, the denotative meaning is what the dictionary attempts to provide. For art historian Panofsky (1970), the denotation of a representational visual image is what all viewers from any culture and at any time would recognise the image as depicting. Danesi (1999) illustrates that the word 'red' denotes a colour on the spectrum, and the word 'house' denotes a structure for human habitation. Denotation is the only order of signification on which Saussure focused. As Barthes (1964/1967) notes, Saussure's model of the sign focused on denotation at the expense of connotation and it was left to subsequent theorists (notably Barthes himself) to offer an account of this important dimension of meaning.

Figure 3.9: Denotation and Connotation
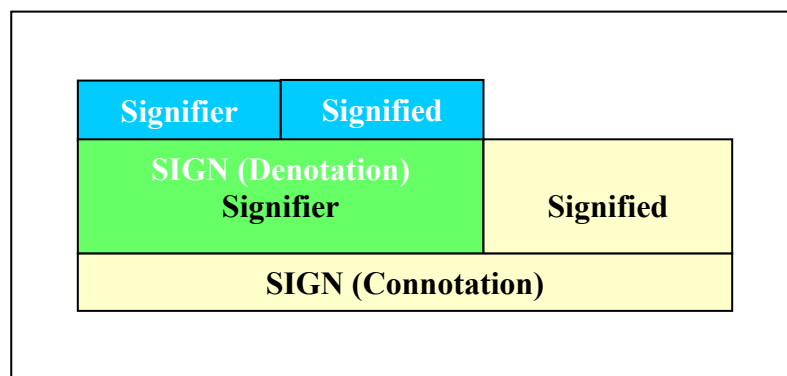
Source: Chandler (2002, p.142)

The second order of signification, connotation uses the denotative sign (signifier and signified) as its signifier and attaches to it an additional signified. Connotation is used to refer to the socio-cultural and personal associations of the sign. It describes the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of the users and the values of their culture. Meanings become more subjective and the interpretant is influenced as much by the interpreter as by the object or the sign. Signs become more polysemic, open to interpretation in their connotations than their denotations.

Barthes (1977) argues that the difference between denotation and connotation can be illustrated in photography. He contends that denotation is the mechanical reproduction on film of the object at which the camera is pointed. Connotation is the human part of the process. It is the selection of what to include in the frame, of focus, aperture, camera angle,

quality of film and so on. Fiske (1990) claims that denotation is what is photographed and connotation is how it is photographed. Going back to the colour 'red', Danesi (1999) recognises its connotative meanings by illustrating that it connotes *life* and *beauty*, and that red lipstick on a female signifies *female life, beauty*, and even the colour of *female genitalia*. He also notes that the term 'red' may be used to refer to an emotional state, a financial predicament or even a political ideology.

Connotations are not, however, purely personal meanings. They are determined by the codes to which the interpreter has access and many codes are culturally defined. Cultural codes provide a connotational framework since they are organised around key oppositions and equations, each term being aligned with a cluster of symbolic attributes (Silverman, 1983). Certain connotations are widely recognised within a culture. For example, most adults in Western cultures would understand that a car connotes *virility* or *freedom*. Because connotation works on a subjective level, people are frequently not made consciously aware of it and connotative values can be read as denotative facts. One of the main aims of semiotic studies is to provide an analytical method and a frame of mind to guard against this sort of misreading (Fiske, 1990).

Barthes (1972) relates connotation to *myth*, claiming that myths are dominant ideologies of a particular time. He argues that denotation and connotation combine to produce *ideology* or *mythology*, a concept which was later described as the third order of signification (Fiske and Hartley, 1978; O'Sullivan et al, 1994). The biographies that early people sought to know were those of the Gods, of the supernatural beings who ran the world behind the scenes. These stories that early people told are known as myths. These poetic narratives provided reassuring information on the reason for things, on how the world came into being, who the Gods were, how humans and animals were created and how customs, gestures, and other human symbolic activities originated. Fiske (1990, p. 88) states that "a myth is a story by which a culture explains or understands some aspect of reality or nature. Primitive myths are about life and death, men and gods, good and evil. Our sophisticated myths are about masculinity and femininity, the family, success, science."

Barthes viewed a myth as a culture's way of thinking about something, a way of conceptualising or understanding it. He argues that the main way that myths work is by naturalising history. He contends (1977), that the function of codes is to naturalise the cultural, making dominant cultural and historical values, attitudes and beliefs seem entirely natural, normal, self-evident, timeless, obvious common sense and thus objective and true reflections of the ways things are. Myths persist in the modern day, where the great mythical themes of all cultures are felt to be parables of a timeless logic, symbols of an intuitive knowledge of human nature and destiny which people feel must be present in their lives.

Barthes (1987) contends that mythic thinking in the modern day is largely unconscious, but it does however show up in social rituals, performances, and spectacles that are shaped by its themes. Considering the apparently idiotic spectacle of commercial wrestling, Barthes (1987) notes that the spectacle is emotionally involving for many people because it represents a mythic fight between *good* and *evil*. Some people become excited or even aggressive at wrestling matches as they get involved in the battle between the forces of *good* and *evil*. The good is often symbolised in the persona of a handsome and muscular wrestler, the bad in that of a depraved, ugly wrestler.

The first, denotative order of signification can therefore be seen as primarily representational and relatively self-contained. The second, connotative order reflects expressive values that are attached to a sign. In the third, ideological or mythological order of signification the sign reflects major culturally-variable concepts underpinning a particular world view such as masculinity, femininity, freedom and so on.

Hayward (1996) offers an example of the three orders of signification in relation to the photograph of Marilyn Monroe illustrated in Figure 3.10. She recognises that at the denotative level this is a photograph of the movie star Marilyn Monroe. At the connotative level people associate this photograph with Marilyn Monroe's star qualities of *glamour*, *sexuality*, *beauty*, but also with her *depression, drug-taking* and untimely *death*. At an ideological/mythic level people understand this sign as activating the myth of *Hollywood*, the dream factory that produces *glamour* in the form of the stars it constructs, but also the dream machine that can crush them – all with a view to *profit* and *expediency*.

Figure 3.10: Photograph of Marilyn Monroe

Source: Hayward (1996, p. 310)

3.6.2 Key Tropes

Contemporary semiotic theorists agree that an understanding of certain *key tropes* (figures of speech) is essential for the exploration of semiotic theory (Jakobson, 1960, 1971; Lévi-Strauss 1970, 1972, 1974; Derrida, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1981, 1998; White, 1978, 1987; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). These key tropes can be identified as *metaphor*, *metonymy*, *synecdoche* and *irony*. They act as an anchor, linking people to the dominant ways of thinking within their culture (Lakaff and Johnson, 1980). Repeated exposure to, and use of, such figures of speech subtly sustains the tacit agreement with the shared assumptions of one's society. Tropes generate imagery with connotations over and above any literal meaning. Once a person employs a trope, the utterance becomes part of a much larger system of associations which is beyond that person's control. Figures of speech enable people to see one thing in terms of another.

Various theorists attribute significant importance to metaphor and metonymy (Jacobson and Halle, 1956; Vico, [1744] 1968; Lévis-Strauss, 1969; Pollio et al, 1977; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Wilden, 1987; Kress and Leeuwen, 1996; Danesi, 1999; Chandler, 2002). They contend that metaphor and metonymy are the two fundamental modes of communicating meaning in which the basis for human understanding in everyday life is created. To the

semiotician, metaphor is the semantic glue that binds all the meaning systems and codes in the system of everyday life. It allows people to link an abstraction to something concrete, familiar, and experienced. People throughout the world use similar metaphorical stories to explain morals, ideas, values and other abstractions to children. Metaphor is the innate faculty that allows the unknowing mind to grasp abstractions on the basis of previous experience (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). When a metaphor is accepted as fact, it enters human life, taking on an independent conceptual existence in the real world.

Metaphor consists of a new sign which is formed from the signifier of one sign and the signified of another. The signifier thus stands for a different signified; the new signified replaces the usual one. This is illustrated in Figure 3.11.

Figure 3.11: Formation of Metaphor
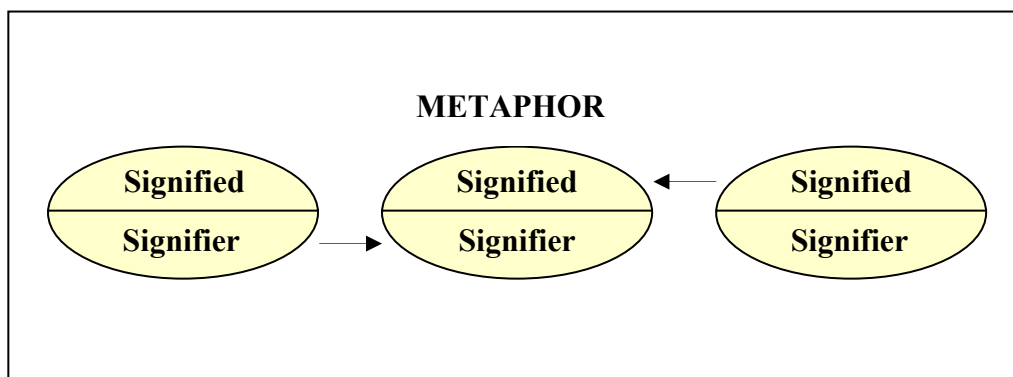
Source: Adapted from Chandler (2002, p. 125)

The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. To illustrate this, Vico (1968) notes how in all languages, the greater part of the expressions relating to inanimate things are formed by metaphor from the human body and its parts, and from the human senses and passions. He describes this in a quote that includes (1968, p. 129): "Thus, head for top or beginning; the brow and shoulders of a hill; the eyes of needles and of potatoes; mouth for any opening; the teeth of a rake, a saw, a comb; the hands of a clock; the flesh of fruits; the bowels of the earth; the wind whistles; the waves murmur."

More recently, Kress and Leeuwen (1996) recognise how seeing, in Western culture, has become synonymous with understanding. They state (1996, p. 168), "We 'look' at a problem. We 'see' the point. We adopt a 'viewpoint'. We 'focus' on an issue. We 'see things in perspective'. The world 'as we see it' (rather than 'as we know it' and certainly not 'as we hear it' or 'as we feel it') has become the measure for what is 'real' and 'true'." Lakoff and Johnson (1980) previously noted that metaphors form systematic clusters such as, *ideas* are *objects*, *linguistic expressions* are *containers* and *communication* is *sending*. Metaphors not only cluster in this way but when extended they become myths.

Metaphors have become so habitually employed and naturalised within culture that much of the time people fail to recognise that they are using them at all. One study found that English speakers produce an average of three thousand novel metaphors per week which, in time, become naturalised into their culture (Pollio et al, 1977). Metaphors can be both *verbal* and *visual*. Visual metaphors frequently play a central role in the development of advertising campaigns.

Whilst metaphor works by transposing qualities from one plane of reality to another, metonymy works by associating meanings within the same plane (Fiske, 1990). Metaphor is based on apparent unrelatedness whereas metonymy is a function that involves using one signified to stand for another signified which is directly related to it or closely associated with it in some way (Chandler, 2002). Metonyms are based on various indexical relationships between signifieds. Previously, Wilden (1987, p. 198) defined metonymy as "the evocation of the whole by a connection. It consists in using for the name of a thing or a relationship an attribute, a suggested sense, or something closely related, such as effect for cause… the imputed relationship being that of contiguity (closeness)." Metonymy can include the substitution of a number of factors, as described in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Substitutes in Metonymy

Effect for *cause*	(Don't get hot under the collar!' for 'Don't get angry')
Object for *user*	(or associated *institution*) ('the Crown' for the *monarchy*, 'the stage' for the *theatre* and 'the press' for *journalists*
Substance for *form*	('plastic' for *credit card,* 'lead' for *bullet*
Place for *event*	('*Chernobyl* changed attitudes to nuclear power')
Place for *person*	('No. 10' for the *Prime Minister*)
Place for *institution*	('*Whitehall* isn't saying anything')
Institution for *people*	('The *government* is not backing down')

Source: Adapted from Chandler (2002, p. 130)

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) comment on three more types of substitution within metonym which include; *producer* for *product* ('she owns a *Picasso'*); *object* for *user* (the *beef sandwich* wants his bill); *controller* for *controlled* ('*Nixon* bombed Hanoi'). Choices of particular kinds of substitution are likely to influence people's thoughts, attitudes and actions by focusing on certain aspects of a concept and suppressing other aspects that are inconsistent with the chosen metonym (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Like metaphors, metonyms may be *visual* as well as *verbal*.

The indexicality of metonyms suggests that they are directly connected to reality in contrast to the mere iconicity or symbolism of metaphor. Metonyms appear to be more obviously grounded in human experience than metaphors since they usually involve direct associations and do not require transposition from one domain to another as metaphor does (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Metonyms work syntagmatically for realist effect whereas metaphors work paradigmatically for imaginative or surrealistic effect.

Previously, Jakobson and Halle (1956) proposed that metaphor and metonymy are the two basic axes of language and communication and that their syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions can be plotted on axes. This is illustrated in Figure 3.12. It is in this sense that connotation can be said to work in a metaphoric mode (Fiske, 1990).

Figure 3.12: Metaphor and Metonymy

Metaphor
Paradigm
Similarity
Substitution
Selection

Metonymy
Syntagm
Contiguity
Contexture
Combination
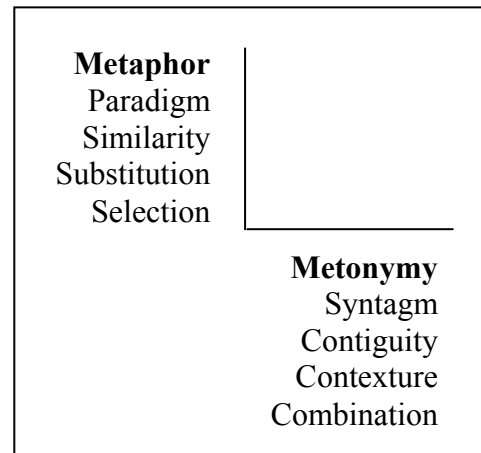
Source: Jakobson, R. and Halle, M (1956, p. 90)

Like metonymy, synecdoche is also based on contiguity (closeness) (Jakobson and Halle, 1956). For this reason some theorists choose to classify it as part of metonymy whilst others treat it as a separate trope. In essence, synecdoche is "the substitution of part for whole, genus for species or vice versa" (Lanham, 1969, p. 97). Examples of synecdoche are illustrated in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Synechdoche

Part for *whole*	('I'm going to the *smoke* [*London*]', 'I've got a new set of *wheels'* [*car*])
Whole for *part*	('I was stopped by the *law* [*police officer*], 'the market' for *customers*)
Species for *genus*	('bread' for *food*, 'Hoover' for *vacuum cleaner*)
Genus for *species*	('vehicle' for *car*, 'machine' for *computer*)

Source: Adapted from Chandler (2002, p. 133)

In photographic and film media a close-up is a simple synecdoche, a part representing a whole (Jakobson and Halle, 1956). Indeed, the formal frame of any visual image functions as a synecdoche in that it suggests that what is being offered is a slice of life, and that the world outside the frame is carrying on in the same manner as the world depicted within it

(Chandler, 2002). Synecdoche expects the viewer to fill in the gaps and advertisements frequently employ this trope. Attempts to represent reality, such as in news film, frequently employ synecdoche. This is because, whilst indexical relations in general reflect the closest link that a signifier can be seen as having with a signified, the part/whole relations of synecdoche reflect the most direct link of all. That which is seen as forming part of a larger whole to which it refers is connected existentially to what is signified, as an integral part of its being.

Irony is the most radical of the four main tropes. As with metaphor, the signifier of the ironic sign appears to signify one thing but it becomes apparent from another signifier that it actually signifies something very different. Based on binary opposition, an ironic statement usually means the opposite of what is actually said. It may thus reflect the opposite of the thoughts or feelings of the speaker or writer (a person saying they 'love' something when they 'hate' it) or the opposite of the truth about external reality (the weather is 'very hot' when it is 'freezing cold'). Limited use of irony is usually intended as a form of humour and frequent use may be associated with reflexiveness, detachment or scepticism. It sometimes marks a cynical stance, which assumes that people do not mean or do what they say (Chandler, 2002).

If an ironic sign is a spoken utterance a sarcastic intonation is likely to identify its status as irony. It may be marked by a 'knowing' smile, by the use of 'air quotes' (gestural inverted commas) or even by use of the word 'not' after the utterance. However, it can in fact be quite difficult to identify. All of the tropes involve the non-literal substitution of a new signified for the usual one and comprehension requires a distinction between what is said and what is meant. Thus, they are all in a sense double signs. However, whereas the other tropes involve shifts in what is being referred to, irony involves a shift in modality. The evaluation of the ironic sign requires the retrospective assessment of its modality status. Re-evaluating an apparently literal sign for ironic cues requires reference to perceived intent and to truth status. An ironic statement is not the same as a lie because it is not intended to be taken as true. Irony has sometimes been referred to as *double-coded* (Chandler, 2002).

A brief summary of the four tropes, with linguistic examples, is provided in Table 3.3. It can be concluded that each of the four tropes represents a different relationship between the signifier and signified. White (1973, 1978) contends that these relationships consist of; resemblance (*metaphor*), adjacency (*metonymy*), essentiality (*synecdoche*) and doubling (*irony*). Recognising the importance of them, Culler (1981, p. 65) states that "they may constitute a system, indeed *the* system by which the mind comes to grasp the world conceptually in language."

Table 3.3: Summary of the Four Tropes

Trope	*Basis*	*Linguistic Example*	*Intended Meaning*
Metaphor	Similarity despite difference (explicit in the case of simile)	I work at the coalface	I do the hard work
Metonymy	Relatedness through direct association	I'm one of the suits	I'm one of the managers
Synecdoche	Relatedness through categorical hierarchy	I deal with the general public	I deal with customers
Irony	Inexplicit direct opposite (more explicit in sarcasm)	I love working here	I hate working here

Source: Chandler (2002, p. 136)

3.7   Neopositivistic Semiotics versus Interpretive Semiology

Holbrook and Hirschman (1993) distinguish between the American tradition of semiotics and the Continental tradition of semiology, noting that the two traditions do appear to encourage contrasting points of view. They term the American position *neopositivistic semiotics* and the Continental position *interpretive semiology*. They contend that although much research inhabits a grey area that borrows from both traditions, and thereby falls between the two extremes, it is very useful to preserve a contrast between the two divergent viewpoints. Based on Singer's (1984) account of the differences between the two approaches, and on

work by Laundan (1984), Holbrook and Hirschman (1993) summarise the key differences between the two approaches. This is illustrated in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Neopositivistic Semiotics versus Interpretive Semiology

	NEOPOSITIVISTIC SEMIOTICS	**INTERPRETIVE SEMIOLOGY**
AIMS	Focus on *all kinds* of SIGNS, including: ICONS (e.g., pictorial art), INDICES (e.g., music, dance), SYMBOLS (e.g., conventional language)	Focus on *communication* via SYMBOLS organised into LANGUAGES and CODES (e.g., food, clothing, furniture, High Art, pop culture, myths, rituals)
CONCEPTS	A TRIADIC relation among a SIGN (icon/index/symbol), an OBJECT (designatum), and an INTERPRETANT (disposition to respond); inclusion of the object encourages a NEOPOSITIVISTIC emphasis on DENOTATION	A DYADIC relation between a SIGNIFIER (form, expression) and a SIGNIFIED (concept, content); extends this dyadic scheme to MULTIPLE LEVELS OF MEANING (involving CONNOTATION and METALANGUAGE)
METHODS	The NEOPOSITIVISTIC bias emphasises the PRAGMATIC aspects of semiosis found in its INTERPRETANTS involving *behavioural responses of sign users*	The POSTPOSITIVISTIC bias toward INTERPRETATION emphasises the SEMANTIC aspects of *multiple levels of meaning*

Source: Holbrook, M. and Hirschman, E. (1993, p. 11)

The contrasting aims, concepts, and methods described in Table 3.4 draw a general picture of two somewhat different approaches to the study of signs. Neopositivistic semiotics tends to adopt a hypothetico-deductive approach to the study of pragmatic effects involving conventional verbal language, or responses to nonverbal artistic creations such as music and painting (Morris, 1964). Interpretive semiology tends to focus on the structuralist analysis of symbolic codes and often considers the non-artistic artefacts of pop culture or everyday consumption whose multi-level meanings may not be consciously intended to communicate but which nevertheless play a role within society (Guiraud, 1975).

The work of Holbrook and Hirschman (1993) has significant methodological implications for this study. Whilst the study recognises that much research falls into a grey area between the two extremes of neopositivistic semiotics and interpretive semiology, and thus continues to refer to *semiotics* as the study of signs as a whole, it also recognises differences in subject matter, method, specific concepts and laws as well as epistemology and ontology (Singer, 1984) that cannot be ignored. The specific *semiological* approach adopted in this study is outlined in detail within the Methodology (Chapter 6).

3.8   Chapter Summary

Recognising the central role of semiotics to the investigation, this chapter aimed to provide an overview, discussion and critique of semiotic theory. Several definitions were provided and the key contributors to the field were identified. It was recognised that semioticians investigate the sign systems or codes essential to all types of communication for the latent rules that facilitate sign production and interpretive responses. Semiotic theory is traditionally grounded in structuralist philosophy, adopting the viewpoint that any object, custom or artefact can be fruitfully studied in terms of its role in a sign process. Insights are gleaned into the human meaning-quest by studying the distinct meanings that are generated through the world's various systems of everyday life.

It was found that the twentieth century has witnessed a rapid development in semiotic theory and method; significant contributions to the field made by Swiss Linguist, Saussure ([1916] 1974, 1983), and American philosopher and logician, Peirce (1931-58). Founding the Continental tradition, Saussure's chief contribution to the field was in shifting a longstanding philosophical emphasis on the nature of things to a relational worldview, whereby meaning derives from the priorities humans construct and perceive among signs in a system. Signs shape people's perceptions rather than reflecting a reality that already exists. Language and other communication systems provide the conceptual framework in and through which reality is available to people. Founding the American tradition, Peirce adopted a vision of semiotics that took a logic centred, hypo-deductive orientation grounded in empirical observation to

formulate a model of the sign, taxonomies of signs, and semiotics. It was recognised that, subsequent to Saussure and Peirce, theorists from the Continental tradition who have been particularly influential in bringing semiotics to contemporary public light are Barthes (1964/1967, 1964/1968, 1972, 1977, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987), Eco (1976, 1978, 1979, 1984, 1999) and Sebeok (1972, 1976, 1979, 1981).

The chapter continued with more focused technical discussion of signs, codes and signification. Saussure's two-part, dyadic model of the sign was introduced, where signification is determined from the relationship between signifier and signified, and from the paradigmatic and syntagmatic differences between signs within the same system. Discussion continued with Peirce's three-part, triadic model of the sign, which includes in it a sign, interpretant and object. Here, the sign refers to something other than itself, the object, and is understood by somebody; that is, it has an effect in the mind of the user, the interpretant. Peirce's role as a compulsive taxonomist was highlighted, along with his most enduring classification which categorises signs as iconic, indexical and symbolic. Further work by Peirce's successors was discussed, particularly Morris's (1964) trichotomy of syntactics-semantics-pragmatics and the semantic differential scale. The scale of motivation was described, highlighting that the more motivated/constrained a sign, the more iconic it is, and the less motivated/constrained a sign, the more arbitrary it is.

It was recognised that codes are systems into which signs are organised and these systems are governed by rules which are consented to by all members of the community using that code. Codes provide the framework within which signs make sense and they can be representational, presentational, elaborated and/or restricted. Members of the Continental tradition have played an influential role in bringing contemporary semiotics to public light by recognising that multiple levels of meaning exist within sign systems. Barthes (1968, 1972, 1977, 1983, 1986) termed these levels orders of signification, calling the first order denotation and the second order connotation. Later, myth/ideology was termed the third order of signification. Semiotic theorists agree that an understanding of certain key tropes is essential for the exploration of semiotic theory as they act as an anchor, linking people to the dominant ways of thinking within their culture. Tropes considered here were metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony.

Of significant methodological importance to the study, the American tradition of semiotics was compared and contrasted with the Continental tradition of semiology. It was recognised that, although much research falls into a grey area between the two extremes, and as such the term *semiotics* is used throughout to refer to the study of signs as a whole, there are differences in subject matter, method, specific concepts and laws as well as epistemology and ontology that cannot be ignored. It was noted that the specific *semiological* approach adopted in this study is outlined in detail in the Methodology Chapter.

Chapter 4

**Semiotics – Culture,
The Self and Consumption**

Semiotics – Culture, The Self and Consumption

"A man's self is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands, and yacht and bank account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down."

(James, 1890, pp. 291-292)

4.1   Introduction

It is important to link semiotic theory to the key conceptual areas that form the focus of this investigation. This chapter aims to achieve this by discussing and critiquing theory of culture, the self and consumption, and illustrating the central role of semiotics within these fields. The chapter begins by defining and describing culture, and identifying the importance of semiotics in the analysis of culture. It continues by discussing theory of the self*, which includes detailed analysis of theory of symbolic interactionism, performance, signifying spaces and possessions and the self. The final section concentrates on consumption, specifically examining the development of semiotics in consumer research. Key contributions are highlighted with particular reference to influential work by Mick (1986, 1988) and Holbrook and Hirschman (1982, 1993), who study the deeper and more meaningful aspects of semiotics and consumption. Finally, brand communications are addressed along with key communication methods of advertising and the retail environment.

4.2   Culture

Solomon et al (1999, p. 377) state that *culture* "may be thought of as the collective memory of a society. It is the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among the members of a society. It is what defines a human community, its individuals, its social organisations, as well as its economic and political system." Culture includes in it both

abstract ideas, such as values and ethics, as well as the material objects and services, such as cars, clothing, food, art and sports, that are produced or valued by a group of people. It is the overall system within which other systems are organised (Solomon et al, 1999).

In early work, Vico ([1744] 1968) contends that culture is humanities' greatest invention. Focusing on metaphor, he not only claims that metaphor is the strategy by which humans make abstract knowledge, but he went further than this, attributing the ability to use metaphors to the workings of the human imagination. Using the imagination and its ability to fantasise, human beings feel impelled to constantly search for new meanings. Indeed humanity is restless, never appeased, unless and until it is inventing something new, and this is how culture is formed. Culture is not static, it is continually evolving, synthesising old ideas with new ones.

Semiotics is particularly relevant when applied to the study of cultural practices as insights can be gleaned into the human-meaning quest from a study of the distinct meanings that are generated through the world's various systems of everyday life. The world's sign systems provide key pieces of evidence for solving the riddle of culture and for probing the mystery behind the human meaning quest. Semiotics posits that virtually nobody thinks as a truly free agent; rather that each person is a product of culture. Also, that culture is largely determined by language, and by the popular culture of the day, in the country in which one lives; or at least in the cultural area most relevant to one's particular sex, age cohort, life-style, profession and/or cultural class (Alexander, 1999).

Semiotically, culture can be defined as a kind of 'macro-code', consisting of numerous codes which a group of individuals habitually use to interpret reality (Nichols, 1981; Sturrock, 1986; Danesi, 1994; 1999). Semioticians treat as signs any objects or actions which have meaning to members of a particular cultural group, seeking to identify the rules or conventions of the codes which underlie the production of meanings within that culture. Codes may include: the clothes people wear, the work they do, the way they talk, their hairstyles, eating habits, domestic environments, possessions, use of leisure time, modes of travel and so on (Fussell, 1984). Understanding such codes, their relationships and the

contexts in which they are appropriate is part of what it means for a person to be a member of a particular culture.

Signs acquire their meaning through the socialisation process that begins in childhood. Infants are born with relatively few innate traits yet a vast number of potential behaviours. These behaviours are shaped and influenced significantly by the culture within which a person is reared. Cultural signs are vital to the interpretation of social reality, allowing people to assign meaning to the world. Thayler, (1982, p. 30) states, "what we learn is not the world, but particular codes into which it has been structured so that we may share our experiences of it." Semiotic theory proposes that people are not as independent-minded and self-determined as they like to think they are. Rather, people are creatures of their cultures; they perceive the world, draw up their value-systems and make, and share, their group meanings in accordance with the perceptions, values and meanings of the particular culture they belong to (Alexander, 2000).

Individuals with a common history of enculturation should exhibit considerable overlap in their interpretation of cultural meanings. The ascribed meanings of many signs possess a high degree of consensual validation. The shared meaning inherent in a common sign system allows an individual to assume that his/her interpretation of reality is reasonably consistent with the interpretations of others (Solomon, 1983; Solomon et al, 1999). Every culture expresses itself through the overall package of communications that form its discourse. Discourse is the expression of that culture's own particular worldview; made up of an overall mix of relevant television, radio, films, books, music, advertising, jokes, folklore and personal conversation, all of which embody similar cultural assumptions and taken-for-granted meanings (Alexander, 2000).

People learn to read the world in terms of the codes and conventions which are dominant within the specific socio-cultural contexts and roles they are socialised. In the process of adopting a way of seeing, people also adopt an identity. The most important constancy in people's understanding of reality is each person's sense of who they are as an individual (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 1995). Nichols (1981) contends that roles, conventions, attitudes, language, to varying degrees, are internalised in order to be repeated, and through

the constancies of repetition a consistent locus gradually emerges, *the self*. Although never fully determined by these internalisations, the self would be entirely underdetermined without them.

As Mead (1934) previously stressed, in cultures the world over, the primary problem of life is trying to solve how to construct signifiers in terms of the social system into which one is born and reared; that is, how to present a persona that conforms to the expectations of this system. Every child learns relatively early in life that gaining the acceptance of his/her social audience entails fashioning a persona that will allow him/her to conceal certain habits, views, idiosyncrasies from public view, while exposing and highlighting others. Markus and Nurius (1986) suggest that an individual is free to create any variety of possible selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual's particular socio-cultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual's immediate social experiences.

4.3   The Self

Goffman (1957) emphasised that throughout the world, people equate the self with the face. He noted that the idea is, in fact, implicit in the word 'person'. In ancient Greece, 'persona' signified a mask worn by an actor on stage. Subsequently, it came to have the meaning of the character of the mask wearer. Eventually the word came to have its present meaning, *the self*. Rosenberg (1979, p. 7) defines self-concept as the "totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object". Solomon et al (1999, p. 181) state simply that the self-concept is "the attitude a person holds towards him or herself." Although self-concept has been treated from numerous viewpoints, of relevance here is the theory of *symbolic interactionism* which views the self as a function of both intrapersonal and interpersonal interaction.

4.3.1 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism, a sociological theory, was initially proposed by Cooley (1902) and has since been developed by a number of theorists (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1957; Blumer, 1969, 1986; Hewitt, 1976; MacCanell, 1976; Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982). This concept proposes that relationships with other people are of significant importance in the formation of the self. Solomon (1983) contends that symbolic interactionism focuses on the process by which individuals understand their world. It assumes that people exist in a symbolic environment, and the meaning attached to any situation or object is determined by the interpretation of these symbols. People interpret the actions of others rather than simply reacting to them. Moreover, the interpretations are a function of the meaning attached to such actions, which are, in turn, mediated largely by symbols.

Solomon (1983) recognises many overlaps between the tenets of symbolic interactionism and semiotics, thus hinting that the more refined metalanguage of semiotics holds significant promise for symbolic interactionism theory and research. Like most semioticians, symbolic interactionists view human minds as fundamentally social and thus existentially dependent upon shared symbols. According to both perspectives, meaning is negotiated and constructed through intrapersonal and interpersonal discourse; it is not an individual enterprise, but rather a social procedure for defining objects to achieve a practical effect (Gallant and Kleinman, 1983).

Agreeing with the semiotic perspective, symbolic interactionists propose that self-concept encompasses such things as role identities, personal attributes, relationships, fantasies, possessions and other symbols that individuals use for the purpose of self creation and self understanding (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1957; Rosenberg, 1979; Sirgy, 1982; Taylor, 1989; Schouten, 1991; Giddens, 1993; Thompson, 1995; Thompson and Hirschman, 1995; Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998; Solomon et al, 1999). Thompson (1995) describes the self as a symbolic project, which the individual must actively construct out of the available symbolic materials, materials which the individual weaves into a coherent account of who he/she is, a narrative of self-identity.

Early architects of symbolic interactionism not only emphasised the symbolic nature of the self, but they recognised that the self is, in fact, made up of a number of constituents (James, 1890; Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). James (1890) partitioned the self into at least four constituents and offered separate analyses of the *material self,* the *social self,* the *spiritual self* and *pure ego*. He believed that each person has as many selves as they do social roles. Cooley (1902) proposed a concept which is still central to current theory of symbolic interactionism; the metaphor of the *looking glass self*. According to Cooley, a process of reflexive evaluation occurs when the individual attempts to define the self, and it operates as a sort of psychological sonar. People take readings of their own identity by bouncing signals off others. The looking-glass image people receive depends on whose views they are considering.

Mead's (1934) analysis took the construct of self-concept a step further. He proposed that individuals are role-players; they can play many disparate roles depending on the cues inherent in a given setting. According to Mead, the individual's definition of the self as a role-player in a specific relationship is termed a 'me'. Thus, people have a separate 'me' for each of their roles. It is plausible to assume that all 'me's' are not equally articulated, learned or complex, and that some are more salient than others for self-definition. The individual's set of 'me's' combines to form a total self-conception, which Mead termed 'I'.

In a sense, every human being is, in fact, a number of different people. People have as many selves as they do social roles (James, 1890; Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Sarbin and Allen, 1968; Zaltman and Wallendorf, 1979; Solomon et al, 1985; Markus and Nurius, 1986; Broderick, 1998, 1999; Solomon et al, 1999). Only one or a few of these are ever active at a particular point in time. Some role identities, such as husband, boss, or student are always central to the self, whereas others, such as swimmer, dancer or stamp collector only become dominant in specific situations. Hill (1992) carried out a survey of executives in Britain, the United States and some Pacific Rim countries and discovered that different aspects of the executives' personalities came into play depending on whether they are making a purchase decision at home or at work. They report being less time-conscious, more emotional and less disciplined in their home roles.

As a person takes on different role identities they also engage in the 'subcultural' discourse which is distinctive to each identity. They may, for example, become involved with the 'fashion' subcultural discourse, the 'food' discourse, the 'political' discourse, the 'financial' discourse, or 'high-risk leisure' discourse depending on which identity is prevalent at a particular point in time (Alexander, 2000). During that time, whilst wearing the appropriate subcultural hat, one shares the assumptions, attitudes and taken-for-granted meanings, and therefore the subcultural discourse with other members of the same subculture.

The multiplicity of role identities makes the nature of self-concept complex. Recognising this multidimensional perspective, various theorists have attempted to categorise self-concept into a variety of *actual selves* (or roles) and a variety of possible, or *ideal, selves* (Freud, 1965; Rosenberg, 1979; Sirgy, 1982; Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998; Solomon et al, 1999). The actual self refers to how a person perceives him/herself and is determined through a realistic appraisal of the qualities he/she has or lacks. The ideal self refers to a person's perception of how he/she would like to be. This is influenced by elements within a person's culture*,* such as heroes or people depicted in advertising who serve as models of materialistic achievement or appearance (Freud, 1965).

4.3.2 *Performance*

The word 'life' refers to something that one knows exists, but when asked to describe it, Aristotle ([384-322 B.C] 1915) explained, there is virtually no way of conveying its meaning in common words. This is because the notion of life is something abstract, and thus produces no concrete images to which one can put words. A stage, on the other hand, is something one can visualise, and thus describe easily in words; it is a raised platform on which theatrical performances are presented, where actors perform routines according to their roles. The use of the stage metaphor to describe life makes this notion intelligible. Performance is, literally the communication of an artistic form (from Latin *per* meaning *through* and *forma,* meaning *form*), framed in a special way and put on display for an audience. Performances are given spatial prominence, through a raised stage or a platform; they generally involve using props and paraphernalia such as costumes, masks, and artefacts of various kinds; they occur within

a socially defined situation; they have a beginning and an end; they unfold through a structured sequence of parts; and they are coordinated for public involvement.

Employing the *performance metaphor*, Goffman (1957) drew attention to the idea that everyday life is very much like the theatre because it involves a skilful staging of character. He noted that individuals seem to be bent on preparing their individual persona or self for presentation to spectators. Goffman (1957) pioneered the theoretical concept of *presentation of the self,* based on the performance metaphor in his early study of the Shetland Islands' crofters. He proposed that an individual, the actor, manages his/her speech, body, demeanour, attire and other communicative symbols and gestures to present a certain impression to others. This impression management is designed to elicit a preconceived interpretation of the self from the presumed audience. In other words, the actor presents an identity for social validation. The response to this identity presentation, the definition by others of that person's role identities, shapes how he/she will enact the role on subsequent occasions. Goffman's work on performance and the self is consistent with the symbolic interactionist perspective.

If an actor is to convincingly play a role, he/she requires the correct stage setting and props to do so. Through socialisation people learn that different roles are accompanied by different constellations of products, services and activities that help to define those roles (Belk, 1988; Malhotra, 1988; McCracken, 1988; Gabriel and Lang, 1995; Valentine, 1995; Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998). For the semiotician, analysis of stage settings and props provides codes from which it becomes possible to explore the human quest for meaning.

4.3.3 Stage Settings – Signifying Spaces

Signifying spaces such as cities, shelters, buildings and communal sites invariably constitute codes. They are perceived as signifying systems by members of society, offering spatial codes which people use to guide their uses of, and behaviour within such places. Signifying spaces can be *public, private* and/or *sacred*. Public spaces are those sites where communal or social interactions of various kinds take place; private spaces are those places that individuals

have appropriated or designated as their own; sacred places are those locales that are purported to have metaphysical, mythical or spiritual attributes and meanings (Belk et al, 1989; Danesi, 1999). Interconnectedness among spatial codes is what gives coherence and meaning to cultural activities and routines in the system of everyday life.

The home provides a good example of a signifying space. At a denotative level, the home, whether a crude hut or a mansion has straightforward meaning; it is a shelter providing protection from weather and intruders. But the home is not just a shelter, it demarcates territory, constituting a privately bounded space that ensures safety and preserves sanity. It represents a crucial distinction between the harsh, external world and a person's inner space. Entering the home evokes feelings that one has retreated into the safety of one's own body. It is therefore an extension of self-space (Csikszentmilahyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Belk, 1988; Solomon et al, 2002). This is why intrusion into the home is felt as a violation of the self (Rudmin, 1987).

The home has been attributed with sacred status (Jackson, 1956; Eliade, 1959; Tuan, 1978; Kron, 1983) because it houses the family. The most sacred and secret family activities occur there, including cooking, eating, sleeping, having sex, dressing, caring for children and the sick (Saegert, 1985). It is separated from the *profane* world 'outside' through careful attention given to entry thresholds (Deffontaines, 1953; Rapoport, 1982; Altman and Chemers, 1984). Within the home, private spaces serve as inner sanctums in a society favouring individualism (Tuan, 1978). The hearth is often a communal family alter where family photographs are enshrined and greeting cards connecting the family to others are displayed (Jackson, 1956; Lévi-Strauss, 1965a; Collier and Collier, 1986). Significant amounts of money are spent each year on interior decorators and home furnishings as people go to great lengths to create a special environment that allows them to create the quality of homeliness (Pratt, 1981, McCracken, 1989).

When a signifying space becomes regarded as sacred, it is likely to command reverential behaviours such as pilgrimages, removal or wiping of shoes, silence, purification prior to entry, or sacrificial offerings. If they do not already exist, boundaries may be marked and shrines erected. A place may become sacred by contamination through events that occurred

there or because sacred persons were born, performed miracles, received mystic revelations, and are buried there (Belk et al, 1989). *Rituals* may sacralise a place, as with burials, housewarming parties, and even car/motorcycle racing at race tracks. Some sacred places, especially those in nature, have a beauty, majesty and power to evoke ecstasy and flow without help from myth, ritual or contamination (Lipsey, 1984; Brereton, 1987).

People often take the opportunity to perform pilgrimages to sacred places. Pilgrims disengage from their ordinary lives entering sacred precincts and their stay becomes a phase of self-transition. This transitional phase is marked by a rite of intensification in which the pilgrims engage in shared performance rituals with other pilgrims who are likely to be widely scattered and dissimilar in ordinary life but who share a common mythohistorical orientation (Coon, 1958). Heightened emotions allow pilgrims to share a bond of common experience and *communitas* (Turner, 1969; 1974). They return, not transformed as in the basic formulation of rites of passage, but with a reaffirmed and renewed sense of self-identity (Moore, 1980).

Consumption has its public cathedrals that enhance the mystery and sense of otherworldliness of the sacred. Such places have been instrumental in the development of consumer culture (Belk et al, 1989). Theme parks are a form of mass-produced fantasy that take on aspects of sacredness. In particular, the various Disneylands are destinations for pilgrimages from consumers around the world. Disneyland displays many characteristics of more traditional sacred places, especially for Americans, but Europeans too may consider these parks the quintessence of *America*. It is even regarded by some as the epitome of *childhood happiness*. A trip to the park is the most common 'last wish' for terminally ill children (Kottak, 1982).

In villages, the traditional market square used to be a locus for people to enact certain rituals, to exchange goods and services, and to socialise. These same kinds of functions are served in modern urban social societies, by the shopping mall. The mall is much more than just a locus for shopping (Mann, 1980; Kowinski, 1985; Zepp, 1986; Danesi, 1999); it is a sacred performance arena, with its magnificent grandiose architecture, theatrical lighting, and sumptuous display (Williams, 1981; Bowlby, 1985, Gottdiener, 1995), a place where shopping has become a ritual in a consumption-oriented society.

The modern mall satisfies several psychic and social needs at once. It is a safe and purified space for human social activities, a haven for combating loneliness and boredom. With its theatrical atmosphere proclaiming the virtues of a consumerist utopia, it imparts a feeling of *security* and *protection* against the outside world of cars, mechanical noises and air pollution. It shields against rain, snow, heat and cold, conveying feelings of *control* and *organisation* (Bowlby, 1985; Zepp, 1986; Gottdiener, 1995; Danesi, 1999). Shopping malls are, indeed, fast becoming self-contained 'fantasylands' where one can leave the problems, dirt, and hassles of ordinary urban life outside. In the controlled environment inside the mall everything is clean, shiny, cheery and optimistic. It is thus experienced as a nirvana of endless shopping, cosmeticised and simplified to keep grisly reality out of sight and mind. Dansesi (1999, p. 142) states, "The mall is a sign which stands for our system of everyday life. The meaning of this sign is essentially that shopping equals paradise on earth." But ultimately, he claims, "this is an empty, vacuous meaning." Very few people claim that their experiences at shopping malls are memorable, rewarding or meaningful and they do not remember them for very long afterwards.

4.3.4 Props – Possessions and the Self

From the dawn of civilisation, objects have had great personal and cultural significance for no apparent reason other than they appeal to people. Gold, for example, became a precious metal from which all kinds of valuable artefacts continue to be made, from money to wedding rings. In the 1950s and 1960s the perception of objects as meaningful things became particularly apparent in North American society as contemporary artists began to use everyday commercial items like bottles, cans and hygiene products as *objects d'art;* symbols standing not for themselves but for consumerist values (Danesi, 1999).

It has been recognised that a person's self-concept is largely a result of others' appraisals, both imagined and actual. It is essentially a projection of how one appears to others; to use Cooley's early (1902) term, the *looking glass self*. Evaluations of a person's roles are dependent upon the appropriateness and quality of the symbols which accompany that role.

People require the proper constellation of products to build an appropriate discourse and deliver a satisfactory reflection of their self. The actor's self-confidence and interactions with others are based on the character of this reflection. Reflexive feedback that one 'looks the part' elicits the set of learned behaviours corresponding to the appropriate 'me,' thus generating a *self-fulfilling prophecy* as others pattern their behaviour vis-à-vis the enacted role. The subsequent reinforcement from others validates one's claim to occupy that role (Solomon, 1983, Gordon and Valentine, 2000).

Dittmar (1992) comments that material possessions have a profound symbolic significance for their owners, as well as for other people, and the symbolic meanings of one's belongings are an integral feature of expressing one's own identity and perceiving the identity of others. People manifest a tendency to extend their persona to encompass personal objects and possessions (Belk, 1988). Taking the car as an example, at a denotative level it is definable as an invention that has considerably extended the function of body locomotors (legs and feet) in mechanical ways. At a connotative level it is experienced as a body. In the public world of traffic, the car extends the body's armour and is therefore perceived as the body itself (Danesi, 1999).

As previously mentioned, symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982) predicts that people who have an incomplete self-definition tend to complete this identity by acquiring and displaying symbols associated with it. Failure to possess one symbolic indicator of an aspired-to self-definition leads to the compensatory display of other indicators. Today's postmodern society is in a constant state of flux and its members frequently find themselves in novel role situations where a process of self-definition must be reinitiated. Periods of role transition are often accompanied by the need to employ a variety of products; the correct use of these products is a determinant of success in completing the transition (Solomon, 1983; McAlexander and Schouten, 1989). The stages of role shift involve, firstly, *separation*, in which a person disengages from a social role or status, and secondly, *transition*, a liminal state of social limbo (Turner, 1982) in which a person eventually adapts to fit new roles, and thirdly, *incorporation*, in which a person integrates the self with the new role or status (Schouten, 1991).

4.4 Consumption

The individual in postmodern society is threatened by a number of dilemmas of the self; namely, fragmentation, powerlessness, uncertainty and a struggle against commodification. These dilemmas are driven by the looming threat of personal meaninglessness as the individual endeavours to construct and maintain an identity that will remain stable through a rapidly changing environment (Giddens, 1991). Although the individual may fear mass commodification because it threatens to remove choice and replace it with standardisation, in fact, through ever growing plurality of consumer choice the individual is offered resources which may be used creatively to achieve an "ego-ideal which commands the respect of others and inspires self-love" (Gabriel and Lang, 1995, p. 98). The postmodern self is something that a person actively creates and this is done partially through consumption (Tyler, 1978; Glover, 1988; Dittmar, 1992; Giddens, 1993; Gabrial and Lang, 1995, Solomon, 1996).

The notion that many products possess symbolic features and that consumption of goods may depend more on their social meaning than their functional utility is one that has become significant for consumer researchers (Levy, 1959, 1971, 1981, 1982; Zaltman and Wallendorf, 1979; Schenk and Holman, 1980; Solomon, 1983, Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Hirchman and Holbrook, 1981; Holman 1981b; Kehret-Ward, a.k.a. Murray, 1981; Thayler, 1982; Kehret-Ward et al, 1985; Solomon et al, 1985, 1999, 2002; Mick, 1986, 1988, 1997; Belk, 1988; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988; McAlexander and Schouten, 1989; Mick and DeMoss, 1990; Holbrook, 1991; Mehta and Belk, 1991; Schouten, 1991; Belk and Coon, 1993; Kleine et al, 1995; Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998; Grayson and Schulman, 2000). They recognise that consumption does not occur in a vacuum and that products are integral threads in the fabric of social life. Also, they recognise that all voluntary consumption carries, either consciously or unconsciously, symbolic meanings; if the consumer has choices to consume, he/she will consume things that hold particular symbolic meanings.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) suggest that the consumer invests psychic energy such as effort, time and attention in an object. This energy and its products are regarded as a part of the self because they have grown or emerged from the self. The

symbolic meanings of the consumer's possessions are likely to aid in the process of symbolic self-completion (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982). Possessions may portray essences of a person's individuality, or reflect his/her desirable connections with others and symbolic consumption helps the consumer to categorise his/her self in society, to ease his/her self-transitions and to achieve a sense of continuity and preparation for death (Belk, 1988; Kleine et al, 1995).

McCracken (1988) suggests that in consumption, material goods act like bridges between what people actually do with them, and how they imagine themselves to be. They connect the real with the ideal. They go on to connect the *socio-cultural identity* of the consumer with his/her *semiotic identity*. The socio-cultural identity represents this 'me' that a person actually is, with his/her disposable income, his/her real physical age and characteristics. On another level, it describes this 'me' that has been culturally constructed; the person's background, education, family life and teenage world experiences. Both these socio-cultural levels provide the person with the tools to start building the bridge between the material goods/services and the *ideal self* which ultimately is reflected in the product or brand (Alexander and Valentine, 1989). Earlier, the French sociologist, Bourdieu (1984) mentioned that they give people cultural capital with which to consume. The ideal self is then the semiotic identity, a mirror image of the way people want to see themselves. For the whole thing to work, the brand image and the consumer image must fuse into a single semiological artefact.

Gabriel and Lang (1995, p. 88) note that between the life-story that constitutes identity and the images of the consumer world, identities are fashioned through active engagement with products and the world of material objects. They highlight that late twentieth century consumption depends upon stories which are read by consumers into innumerable, relatively mundane objects which they buy, own and use. In their pioneering article on consumer desire, Belk et al (2003) describe the kind of 'embodied passion' that consumers develop for certain consumption objects and experiences. Noting the self-transformational benefits of product ownership akin to the semiotic self, they describe the intense, profound, powerfully motivating desire that consumers hold for certain objects and experiences. Such is the

strength, seduction and irrationality of this kind of desire that objects/experiences become infused with a kind of tempting, mythical power.

Based on Girard's (1977) work on 'mimetic desire', Belk et al (2003) discuss the deeply social and cultural nature of desire, noting that the underlying motivation behind even one's most object-focused desires is to have social relationships with other people, to obtain desired responses from them, and ultimately for affirmation of self-belonging; the object of desire, they note, is hoped ultimately to facilitate social relations, to join one with idealised others and to direct one's social destiny. Belk et al (2003) comment that objects that transfix people are hoped to be conduits to love, recognition, status, security, escape or attractiveness; the social relations one consciously or subconsciously desires, behind the objects one finds so compelling.

Agreeing with previous work of Bataille ([1949] 1967), Belk et al (2003) note that consumption products/experiences are often desired that provide one with a sense of 'otherness', a kind of 'unique' 'sovereign' self that allows one to escape the confines of wider society and find semiotic identity through belonging to marginalised groups. Thus products/experiences are desired that allow one to escape to a far better life, dramatically opposed to the one currently being lived, to a condition of sacredness that transcends the profane present.

4.4.1 Semiotics and Consumer Behaviour Research

Thayler (1982, p.7) implicates semiotics as an essential doctrine in the inquiry into consumer behaviour, stating, "Symbolic activity is central to humanity… Whatever paths we take, we will be acting in ways uniquely human, because we will employ symbols to reach our ends. Humans have such choices only because we can create, use and abuse symbols to affect our own lives and worlds."

The pre-eminent scholar and spokesman on the importance of semiotics in consumer behaviour was Levy (1959, 1971, 1978, 1981, 1982). Influenced by the work of Lévi-Strauss

(1963, 1965b) he studied consumer mythology as a type of code, specifically focusing on food consumption attitudes and behaviours amongst family members. He uncovered symbolic distinctions among certain foods, preparation methods and consumption behaviours directly related to mythic proportion oppositions, including *family togetherness* versus *separation* and *celebratory* versus *everyday* cuisine. His work demonstrated the insightfulness of semiotic and structuralist analysis of consumer mythology. Also, the seminal work of Howard and Sheth (1969) on semiotics in buyer behaviour provided an early contribution, stressing the importance of semiotics in consumer buying behaviour.

The systematic study of signs gained momentum in consumer research when, in the late 1970s, three researchers (Holbrook, 1975; Holman, 1976; Kehret-Ward, a.k.a. Murray, 1981) independently focused their doctoral research on various aspects of sign processes in consumer behaviour. They adopted contrasting positions with Holbrook (1975), heavily influenced by the work of Morris (1938, 1946, 1964), adopting the American neopositivistic semiotic position (introduced previously in Section 3.7). Holman (1976) stuck much closer to the Continental interpretive semiology approach. Kehret-Ward (a.k.a. Murray, 1981) demonstrated a broad command of the full range between both the American and Continental approaches to semiotics.

Holbrook (1975) focused on the pragmatic effects of advertising copy experimentally manipulated to differ in both *semantics* (factual versus evaluative content) and *syntactics* (level of psycholinguistic uncertainty). One aspect of his research concerned the differential persuasiveness of factual versus evaluative messages (Holbrook, 1978a), and another studied the impact of verbal uncertainty on perceptual performance in a proofreading task (Holbrook, 1978b). Holbrook's work influenced further work on attitude-toward-the-ad and contingency models of advertising effectiveness as well as studies of 'requiredness' in ad copy, promotional letters, and literary passages (Wallendorf et al, 1981; Zinkhan, 1981; Zinkhan and Martin, 1983; Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy, 1984; Zinkhan and Stoiadnin, 1984).

Influenced by the Continental tradition, Holman (1976) focused on the meaning of clothing and other aspects of the fashion system. Specifically, she investigated the *syntactic* and *semantic* levels of consumer semiosis by examining the clothing system as a code and

particular clothing ensembles as messages. She identified the socio-cultural rules that endow clothing with meaning. First, she sought to identify the multiple messages possible within a context-specific clothing system through the description of its structural form. She then examined the strength and consistency of correlations between specific ensembles and attributions made about ensembles.

Holman (1980a) devised a complex semiological scheme for the analysis of apparel. Her subsequent work (1980b, 1981a, 1981b, 1983) has built upon these semiotic orientations and she has expanded her purview to encompass the full range of consumption behaviour, thus regarding consumer products as symbols used to convey one's self-concept to members of various relevant reference groups, including oneself. This position has since been widely recognised by consumer researchers (Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1981; Solomon, 1983; Bourdieu, 1984; Rook, 1985; Belk, 1988; McCracken, 1988; Alexander and Valentine, 1989; Gabriel and Lang, 1995; Kleine et al, 1995).

Kehret-Ward (a.k.a Murray, 1981), like Holman, focused on artefactual communication. She invoked Saussurean perspectives to study how children perceive products as conveyors of information about themselves and others. She found that products-as-symbols are like linguistic units in that meaning emerges from 'differences' between them, scarcity being the guarantor of difference. These differences in products, in association with their owners, signal social positioning of various modes. Subsequently, Kehret-Ward employed both Saussurean semiology and Peircian semiotics to focus on the significance of social meanings (Kehret-Ward, 1982; Kehret-Ward and Yalch, 1984), and to study the syntactic properties of consumption systems (Kehret-Ward et al, 1985). Her interest in the developmental aspects of symbolic consumption is also shared by Belk et al (1982).

The mid 1980s saw a resurgence of interest in semiotic analysis of consumer research, which was encouraged by a number of theorists (Mick, 1986, 1988; Holbrook and Grayson, 1986; Umiker-Sebeok, 1987). Particularly influential, and still influential to this day, is a seminal review article on the subject produced by Mick (1986). Mick notes that among its strengths, semiotics positions meaning at the nucleus of consumer behaviour, providing a rich

metalanguage for semiotic consumer research. He claims that semiotics is essential to consumer research because consumers behave based on meanings they ascribe to marketplace stimuli. He proposes that the view of products as symbols carries immediate relevance for such conventional topics as brand imagery or competitive positioning strategy, price as a cue for quality, intangible aspects of the shopping experience, and the multi-layered meaning of ad copy. Mick (1986) stresses that semiotics fits quite comfortably into these conventional areas of concern and has therefore won favour with even the most traditional marketing-oriented consumer researchers. It should be noted that the use of semiotic approaches to the study consumer behaviour has received some criticism, particularly from Calder and Tybout (1987), theorists devoted to the positivistic side of science in marketing.

Mick (1986) does identify that although the importance of symbolism has been widely recognised by consumer researchers, few have actually carried out detailed and systematic inquiry into meaning processes. To fill this gap, he (1986) introduces a framework for the semiotic analysis of consumption symbolism to the literature. He adapts a model of the semiotic cube proposed by Nauta (1972) to provide a useful framework for semiotic analysis of consumption symbolism. This is illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: A Semiotic Cube
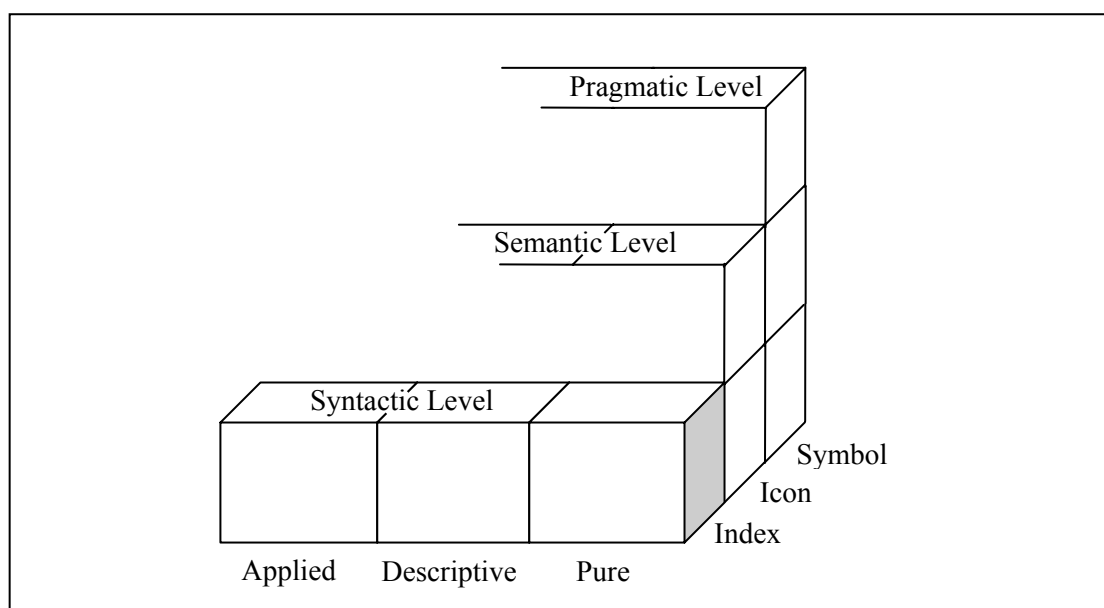
Source: Adapted by Mick (1986, p. 200) from Nauta (1972, p38)

In the semiotic cube, Mick (1986) unites Peirce's trichotomy of *icon-index-symbol* with Morris's trichotomies of *syntactics-semantics-pragmatics* and *pure-descriptive-applied* semiotics. Taking the 'pure' section of the cube, he recognises that pure semiotics elaborates a metalanguage to talk about signs of any type at any level of semiosis. He claims that componential specifications of consumer semiosis are virtually nonexistent at this level so a fruitful start is to consider what aspects of acquisition, consumption and disposition behaviours involve, or perhaps, accentuate certain signs over others. Further, he claims, it is likely that icons, indexes and symbols themselves can be taxonomised to provide more precise theoretical foundations for semiosis in consumer behaviour.

Mick illustrates this point by using the example of gift-giving behaviours that are intrinsically semiotic and have drawn attention from consumer researchers (Belk, 1976, 1979, 1982; Sherry, 1983). He contends that by employing a pure semiotics approach, signs can be taxonomised as interpersonal and intrapersonal, and that gifts as symbols can also be classified in the same way. Mick notes that although previous consumer research has concentrated on the interpersonal value of gift giving, the intrapersonal value, that is, the purchase of self-gifts is relatively unexplored. He argues that the purchase of self-gifts is likely to have significant social, personal and economic implications. Mick's findings have had an influential effect on consumer researchers, spurring research into the area of self-gift giving (Mick and DeMoss, 1990; Sherry et al, 1995).

Taking the 'descriptive' section of the cube, Mick recognises that advertisements in particular have been subjected to descriptive semiotic analysis (Williamson, 1978; Umiker-Sebeok, 1979, 1981; Fiske, 1982; Wernick, 1983; Leiss et al, 1986). When considering the 'applied' section of the cube, he notes that one engages in applied semiotics when placing actual signs in specific contexts of acquisition, consumption and disposition. Instances of applied semiotics include physician-patient relations, advertising-information consumption and cultural anthropology research. Mick notes that in all three modes of pure, descriptive and applied inquiry, the signs can be detailed in relation to other signs *(syntactics)*, in relation to their objects *(semantics)* and in relation to their interpretants *(pragmatics)*.

Mick's (1986) framework and his accompanying postulations have had a significant influence on the use of semiotic method and analysis techniques by consumer researchers in recent years. In particular, his framework has been applied to the interpretation of motion pictures (Holbrook and Grayson, 1986; Hirschman, 1987a, 1987b, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1990; Holbrook, 1988, 1991; Ryan and McLoughlin, 1999). Also the framework has been applied to study the cross-cultural diffusion of product labels and promotions (Sherry and Camargo, 1987), the indexicality and verification function of special possessions (Grayson and Shulman, 2000) and the symbolism and meaning in the consumer experience of the British public house (Clarke et al, 2000).

Earlier work by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) had semiotic orientations. Holbrook and Hirschman became influential in calling for more concerted attention to the 'experiential' aspects of consumer behaviour, emphasising the importance of pre-reflexive reactions to the less objective features of products, nonverbal cues in stimuli, and syntactic versus semantic characteristics of communication. Later, Holbrook and Hirschman (1993) developed an influential study to directly address the semiotics of consumption. Within this study they agree with Mick that despite the increasing recognition by consumer researchers of symbolism in the marketplace and consumer life, few consumer researchers have carried out detailed examination of meaning processes.

As noted previously in Section 3.7, Holbrook and Hirschman (1993) provide a critique of semiotic theory that compares and contrasts neopositivistic semiotics with interpretive semiology. Focusing on semiotics and consumer research, they go on to stress that interpretive semiology is by far the more neglected of the two divergent approaches to semiotics. They note that although a few consumer researchers have dipped their 'paws' into the stream of semiological investigation (Belk, 1986; O'Guinn et al, 1986; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Stern, 1989), none have taken it to great depth. Holbrook and Hirschman (1993) attempt to fill this gap by employing interpretive semiology to explore the meanings conveyed by the use of symbolic consumption in popular culture and works of art. They explore meanings as they appear on the television and in films, focusing on motion pictures as a way of encoding and communicating a society's implicit mythology.

More recently, in her practical and highly informative article on 'demystifying semiotics', Lawes (2002) again stresses that on the one hand, semiotics seems to be everywhere one looks, but on the other, in practice, it is hardly used. She identifies that although there is more interest in semiotics now that there used to be, "generally people remain cautious about dipping their toe in the water" (Lawes, 2002, p. 251).

4.4.2 Brand Communications

Carey (1975) notes that communication work stems from two quite different philosophical traditions and is thus grounded in two different metaphors for communication. The American view follows a transmission or transportation perspective, proposing that communication is a process of transmitting messages at a distance for the purpose of control. In contrast to this, the European communication metaphor is embodied in myth and ritual, what one might term *holistic cultural*, so that communication is seen as a process through which a shared culture is created, modified and transformed (Carey, 1975, Lannon and Cooper, 1983). Here is a very much richer metaphor for the communication process and one that is much more closely linked to the European tradition of interpretive semiology.

Adopting the European position, it can be noted that brands bought tell a great deal about who a person is, where they are in life, what they were and where they are going. Brand choices are as much a part of a person's self as the way he/she speaks, the words he/she uses, his/her dialect, dress, gestures and language (Lannon and Cooper, 1983). Previously, Douglas and Isherwood (1979) noted that brands (and brand communications) help structure the categories of culture. More recently, Alexander (1999) notes the strong interrelatedness between brands, brand communications, culture and the consumer. He contends that popular culture constructs the consumer, the brand and the company that owns the brand. Brand communications (all elements of that same popular culture) also play their part in helping to construct that consumer. He notes that the consequences of these processes profoundly influence the relationship between the two main transactors, the brand and the consumer.

What turns a product into a brand is that the physical product is combined with symbols, images and feelings to produce an idea which is more than and different from the sum of the parts. The two, 'product' and 'symbolism', live and grow with one another in a partnership and mutual exchange (Lannon and Cooper, 1983). Cooper (1979) previously referred to this as a sort of attachment or *symbiosis* which consumers have for their brands and the communications surrounding them. Lannon and Cooper (1983) distinguish between the *practical* and *symbolic* attitudes to buying brands in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Practical and Symbolic Attitudes to Buying Brands
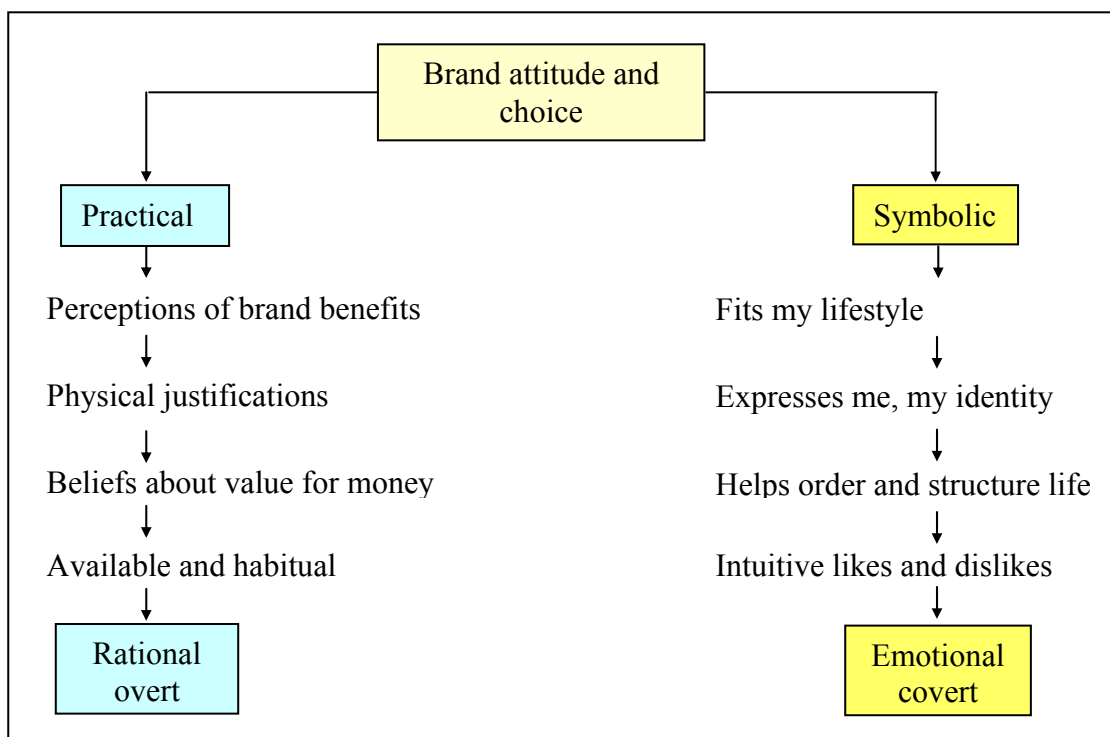
Source: Lannon, J. and Cooper, P. (1983, p. 202)

Lannon and Cooper (1983) go on to contend that brand symbolism is a form of language and that two types can be identified. Firstly, brands as *expressive gestures* which are chosen to say something in a general way to other people about who a person is or is not. Brands here are like words, and branding gives them a special intonation or accent. Secondly, brands as *rituals* where purchase and use are saying something deeper. Ritual brands are bought regularly and very loyally, usually related to some emotional or social event. They are not

merely gestures but incantations, spells or celebrations, often to make purchase more interesting or less boring. Just like language, the right brands to use vary with social context.

Focusing on the concept of brands as language and after much primary research, Alexander (1996) contends that most successful brands embody their own form of *cultural myth*. Alexander uses Lévi-Strauss's (1970) conception of mythology, adopting the view that the purpose of myth is to prove a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction. Also that all cultures try to account for apparent contradictions in the world around them and that in almost all languages, myths follow similar structural lines in dramatising these contradictions into story form in order to resolve them. Successful brands therefore resolve contradiction.

Translating this into marketing language, Alexander (1996) notes that a brand's myth is the belief by consumers that the brand offers them a way of resolving a problem or situation that hitherto represented some kind of contradiction. Or, from the perspective of the marketer, that the brand holds the power to reconcile a *cultural opposition*. To illustrate this, Alexander uses the example of Persil washing powder. Here the brand, expressed through the persona of the 'Persil Mum', reconciles the cultural opposition between the 'distance' and detachment of a factory produced, high-tech washing agent on the one hand, and the 'closeness' of a caring, loving member of the family on the other. From this contradiction it is possible to define the Persil myth by an expression such as *caring detachment*.

Alexander (1996) found that the power of brand myth seems to stand in direct proportion to the dynamism of the contradiction it resolves. He therefore claims that the more contradiction that exists, the better. The stronger the oppositions, the stronger the myth, and consequently, the stronger the brand positioning. At a pragmatic level, Alexander (1996) and later his associate Valentine (2001) have recognised the significance of brand mythology*,* and have designed and successfully employed the myth quadrant model (illustrated in Figure 4.3) in their consultancy work for various Blue Chip companies.

Figure 4.3: Myth Quadrant Model

OPPOSITION 1

Cultural norms   *Cultural contradictions*

OPPOSITION 2 - OPPOSITION 2

Cultural contradictions   *Cultural norms*
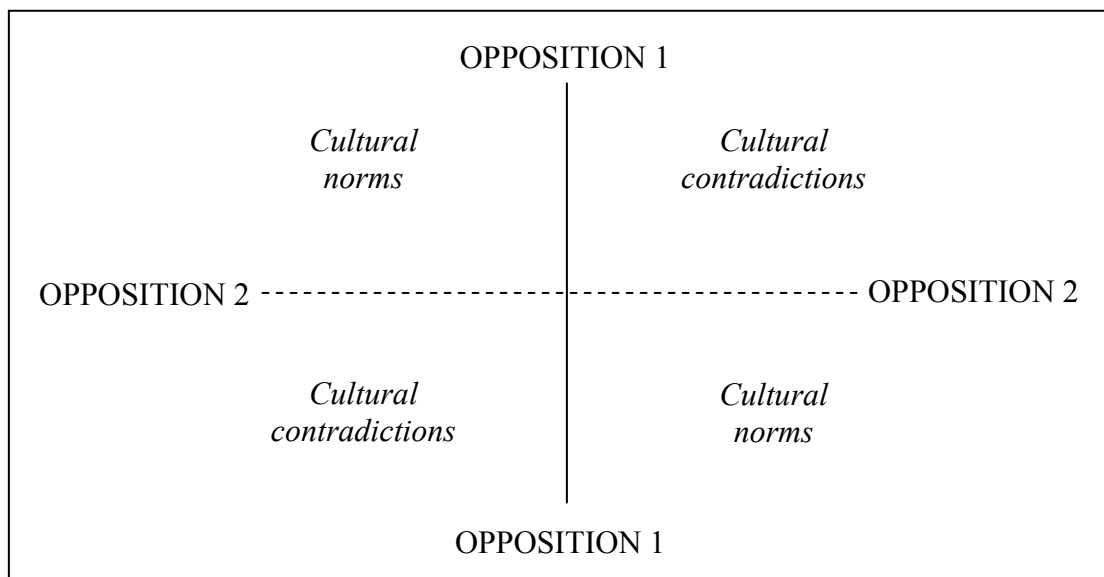
OPPOSITION 1

Source: Valentine (2001, p.9)

The two axes of the model mark the boundaries of four corresponding corners, or *quadrants*. The vertical axis runs between one pair of opposites, resembling opposition 1, and the horizontal axis between the other, opposition 2. Two of the facing corner quadrants represent *cultural norms* and the other two represent *cultural contradictions*. The myth stands or falls by the strength and dynamism of these various oppositions, and the subtleties of the interplay between the four poles and the four quadrants of the diagram. If the two pairs of opposites are well selected, then two of the quadrants diagonally facing each other will clearly represent accepted beliefs and attitudes; cultural norms. Conversely, the other two corners will represent cultural contradictions, one or both of which will be the *myth quadrant.*

Alexander (1996) proposes that it is the power and memorability of myth as reconciled contradiction that gives it its commercial importance and value. Translated into the world of marketing, the contradictory corners of the diagram (the potential myth quadrants) represent 'communicational' windows of opportunity. Provided their contradictions can be creatively resolved, then at least one of the two quadrants will provide a strong brand and/or advertising positioning myth, or a viable myth on which to base a new product proposition.

Application of the myth quadrant is best illustrated by using the example of BTs 'Good to Talk' campaign. Semiotic Solutions market research agency was heavily involved in the market research and development of this campaign. Alexander and Valentine are co-partners of Semiotic Solutions, which aims to employ semiotic methods in market research. They have made a key contribution to both theory and method in the field by documenting their work (Valentine, 1995, 2001, 2002, 2003; Alexander, 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001; Gordon and Valentine, 1996, 2000).

When carrying out research for BT, Semiotic Solutions developed a myth quadrant for phone usage at that time. A cultural and semiotic analysis was carried out of chatting in British society and dozens of words for chat were discovered. Among these words were 'Small Talk' and, its opposite 'Big Talk'. They found that small talk was thought to be idle, not serious, woman talk and that big talk was official, serious, masculine, focused around setting the agenda (Valentine, 2001). It was decided that a myth was required to reconcile the contradictions between women's phone usage and 'important' communications. The myth quadrant for BT which Semiotic Solutions developed is illustrated in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: Mythic Quadrant Model for BT

SMALL TALK
Womanspeak/Emotional

1.
(Cultural norm)
Silly chit-chat

2.
Women's caring phone-chat
It's good to talk

TRIVIAL ------------------------------------ IMPORTANT

3.
Men's 'uncaring'
mode of communication

4.
(Cultural norm)
Official language

BIG TALK
Manspeak/Rational
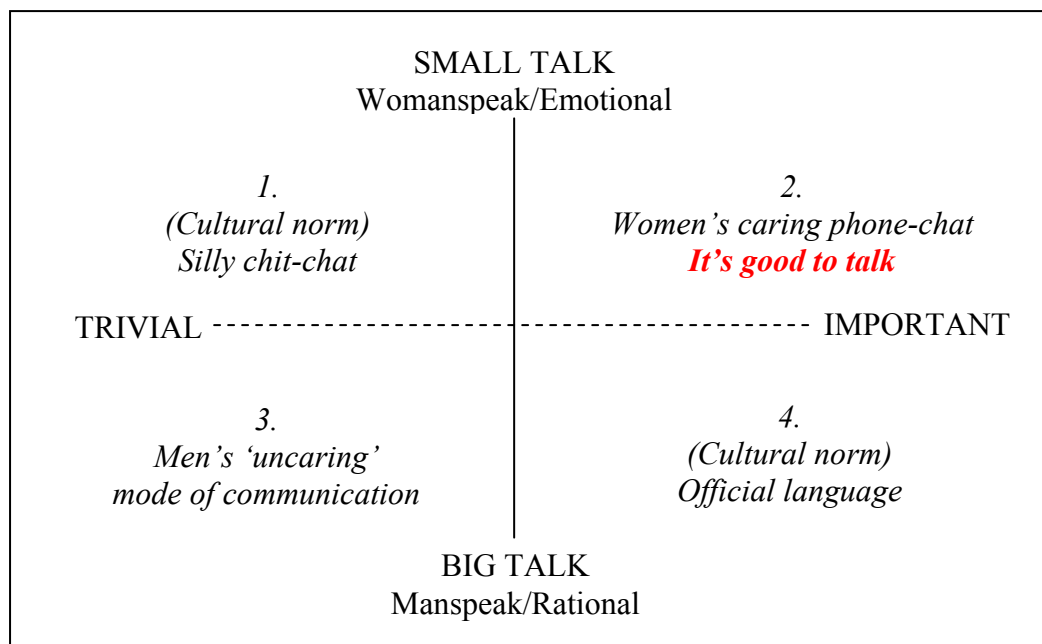
Source: Valentine (2001, p.14)

Focus groups revealed that men hated using the domestic phone, but they felt they owned it, whether or not they actually paid the bill. Women loved the phone but were deprived of ownership culturally and practically. Big, monolithic BT sent the phone bill to the 'head' of the household, usually a man, who then used the bill to berate his wife precisely for chatting. Women, BTs best customers were made to feel that chatting on the phone was wrong, and BT was actually colluding with this. However, under close questioning, men admitted to really admiring the way women used the phone to create emotional 'neighbourhoods' and to keep families together. Chat was an integral part of this, along with the wordless little sounds of listening, phatic empathetic noises, rather than empathetic sentences or purposive words (Valentine, 2001).

Semiotic Solutions recognised that Small Talk could get out of Big Talk's shadow if BT showed that society really values the emotional caring dimensions of the women's phone usage. What began to appear on the myth quadrant was *Important Small Talk* (number 2 in Figure 4.4*)*. Thus the Good to Talk campaign was developed which empowered women to use the phone for longer chatting and gave men permission to communicate in a warmer, more caring way. This campaign created the cultural space which has subsequently been filled by the mobile phone. Alexander (1996) notes that the myth diagram need not just be a static one. It can also be applied to track movement reflecting changes in brand positioning and in the surrounding culture.

The importance of the key tropes of metaphor and metonymy were identified in the previous chapter (Section 3.6.2). Metaphor and metonymy lie on opposite ends of the language axis, but it is metaphor which opens up meanings and allows the imagination to feel the analogy between two terms and therefore is important when considering brand communications. Metonymy, at the other end, closes meanings down and demands a decoding that provides the 'right' answer. Earls (2001) contends that it is as metaphor that brands connect with the imagination and emotional responses of the consumer. The metaphor superimposes one set of meanings on another, demanding imaginative decoding and, most importantly, the receiver's active participation in making meanings. Previously when discussing this, Turner

(1974) noted that this is where language plays, slides, goes deep and invokes an emotional dimension when one makes the connection in his/her imagination.

Brand Identity - Advertising and the Retail Outlet

Key communication tools used for the signification of brand identity/personality relevant to this study, and of which an amount of semiotic literature relates them, are *advertising* and the *retail outlet*.

Traditionally, advertising theorists drew on the American communication metaphor, concentrating on overt persuasion, attitude change and behaviour modification, reflecting the concepts of expansionism, power and control. Criticising this, Barthes (1977) controversially claimed that the 'author is dead'; by this he meant that the reader (consumer) is never passive. Communication is always open to the reader's own interpretation which is influenced by his/her personality, culture and past experiences. Therefore, Barthes claimed, the text of the communication is never as authoritative as it appears to be. He noted that the authority of the text is undermined, as is the privileged status of the author, or adman, who alone controls and is able to decipher the message.

Modern European advertising, specifically English advertising, reflects the European communication metaphor and thus dissipates Barthes' criticism by proposing that advertising carries its culture with it "just as a wave carries the whole sea" (Lannon and Cooper, 1983, p. 199). The appeal and indeed mystery and source of incomprehension, not to say irritation, with English advertising, as has been commented on by foreign observers, is that it is so English. It draws intuitively on shared cultural experience to a very great extent. The understated humour, the highly visual content and the apparent absence of advertising sell are all linked very closely with features of specifically English life, and thus readily understandable to English consumers (Lannon and Cooper, 1983).

In her influential work on ideology and meaning in advertising, Williamson (1978) identifies how advertising endows products with ideological/mythic meaning, and the social significance of this. She (1978, p. 31) states, "The technique of advertising is to correlate

feelings, moods or attributes to tangible objects, linking possible unattainable things with those that are attainable, and thus reassuring us that the former are within reach." Thus, she identifies that the ideal self can be recognised through ownership and use of products that carry particular mythic meaning (signified through advertising). To possess the product is to 'buy into' the myth, and to possess some of its social value for oneself. She notes that advertisements endow products with a certain social significance so that they can function in the real social world as indexical signs; connoting for example, the buyer's *good taste, trendiness,* or some other ideologically valued quality. Advertisements therefore, not only give meaning to products, but also to buyers of products, to readers of the ads, and to the wider socio-cultural world in which the products exist.

Adopting the European communication metaphor and taking a provocative semiotic orientation, Sherry (1985) argues that advertising is a cultural document, a way of presenting and understanding the world. He contends that advertising discerns and discovers meaning through its use of verbal and nonverbal rhetoric as well as symbolic and iconic conventions. Audiences are transported, via ritualised enactments, through the dimensions of experience their culture esteems. The repetitive ritualisations conserve the culture by reducing the variance in the distribution of cultural behaviours, and thereby move it toward resolving inherent contradictions. At the same time, however, the extensive ritualisation leads cultural perceptions to become natural perceptions. Instead of a cultural representation, advertisements come to be seen as representations of the whole world or of definitive reality.

Lannon and Cooper (1983) recognise that advertising operates most effectively at the symbolic, intuitive level of consciousness. They contend that images, feelings, archetypes and meanings employed in advertising are consistent with current values in society. Examples of familiar symbolism used in advertising are illustrated in Table 4.1. These symbols are common in modern day advertising and are closely allied to cultural myths. Lannon and Cooper (1983) claim that these values work to establish the difference between one brand and another and that consumers use them to express themselves and to attain their own identities. Interestingly, symbols/myths of *adventure, freedom* and *mastery*, as noted by Ghurbal (2000) are key elements of adventure experience.

Table 4.1: Symbolism in Advertising

Class	Care
Discrimination	Science
Youth	Magic
Sex	Adventure
Indulgence	Mastery
Freedom	Wisdom

Source: Lannon, J. and Cooper, P. (1983, p. 205)

With regard to the retail outlet, Gordon and Valentine (1996) highlight that retail outlets carry their own distinctive cultural meanings; supermarkets, corner stores, garage forecourt shops and off-licences, for example, are not just different retail operations, but they mean different things in one's culture and communicate these meanings through their semiotics of design and merchandising. The ordered aisles of the supermarket carry different meanings in the West from the random arrangement of goods in corner stores. Supermarkets represent *order* and *control* in the world as well as *affluence* and *comfort*. In contrast to this, the corner store represents *disorder*, *something not quite right*, and familiar brands function to give some form of *order* to this *disorder*.

The retail outlet can therefore be viewed as a communications medium rather than merely a distribution channel, where brands exist in a series of different in-store contexts which frame the way in which they are perceived on the shelf by the shopper. There is a point in time and space when the elements of mass marketing, (product, advertising, packaging, design, promotion, and merchandising) can be orchestrated to leverage/signify the brand's identity/values so it appears to meet the particular needs and set of circumstances of a customer, and of that customer's culture (Gordon and Valentine, 1996).

Gordon and Valentine (1996) note that leveraging the tools of mass marketing at the point of choice is a complex process but not so complex that it should be considered impossible. They recommend a number of strategies that can be employed to improve a brand's chances of selection at the point of choice. Firstly, it is important to set up a *discourse aura* where a brand can clearly communicate its personality, its positioning and can differentiate itself from mass competitors. This is like setting up a shop within a shop, a strategy widely used by

supermarkets when separating the bakery from the butchers and so on. Secondly, a brand can create its own discourse aura through careful design and formatting of its packaging. It is important for the marketer to use sensory metaphorical triggers such as touch, smell, colour and shape. Finally, it is important to create a close relationship between packaging and advertising whereby packaging talks to the shopper in the same voice as the commercial.

4.5   Chapter Summary

This chapter aimed to take a semiotic perspective, to discuss and critique existing theory of culture, the self and consumption, areas central to the investigation. It began by taking a semiotic 'look' at culture, where it was found that semiotics plays a central role within the study of culture, and insights can be revealed into the human meaning-quest from a study of the distinct meanings that are generated through the world's systems of everyday life. Semioticians define culture as a kind of macro-code, consisting of numerous codes which groups of individuals habitually use to interpret reality. The key to unlocking the production of meaning within a culture is to examine these codes and this has significant implications for the methodology developed for this study, as outlined in the Methodology chapter.

Examining theory of the self, it was identified that of particular importance to the study are theories of symbolic interactionism, performance, signifying spaces and possessions and the self. Particularly significant are the precepts of symbolic interactionism, which take a structuralist perspective to analyse symbolic aspects of the social/cultural world. It was found that, like semioticians, symbolic interactionists view human minds as fundamentally social and existentially dependent upon shared symbols, and meaning is negotiated and constructed through intrapersonal and interpersonal discourse; the self is thus a symbolic project which individuals construct out of socially available symbolic materials, a narrative of self-identity. It was identified that the refined metalanguage of semiotics holds significant promise for symbolic interactionism theory and research.

The significance of the performance metaphor was highlighted, which can be used to consider the multiplicity of role identities that individuals engage in. Each human being has a

variety of actual and possible, or ideal, selves. Actors manage their speech, body, demeanour, attire and other communicative symbols and gestures to present a certain impression to others, thus learning that different roles are accompanied by different constellations of products, services and activities which help define these roles. It was noted that if an actor is to convincingly play a role, he/she requires the correct stage setting and props to do so, and that through socialisation people learn that different roles are accompanied by different constellations of products, services and activities that help define those roles. For the semiotician, and central to the methodological development of this study, analysis of stage settings (signifying spaces) and props provides codes from which it becomes possible to explore the human quest for meaning.

Critiquing the role of semiotics in consumer behaviour research, it was identified that semiotics has been recognised as an essential doctrine in the inquiry into consumer behaviour, and that a wide range of scholars have recognised the symbolic significance of ownership and use of symbolic products to aid self-identity construction, and bind the threads of meaningful social life. However, deeper analysis revealed that whilst a wide range of consumer behaviour material pays passing tribute to the term semiotics and recognises the importance of symbolic consumption, very few studies actually carry out detailed and systematic inquiry into meaning processes. Significant contributions which have been made, and which influence the methodological development of this study, are from Mick (1986), and Hirschman and Holbrook (1993). Particularly relevant (and highlighted in the Methodology chapter) is the less used interpretive semiology approach proposed by Hirschman and Holbrook (1993).

Taking a semiotic look at existing literature on brand communications, it was identified that 'communication' work stems from two quite different philosophical traditions, but it is the European tradition which influences the research philosophy adopted in this study (highlighted in Methodology chapter). This assumes that physical products are combined with symbols, images and feelings to create a symbiosis that consumers have for their brands and the communications surrounding them. It was found that brand symbolism is a form of language and most successful brands embody their own form of cultural myth. The myth

quadrant model was introduced to the literature, a model of some significance for data analysis in this study.

Finally, semiotic literature that considers the construction and signification of brand identity/personality through advertising and the retail outlet, key communication tools relevant to this study, was addressed. It was found that modern European advertising draws intuitively on shared cultural experience and arguably, it is a cultural document, a way of presenting and understanding the world which operates most effectively at the symbolic, intuitive level of consciousness, providing audiences with a tool to discern and discover meaning. It does this by transporting its audiences, via ritualised enactments, through dimensions of cultural experience.

It was identified that retail environments are more than merely distribution channels. They can be viewed as communications mediums that carry cultural meanings; meanings which are constructed and signified through their semiotics of design and merchandising. The importance of creating a brand discourse aura within retail outlets was highlighted, where the elements of mass marketing can be orchestrated to leverage/signify a brand's identity/values so it appears to meet the particular needs and set of circumstances of a customer, and of that customer's culture.

Chapter 5

Communicating Adventure

Communicating Adventure

5.1 Introduction

Of central importance to the investigation, and stemming from conceptual areas introduced previously in the literature, this chapter aims to focus on existing literature surrounding the construction and signification of the leisure/adventure self, and consumer/marketer involvement in adventure subcultures of consumption. Firstly, intrinsic and emotive reasons for consumer involvement in leisure/adventure experience are identified and the concept of flow experience is introduced. The social psychological benefits of emotional and physical arousal specifically associated with involvement in adventure are discussed and the concept of communitas is described. Following this, adventure subcultures of consumption are defined, and the significance of consumer use of specific products and brands to mark membership of given adventure communities is highlighted. Finally, existing literature that considers marketer involvement in adventure subcultures of consumption is addressed.

5.2 The Adventurous Self

In influential work on *presentation of the self,* Goffman (1957) noted a point at which an actor steps away from the stage and removes both costume and mask, a point at which actions become self-determined and an actor's 'true' identity can be developed and expressed. This realm of the 'backstage' has been compared to leisure, representing an arena of relative freedom from role constraints and the opportunity for self-definition and self-expression. Individuals are free to choose particular leisure forms and activities. Whereas children play, leisure is the quest by adults to take time-out from the other serious concerns of life. Individuals are free to choose which clubs they wish to be members of, and which leisure services and commodities they wish to consume. Iso-Ahola (1980) notes that there must always be freedom perceived in leisure activities, and that once it is, other satisfactions such as feelings of competence can be added.

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Weiss (1964) noted that the separation of leisure from the realm of necessity is what gives a perspective on the entire life course. He identified that the 'good life' is a life in which a rich leisure identity gives direction and meaning to all else people do. Leisure then, is part of the human and humanising process of life that is fundamental to the entire life span. Happiness is an effectively perceived state that accompanies this state of becoming human. Leisure is more than just empty time; it is a self-initiated and voluntary, and provides an environment for self-creation, self-renewal, personal growth and self-actualisation.

A number of scholars have focused on the self-definitional properties of involvement specifically in adventure experience; certainly Ewert (1985, 1989), Faulkner (1991), Gass (1991) and Celsi et al (1993) recognise that nowhere is the emphasis on the self-transformative features of experience more evident than in adventure. Adventure is an emotional experience, one which embraces uncertainty, and it is through brushing with the possibility of death or injury, testing the self in environments that are not fully controlled by human action, that one's self can be strengthened and one can learn about the meaning of existence (Simmel, 1959; Lyman and Scott, 1989; Hunt, 1995; Holyfield and Fine, 1997). Early work by Simmel (1959) argued that to experience an adventure is to move beyond the mundane, thereby linking one to more transcendent goals. Moreover, adventure is sought out as 'serious action' (adventure for adventure's sake) where both chance and resolution are brought together in one heated moment of experience.

The social psychological benefits of emotional and physical arousal akin to involvement in adventure are clearly identified by Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990), who describes the production of *flow* which occurs when one is totally focused upon a challenging activity. During moments of intense, personal, flow experience, there is total involvement of body and mind in a feasible task that validates the competence and experience of the actor. In a flow state, action follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the actor. He/she experiences it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which he/she is in control of his/her actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present and future (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Figure 5.1 illustrates the original flow model

proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975). The model proposes that optimal experience of flow occurs when a person's skill level matches the level of the challenge.

Figure 5.1: The Original 'Flow' Model
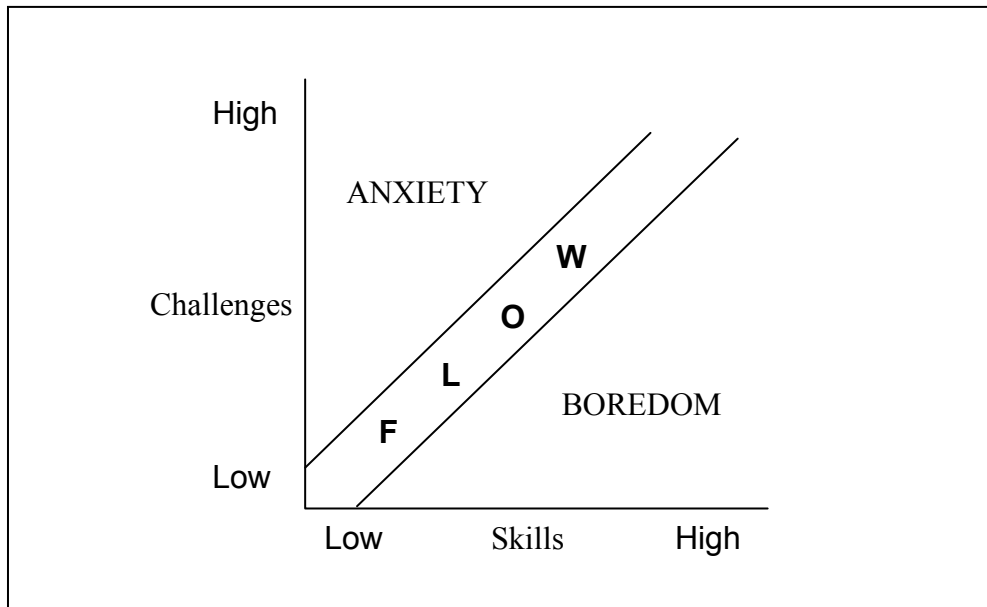
Source: Csikszentmihalyi (1975, p. 49)

The clearest sign of flow is the merging of action and awareness; people in flow have no dualistic perspective. They are aware of their actions, but not of the awareness itself. People become so involved in what they are doing that they do not think of themselves as separate from what they are doing (Mitchell, 1983; Ewert, 1989; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Kelly, 1990). The feeling of control and the resulting absence of worry are present even in flow situations where the dangers to the actor are quite real. Later, in thinking back on the experience, the person will usually conclude that, for the duration of the flow episode, his/her skills were adequate for meeting environmental demands, and this reflection is likely to become an important part of one's self-definition, and the perception of a positive self-concept.

5.3 Communitas

Smith (1995) identifies the social dimension of flow, noting that as a consequence of flow, the actor emerges as a more complex individual in the sense of being more highly integrated into meaningful human relationships and being more differentiated as a unique person. What she is referring to is the sense of *communitas* that develops as people 'share' flow experience; a communitas that bonds group members, giving them a rich, meaningful group identity on the one hand, whilst providing them with a unique, differentiated identity from wider society on the other. It allows them to enact what Varley and Crowther (1997) refer to as 'double lives', where they can escape the constraints of the parent culture whilst finding rich, personal meaning in membership of a unique, adventure subculture.

The concept of communitas, mentioned previously in relation to ritualistic pilgrimages to sacred places in Section 4.3.3, is derived from Latin, meaning 'community', and is based on Van Gennep's (1960) interpretation of the shared rites of passage by pilgrims by Turner (1969, 1974). Turner (1969) identifies that a key aspect of communitas is the recognition that everyday status and social roles are not relevant to the high-risk community. He (1969) contends that communitas is a sense of shared ritualistic experience that transcends ordinary camaraderie. It constitutes a sense of belonging and a sharing of transcendent information. While flow is transcendent at the individual level of experience, common knowledge of the flow experience creates a bond between members and as such, this 'shared flow' creates communitas.

Belk et al (1989) support the work of Turner, noting that communitas is a sense of community that transcends typical social norms and convention. That is, communitas is a sense of camaraderie that occurs when individuals from various walks of life share a common bond of experience that all participants consider special or 'sacred.' They (1989, p. 7) note that the "spirit of communitas emerges from 'shared ritual experience' that transcends the mundane of everyday life." The shared, ritualistic nature of adventure experience that leads to communitas development is confirmed by Varley and Crowther (1997).

The central role of communitas, manifest in feelings of linkage, belonging and group devotion, relative to involvement in adventure pursuits has certainly been highlighted in influential work by Celsi et al (1993) on skydiving and Arnould and Price (1993) on river rafting. In their focused study of the U.S Harley Davidson motorcycle subculture, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) identify the importance of communitas, or 'brotherhood', amongst Harley Davidson owners, where the appellation of 'brother' or 'bro' commonly bestowed on one Harley Davidson motorcyclist by another signifies membership in a community of shared belief, purpose and experience. They note that perhaps the most sublime manifestation of 'brotherhood' lies in the shared experience of riding in formation with a large group of other bikers, stating (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995, p. 51), "the formation moves like a single organism, the sound of the single motorcycle is caught up in a symphony of pipes, and individual identity is subsumed by the group."

5.4   Adventure Subcultures of Consumption

Membership of a unified community is manifested by participants' prescription to codes of behaviour, speech, values, dress and equipment that mark the ideology of their chosen adventure subgroup. As noted by Van Gennep (1960), Turner (1974) and later Arnould and Price (1993), group affiliation (role acquisition) typically begins with the 'casting off' of goods that differentiate members of a group in favour of items of shared meaning, such as clothing. This type of ritualistic behaviour involves the individual replacing everyday items with specific 'uniforms' and shared common possessions indexical of shared group identity. Participants' unifying consumption patterns reflect a common group ideology and the group can be labelled an 'adventure subculture of consumption'.

Hebdige (1974) notes that a subculture is an identifiable segment within larger society, distinguishable in shape and structure to its parent culture, focused around certain attributes, values and material artefacts and with its own territorial spaces; as Etzioni (1993) points out, this is no longer geographical space. Donnelly (1981, 1985) identifies a number of characteristics that define a subculture; an identifiable group within wider culture, with

common characteristics and unique cultural components such as values, speech, beliefs, behaviour, dress and its own means of communication which is unique to the group.

Schouten and McAlexander (1995, p. 43) define a subculture of consumption as "a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity." They note that other subcultural characteristics include an identifiable hierarchical social structure, a unique ethos or set of shared beliefs and values, and unique jargons, rituals and modes of symbolic expression. Consumption subcultures typically encounter in certain products or activities cultural meanings that ultimately become articulated as unique, homologous styles or ideologies of consumption (Hebdige, 1979; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995).

Taking a symbolic interactionist perspective, Kelly (1983) considers consumer involvement in leisure activities, and purchase and symbolic display of leisure products to mark adherence to specific leisure subcultures; which ultimately aid in consumer self-affirmation through the representation of specific, socially constructed, identity images. He suggests that leisure symbols (for example trainers and track suits) are used to signify that one has a significant leisure identification; one may wear trainers to symbolise that one identifies with running or running subcultures. However, there is a richer meaning to this identity than merely being a runner. He considers the deeper, connotative and mythic levels of self-meaning associated with this and notes that, for example, being a runner implies an identity image that one is *physically fit, self-determined* and *motivated*. Haggard and Williams (1992) clustered a number of self-identity images that they found are associated with involvement in a number of leisure activities/subcultures. They are illustrated in Table 5.1.

Certainly with regard to adventure subcultures of consumption, Celsi et al (1993), Arnould and Price (1993) and Hogg et al (1999) have considered consumer self-identity implications of involvement in specific, high-risk adventure communities (skydiving, river rafting and sailing respectively), and the ritualistic purchase and use of consumption props to support desired adventure self-identity. Specifically, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) note that the ideology of the U.S Harley Davidson subculture is built upon a set of core values reflected in the meanings attributed to the Harley Davidson motorcycle and its usage. Aspirants to the

Harley Davidson subculture experiment with the concept of 'biker' as a possible self, and the Harley Davidson motorcycle and its accessory products, along with its highly iconic brand logo, the spread winged eagle, symbolise *personal freedom, American patriotism* and *male machismo.*

Table 5.1: Leisure Identity Images Clustering with Each of Eight Leisure Activities

KAYAKER	VOLLEYBALL PLAYER	GUITARIST
Adventurous	Athletic	Creative
Fun	Competitive	Determined
Fun Loving	Concerned with physical appearance	At peace with themselves
"Granola"	Ego motivated	Introspective
Likes scenic beauty	Energetic	Intelligent
Loves fresh air	Health conscious	Patient
Naturalist	Physically fit	Quiet
Outdoorsy	Proud	
Sociable	Sports minded	
	Team player	
BACKPACKER	**OUTDOOR COOKING ENTHUSIAST**	**WEIGHT TRAINER**
Adventurous	Adventurous	Athletic
Carefree	Back to nature	Competitive
Casual	Conservationist	Concerned with physical appearance
Free	"Granola"	Ego motivated
Fun	Fun	Health conscious
Fun loving	Fun loving	Physically fit
"Granola"	Likes scenic beauty	Proud
Likes scenic beauty	Nature lover	Sports minded
Loves fresh air	Naturalist	
Naturalist	Relaxed	
Nature lover	Outdoorsy	
Needs to get away from society	Needs to get away from society	
Outdoorsy	Sociable	
Relaxed		
Sociable		
RACQUETBALL PLAYER	**CHESS PLAYER**	
Able to concentrate	Able to concentrate	
Competitive	Analytical	
Concerned with physical appearance	Cerebral	
Ego motivated	Competitive	
Proud	Good problem solver	
Strategic	Logical	
Successful	Math minded	
	Quiet	
	Strategic	

Source: Haggard, L. and Williams, D. (1992, p. 9)

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5.4.1 *Marketing and Adventure Subcultures of Consumption*

Underlying the behaviours of a subculture of consumption is therefore an identifiable ethos, that is, a set of core values/ideology which finds expression in certain products/brands and their usages (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Subcultural commitment to key brands and product usage behaviours may be held with religious intensity, even to the point of elevating certain brands, such as Harley Davidson, to the status of icons. As recognised by Smith (1995), when subcultures are involved in flows and peaks associated with adventure consumption, this results in enduring attitude change towards products and contributes to the development of brand loyalty among members of the subculture. Strong consumer-product/brand relationships are formed and these products/brands become instrumental to re-enacting and narrating ones' adventure experiences.

In their devotion to and ritualistic consumption of certain products and services, subcultures tend to patronise marketers who cater to their specialised needs. It is therefore possible for a marketer who understands the structure and ethos of a subculture of consumption to cultivate a long-lasting, symbiotic relationship with it. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) recognise that it is possible to create 'brand communities', which like the Harley Davidson community, are non-geographically bound, and are based on a structured set of social relationships that exist amongst users of a given brand.

On the other hand, a body of research is increasingly developing which considers marketers' use of signifying spaces to appeal to adventure subcultures. This is the case for tourism/adventure tourism research, where it is evident that marketers employ communication material that creates a clear anchorage between adventure tourism destinations (signifying spaces) and associated subcultural adventure experiences/outcomes.

Urban (1989) recognises the self-transformational properties of involvement in tourism, and the marketers' role in signifying these properties. He states (1989, p. 117), "The tourist is a traveller who is willing to die, but only just a little in order to be born again. From the site to the target, this is the symbolic matter of his journey, the meaning of his adventure, an adventure which is reflected and attested by tourist advertising, memorialising the variations

of one's personality and of the world." Urry (1990, 1995) connects the representations of particular places with the evolving 'cultural' practices of tourism to suggest a process of 'tourist gaze.' He specifically includes the images created by tourist advertising in a closed semiotic system that links the representations of places to the experiences of tourists when visiting those places.

Supported by Hughes (1992) and Goss (1993), tourism may be viewed as a cultural practice in which tourist operators provide tourists with a range of images and representations (myths) of what a place is like, and the tourists begin their attempts to understand that place through the imaginary construction of reality contained within these texts. These anticipated constructions are then mirrored as far as possible by the providers of tourist attractions and by the promotion of tourist experiences in the places concerned. Focusing on increasing adventure tourism subcultures in New Zealand, Cloke and Perkins (1998) identify the self-identity implications of this kind of subcultural involvement, and the mythic meanings which become attributed the adventure 'space'. However, they recognise that marketing communications discourse that signifies adventure space not only connotes a sense of seeing, as in the 'tourist gaze', but also an association with the active body, with heightened sensory experience, risk, vulnerability, passion, pleasure, mastery and/or failure associated with involvement in adventure subcultures/experience.

Arnould and Price (1993) previously carried out a study which focused on multiday river rafting trips in the Colorado River basin. They highlighted the role of the service supplier in delivering successful extraordinary experience. They found that successful adventure trip outcomes depend on the ability of the service supplier to orchestrate affective, narrative and ritual content through their skills, emotional and dramatic sense and their engagement with participants. They found that emotional outcomes associated with extraordinary experience are embedded in relationships between customers and service providers.

Focusing on the significance of the retail outlet and leisure experiences, Featherstone (1991) previously noted that the role of the retail outlet may well be far more central to the total leisure experience than merely that of impassive equipment supplier. Arnould and Price (1993) contend that the retailers of equipment for those wishing to venture into the Great

Outdoors contribute significantly to the narrative of the extraordinary experience, prompting the feeling of communitas. This is supported by Varley and Crowther (1998) who note that at the retail site, a variety of sources including point-of-sale displays, merchandise assortment and sales staff develop and extend narratives relating to the Great Outdoors. As a result the process of acculturation for participants is assured with the active participation of staff who act as narrators, promoting a cultural script, heightening hedonic responses and developing communitas, a bond of common experience

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on existing literature that investigates the construction and signification of the leisure/adventure self, and consumer/marketer involvement in adventure subcultures of consumption. The self-initiated, voluntary nature of leisure was identified, and leisure was compared to the 'backstage', where participants perceive freedom for involvement, freedom from the constraints of the everyday, and freedom for self-creation, self-renewal, personal growth and ultimately, self-actualisation. Certainly, it was found that participants are motivated to engage with adventure for its self-transformative, emotive and intrinsic benefits; notably, it is through adventure experience that one's self can be strengthened and one can learn about the meaning of existence. The self-transcendental state of flow was described; a state of heightened emotions where action merges with awareness and one looses conscious awareness of the activity itself.

The social dimension of flow was identified, and it was found that communitas results as a consequence of shared, ritualistic flow experience. This sense of group camaraderie, which transcends typical social convention, provides adventure participants with 'double lives', on the one hand giving them a sense of group devotion and belonging, whilst on the other providing them with a 'unique' identity in wider society. It was identified that in a quest for authentic membership of unified adventure communities, participants prescribe to ideological codes, which include codes of consumption; products and brands are not only purchased for their functional, intrinsic benefits, but to signify adventure identity and authentic group

affiliation. Through their unified and unique consumption patterns, groups can be labelled adventure subcultures of consumption.

It was found that in their devotion to, and ritualistic consumption of certain products and services, subcultures tend to patronise marketers who cater to their specialised needs. This represents significant commercial opportunity for marketers who understand the structure and ethos of consumption subcultures to cultivate long-lasting, symbiotic relationships with them. Marketers can even create brand communities which, non-geographically bound, are based on a structured set of social relationships that exist amongst users of a given brand. The growing body of adventure-tourism research was considered, particularly the role of marketers in developing communications discourse that creates an anchorage between adventure-tourism destinations (signifying spaces) and associated subcultural adventure outcomes/experiences.

Finally, the role of the retail outlet in contributing to authentic subcultural adventure experience was considered. It was recognised that the retail outlet has potential to play a significant role in developing and extending authentic narratives of the Great Outdoors that can result in increased communitas and role acculturation.

Chapter 6

Methodology

Methodology

6.1   Introduction

The Methodology chapter is of critical importance to the research study as it provides an opportunity to discuss and critique existing research philosophies and to describe the emergent primary research strategy employed. Firstly, in the chapter, the aims and objectives of the study are restated, and there follows a discussion of research philosophies that focuses on the history of social research and critiques the theoretical underpinnings of positivism versus interpretivism. The methodological implications of the two philosophies are then considered with a discussion of the important issues of reliability, validity and generalisability.

A detailed outline of the primary research strategy employed for the study is then provided which includes a rationale of the chosen research philosophy, the emergent methodological format and depth description of the research design and primary data collection methods and techniques employed. The issues of reliability, validity and generalisability relative to the study are considered, followed by description of the data analysis strategy employed. Finally, the problems and limitations of the study are addressed.

6.1.1 Restatement of Research Aim

To carry out a semiotic investigation to explore the creation, signification and movement of cultural meaning relative to the UK adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption.

6.1.2 Restatement of Research Objectives

Objective 1 - To identify the key myths/communication codes that drive the construction, signification and movement of meaning relative to the adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption.

Objective 2 - To explore the motorcyclist consumer psyche, specifically focusing on consumer relationships with, and use of signifying props, spaces, and stories for the construction and signification of meaningful subcultural 'motorcyclist' self-identity

Objective 3 - To investigate the role/significance of motorcycle related manufacturers, service suppliers and marketers in constructing and signifying brands that purvey cultural messages and construct categories of motorcycling subculture.

6.2 Research Philosophies

6.2.1 History of Social Research

The driving force behind any type of social research is its philosophical framework. This dictates not only the general perception of reality and social relations but also the type of methods and techniques available to the researcher. Social research as it is known today, originated in France and was inspired by the social philosopher Comte ([1798-1857] 1975). Unconvinced by what he believed were descriptive, philosophical and speculative methodologies of his time he introduced the *positive* method, which was to dominate the field of social research for more than a century. Comte proposed that new methods must be scientific and that it is essential to study society and people as one sees them rather than as

philosophers and theologians interpret them. He proposed that scientific methods are therefore the most appropriate tools of social research.

Comte's positivist theory exerted profound impact on the thinking of many social scientists of the time, leading to the introduction and development of sociology as the new science of society. Positivism became the backbone of the social sciences in Europe, the USA and other countries. Positivistic methodology shifted from philosophy to science and from speculation to the gathering of empirical data, aiming to study positive phenomena by employing scientific methods similar to those used by physical scientists. Until the 1960s, typical social research involved using survey methods and experiments, directed towards quantification and the use of statistics and computers.

The 1960s saw a challenge to positivist theory and research, which knocked it from the privileged position it had held for so long. In particular, challenges came from the school of *symbolic interactionism* (Blumer, 1969, 1986) and later from *phenomenology* (Husserl, 1970; Vandenberg, 1971; Schutz, 1974), *philosophical hermeneutics* (Palmer, 1969; Gadamer, 1976; Ricoeur, 1976; Bleicher, 1980; Mueller-Vollmer, 1988) and *ethnomethodology* (Garfinkel, 1967, 1986), who questioned the theoretical underpinnings of positivism, especially its methodology and perception of social reality. Symbolic interactionism gained recognition amongst wide audiences of social scientists in Europe and the USA. Its theoretical orientation and its objection to positivism made this school of thought a legitimate and well-respected alternative.

Also contributing to this was later work by the Frankfurt School, Marxists, and Feminists. Critics proposed a new, *interpretive* methodology that focused on subjective elements and a constructed world, on critical thinking, on interpretive attributes and on political issues that rejected the notion of taking the world for granted. Hegemony in the social sciences had been undermined and what transpired can be categorised into two principal philosophies or paradigms, *positivism* and *interpretivism*.

6.2.2 Positivism V's Interpretivism – Theoretical Underpinnings

The two principal philosophies or paradigms, positivism and interpretivism are also known as the *quantitative* and *qualitative* paradigms. Sometimes the term *phenomenological* is used rather than interpretivist but for the purpose of this study, the term interpretivist will be used because it suggests a broader philosophical perspective and prevents confusion with a methodology known as phenomenology.

Both the positivist and interpretivist philosophies contain various assumptions. Cresswell (1994) illustrates these in Table 6.1. The *ontological* assumption asks, what is the nature of reality? Here the researcher must decide whether he/she considers the world to be objective and external to him/herself, or whether the world is socially constructed and only understood by examining the perceptions of the human actors within it. Interpretive research methods are prone to be criticised because they uphold variations of a relativistic ontology of multiple, individually constructed but socially and culturally constrained realities. If reality is constructed then it follows that the researcher is active and implicated in that process (Hughes, 1990). This is in marked contrast to the positivistic ontology, which suggests that there is a single reality out there. Positivists do not have to entertain an ontological argument; reality is already there independent of human consciousness. It is objective, rests on order, and is governed by strict, natural and unchangeable laws (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Shankar and Goulding, 2001).

With regard to ontological assumptions, several researchers have claimed that there is no such thing as an objective fact. Rather, there are only facts-as-interpreted, that is, data as socially, linguistically, or personally constructed (Gadamer, 1976; Bernstein, 1983; Bruner, 1986; Hekman, 1986; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1992). They contend that all knowledge and all science rest on interpretation. When one collects a body of empirical evidence, whether in a laboratory experiment, a field survey, or some other kind of text, one can extract valid meaning from it only via some sort of interpretive analysis. Therefore, they claim, the evidence itself is always cloaked in an interpretive shroud (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1993). Supporting this, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) note that in the social sciences today, there is no longer a God's eye view that guarantees absolute methodological certainty. There is no

possibility of theory- or value-free knowledge and the days of naïve realism and naïve *positivism* are over.

Table 6.1: Assumptions of the Two Main Paradigms

Assumption	Question	Quantitative	Qualitative
Ontological	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is objective and singular, apart from the researcher	Reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in the study
Epistemological	What is the relationship of the researcher to that researched?	Researcher is independent from that being researched	Researcher interacts with that being researched
Axiological	What is the role of values?	Value-free and unbiased	Value-laden and biased
Rhetorical	What is the language of research?	Formal Based on set definitions Impersonal voice Use of accepted quantitative words	Informal Evolving decisions Personal voice Use of accepted qualitative words
Methodological	What is the process of research?	Deductive process Cause and effect Static design – categories isolated before study Context-free Generalisations leading to predictions, explanation and understanding Accurate and reliable through validity and reliability	Inductive process Mutual simultaneous shaping of factors Emerging design – categories identified during research process Context-bound Patterns, theories developed for understanding Accurate and reliable through verification

Source: Creswell, J. (1994, p.5)

Epistemology is concerned with the study of knowledge and what one accepts as being valid knowledge. This involves an examination of the relationship between the researcher and that

which is being researched. Positivists believe that only phenomena which are observable and measurable can be validly regarded as knowledge and this enables them to maintain an independent and objective stance. Interpretivists however, attempt to minimise the distance between the researcher and that which is being researched. This polarity between the two approaches has been captured by Smith (1983, p. 19) who argues, "In quantitative research facts act to constrain our beliefs; while in interpretive research beliefs determine what should count as facts." Gordon and Langmaid (1988) support the interpretive position and note that the subjectivity of the interpretive process should not be a source of anxiety; it is, in fact, the strength of interpretive research. They note that interpretation is continuous, rather like the pattern of threads weaving through a piece of cloth. It consists of the development of hypotheses which are continually being challenged throughout the process. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) support this, noting that, in fact, all inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer.

The *axiological* assumption is concerned with values. Positivists believe that science and the process of research is value-free. Positivists therefore consider that they are detached from what they are researching and regard the phenomena which are the focus of their research as objects. They are interested in the interrelationship of the objects they are studying and believe that these objects were present before they took interest in them. Furthermore, they believe that the objects they are studying are unaffected by their research activities and will still be present after the study has been completed. These assumptions are often found in research within the natural sciences, but are less convincing in the social sciences, which are primarily concerned with the activities and behaviour of people (Hussey and Hussey, 1997).

At the other extreme, interpretivists consider that researchers have values, even if they have not been made explicit, and these values help to determine what are recognised as facts and the interpretations that are drawn from them. They believe that the researcher is involved with that which is being researched. Shankar and Goulding (2000) note that if interpretive researchers take as *axiomatic* their beliefs about the world, then it follows that there will always be multiple ways of 'seeing the world'. Each will have its own merits, strengths and weaknesses. They recognise that the researcher's goal is not the 'truth', because it can never be proven, rather their goal is *hermeneutic* understanding or *verstehen*. The choice of

interpretive technique guides the entire research process from research design through to data collection, analysis and finally interpretation.

It should be recognised that the ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions are interrelated. Logically, if the researcher accepts one of the assumptions, the other two assumptions complement it (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). The *rhetorical* assumption is concerned with the language of the research. Within a positivistic study, it is generally accepted to write in a formal style using the passive voice. This is because the researcher is trying to convey the impression that the research is objective, that rigorous procedures have been adopted and any personal opinions and values have not been allowed to distort the findings (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). In an interpretive study the position is less clear. In many disciplines the preferred style of writing is one which fully reflects the immediacy of the research and demonstrates the researcher's involvement.

The final assumption of importance is the *methodological* assumption. The methodology translates the principles of a paradigm in a research language, and shows how the world can be explained, handled, approached or studied. It is a framework which transpires from the chosen philosophy, and provides guidelines on how research can be carried out within the context of that philosophy (Harding, 1987; Hussey and Hussey, 1997, Sarantakos, 1998). Positivists are likely to be concerned with ensuring that any concepts used can be operationalised and described in such a way that they can be measured. Large samples are normally used and phenomena reduced to their simplest parts. Focus is placed on what are regarded as objective facts and on the formulation of hypotheses. Data analysis is formulated on the seeking of associations or causality. Interpretivists normally examine small samples, possibly over a period of time and a number of research methods are likely to be employed to obtain different perceptions of the phenomena and to allow for 'triangulation' of the results (Jick, 1979; Deshpande, 1983; Hirschman, 1985). Analysis seeks to understand what is happening in a situation and looks for patterns which may be repeated in other similar situations.

The two extremes of the positivist and interpretive philosophies can be illustrated in the form of a continuum with various stages in between. Morgan and Smircich (1980) identify this continuum (illustrated in Figure 6.1), which is based on core ontological assumptions.

Figure 6.1: Continuum of Core Ontological Assumptions
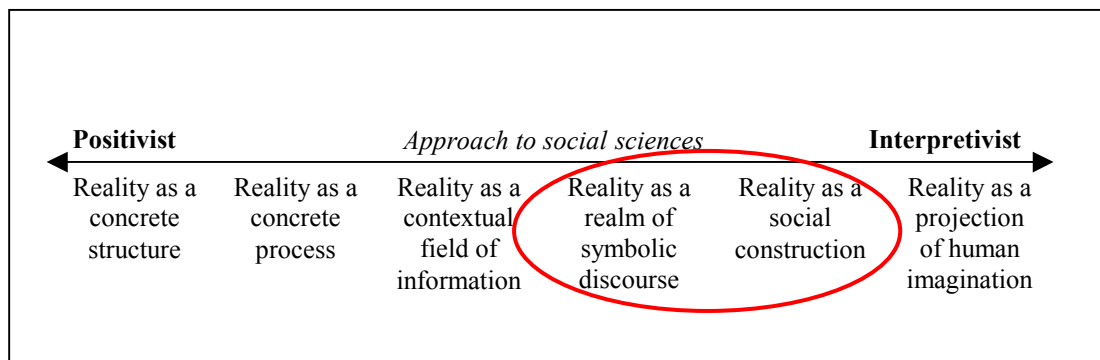
At the extreme positivist end of the continuum are those who assume that the social world is the same as the physical world. Their ontological assumption is that reality is an external, concrete structure which affects everybody. As such, the researcher can attempt to measure and analyse it using research methods such as laboratory experiments and surveys. At the second stage, reality is regarded as a concrete process where the world is, in part, what one makes it. The third stage is where reality is derived from the transmission of information, which leads to an ever-changing form and activity. At the fourth stage the social world is a pattern of symbolic relationships and meanings sustained through the process of human action and interaction. At the fifth stage, the social world is created by individuals through language, actions and routines. At the extreme interpretivist end of the continuum, reality is seen as a projection of human imagination. Under this assumption, there may be no social world apart from that which is inside the individual's mind.

Although rarely do researchers operate at the extremes of this continuum, they are normally biased towards either the positivist or the interpretivist side. This has implications for their chosen approach to the research process and for the choice of research methods to be adopted.

In summary, positivistic philosophy seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena, with little regard to the subjective state of the individual. Thus, logical reasoning is applied to the quantitative research so that precision, objectivity and rigour replace hunches, experience and intuition as the means of investigating research problems. Explanation consists of establishing causal relationships between variables by establishing causal laws and linking them to a deductive or integrated theory. Social and natural worlds are both regarded as being bound by certain fixed laws in a sequence of cause and effect. The interpretivist philosophy is concerned with understanding human behaviour from the participant's own frame of reference. This qualitative approach stresses the subjective aspects of human activity by focusing on the meaning, rather than the measurement of social phenomena.

6.3   Methodological Choices

Once a research philosophy has been chosen, it is important to pay attention to all the features of that particular philosophy to ensure that there are no contradictions or deficiencies within the development of the associated methodology. Table 6.2 illustrates the key methodological features of the positivistic and interpretivist research philosophies.

Table 6.2: Methodological Features of Two Main Paradigms

Positivistic paradigm	Interpretivist paradigm
Tends to produce quantitative data	Tends to produce qualitative data
Uses large samples	Uses small samples
Concerned with hypothesis testing	Concerned with generating theories
Data is highly specific and precise	Data is rich and subjective
The location is artificial	The location is natural
Reliability is high	Reliability is low
Validity is low	Validity is high
Generalises from sample to population	Generalises from one setting to another

Source: Hussey, J. and Hussey, R. (1997, p.54)

It can be recognised that positivistic research tends to produce highly specific and precise quantitative data whereas interpretivist research produces rich, subjective qualitative data. Because of the need to conduct statistical analysis, a positivistic study often uses large

samples. Results from a representative sample can then be taken to be true, and generalised for the whole population. However, the aim of an interpretivist study is to collect rich information, and it is possible to conduct such research with a sample of one.

Positivistic research is concerned with studying the literature to establish appropriate theories and hypotheses that will be tested within the study. Interpretivist research however, is more concerned with generating new theories, hypotheses only sometimes being developed for later testing. Positivistic research traditionally takes place in an artificial setting such as a laboratory whereas interpretivist research traditionally takes place in the field, that is, the natural setting of those being researched. Saunders et al (1997) effectively identify the key advantages and disadvantages of the main approaches to research design (identified in Table 6.3).

Table 6.3: Key Advantages and Disadvantages of the Main Approaches to Research Design

	Positivism	**Interpretivism**
Advantages	▪ Economical collection of large amounts of data ▪ Clear theoretical focus for the research at the outset ▪ Greater opportunity for researcher to retain control of research process ▪ Easily comparable data	▪ Facilitates understanding of how and why ▪ Enables researcher to be alive to changes which occur during the research process ▪ Good at understanding social processes
Disadvantages	▪ Inflexible-direction often cannot be changed once data collection has started ▪ Weak at understanding social processes ▪ Often doesn't discover the meanings people attach to social phenomena	▪ Data collection can be time consuming ▪ Data analysis is difficult ▪ Researcher has to live with the uncertainty that clear patterns may not emerge ▪ Generally perceived as less credible by 'non-researchers'

Source: Adapted from Saunders et al (1997, p.74)

Of significant importance in the development of any research methodology are the issues of *reliability, validity* and *generalisability.*

6.3.1 Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the findings of the research and is one aspect of the *credibility* of the findings, the other being *validity*. The researcher must ask him/herself if the evidence and conclusions produced will stand up to close scrutiny. If a research finding can be repeated, it is reliable. That is, if the research is repeated by the researcher, or anyone else, the same results should be obtained (Raimond, 1993). Repeating a research study to test the reliability of the results is known as *replication* and is very important in positivistic studies where reliability is usually high.

Within an interpretivist study, the criterion of reliability may not be given so much status, or it may be interpreted in a different way. It is not important whether qualitative measures are reliable in the positivistic sense, but whether similar observations and interpretations can be made on different occasions and/or by different researchers. Interpretivists follow a number of 'verification' and 'triangulation' procedures to ensure reliability and validity of the collected data. Triangulation is a process by which multiple data collection methods and techniques are used in the same study. Jick (1979) contends that triangulation has vital strengths; it encourages productive research and enhances qualitative methods.

6.3.2 Validity

Hussey and Hussey (1997, p.58) state that "validity is the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is really happening in the situation." An effect or test is valid if it demonstrates or measures what the researcher thinks, or claims, it does. Research errors, such as faulty research procedures, poor samples and inaccurate or misleading measurement, can undermine validity (Coolican, 1992).

Because a positivistic philosophy focuses on the precision and measurement and the ability to be able to repeat the experiment reliably, there is always a danger that validity will be very low. In other words, the measure does not reflect the phenomena the researcher claims to be investigating. However, an interpretivist philosophy is aimed at capturing the essence of the

phenomena and extracting data that is rich in its explanation and analysis. The research aims to gain full access to the knowledge and meaning of those involved in the phenomenon and consequently validity is high in such a study.

6.3.3 Generalisability

Generalisation is concerned with the application of the research results to cases or situations beyond those examined in the study. Vogt (1993, p.99) states, "generalisability is the extent to which you can come to conclusions about one thing (often a population) based on information about another (often a sample)." Positivists construct a sample and are primarily interested in determining how confident they are in stating that the characteristics found in the sample are present in the population from which the sample has been drawn.

However, using statistics to generalise from a sample to a population is just one type of generalisation (Gummerson, 1991). In an interpretivist study, the researcher may be able to generalise from one setting to another. Gummerson (1991) supports the view of Normann (1970) who contends that it is possible to generalise from a very few cases, or even a single case, if the researcher's analysis has captured the interactions and characteristics of the phenomena which are being studied. Thus, the researcher will be concerned with whether patterns, concepts and theories which have been generated in a particular environment can be applied in other environments.

Several types of research methodology are associated with each of the positivistic and interpretivist philosophies. The most commonly used ones are identified in Figure 6.2. Summary details of these methodologies are contained in APPENDIX B.

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Figure 6.2: Methodologies Associated with Two Main Paradigms

Positivistic *Approach to social sciences*	**Interpretivist**
Associated methodologies	*Associated methodologies*
Cross-sectional studies	Action research
Experimental studies	Case studies
Longitudinal studies	Ethnography
Surveys	Feminist perspective
	Grounded theory
	Hermeneutics
	Participative enquiry
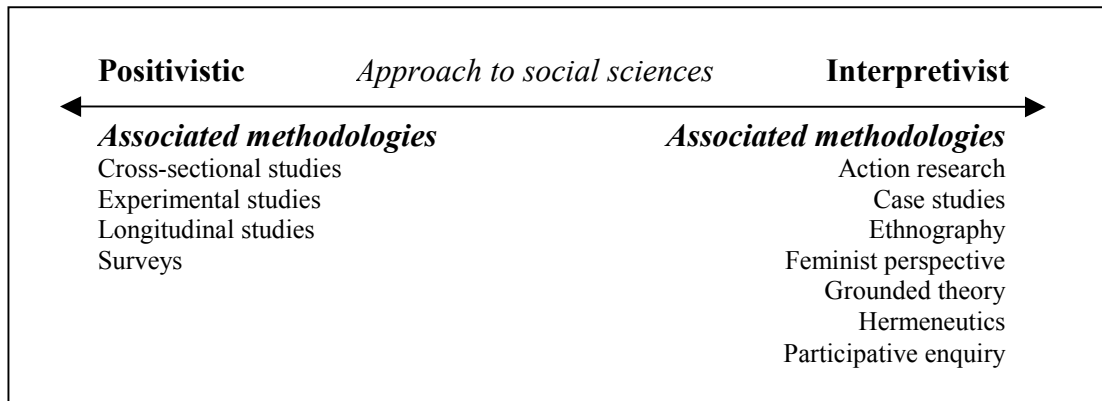
Source: Hussey, J. and Hussey, R. (1997, p.59)

6.4   Research Strategy Employed

6.4.1 Research Philosophy

The interpretivist research philosophy has been adopted for this study. Like other social research, consumer research was once dominated by positivistic inquiry. An awareness of the promise held by interpretive approaches and qualitative methods came to light in the 1980s, at around the time of the Consumer Behaviour Odyssey, masterminded primarily by Belk et al (1989). This paved the way for the *Post-Positivist Movement* in consumer research, which championed interpretive inquiry within the field and was particularly encouraged by various influential consumer researchers (Thompson et al, 1990; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1993; Belk, 1995; Thompson and Hirschman, 1995).

The work of the Post-Positivists brought a tremendous broadening in the range of methods used to study consumer behaviour. Traditional viewpoints from the positivistic philosophy that adhered to the perspectives of the hypothetico-deductive approach (Hunt, 1983) gradually yielded some of their hegemony to an influx of more relativistic viewpoints. This enlarged philosophical foundation has helped to justify the development of methods drawn from humanism (Hirschman, 1986), naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Belk et al, 1989), and other interpretive techniques (Holbrook, 1989; Thompson et al, 1989). Holbrook and Hirschman (1993) propose that as a social science rather than a natural science, consumer

research requires an interpretive perspective. They provide a spectrum, putting the physical sciences at one end and the humanities at the other, and claim that consumer research lies with the social sciences, towards the interpretive humanities end of the spectrum. This model is illustrated in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3: A Schematic Portrayal of the Natural Sciences and Human Studies
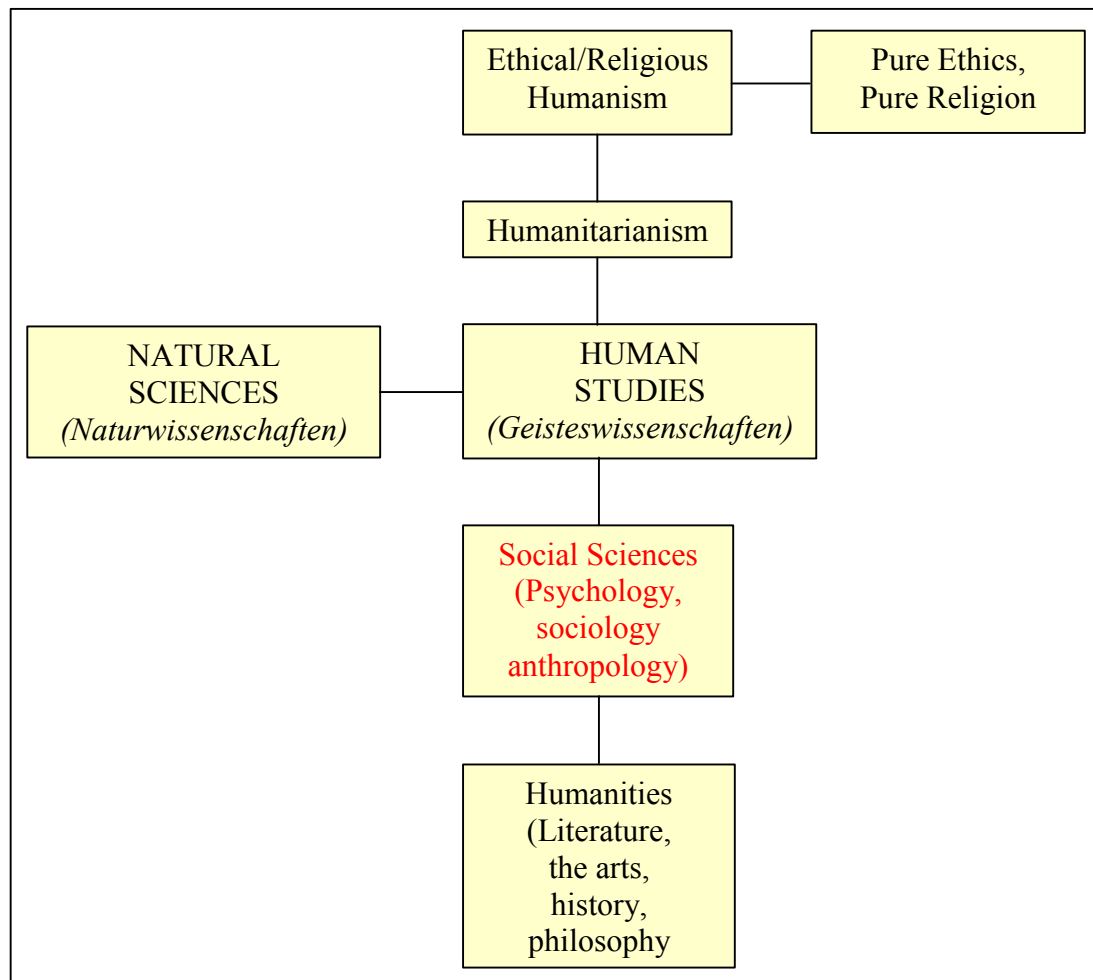
Source: Holbrook, M. and Hirschman, E. (1993, p. 34)

Holbrook and Hirschman (1993) note that, like the humanities, the social sciences in general and consumer research in particular, deals with people, that is, human beings. One quintessential characteristic of people entails their unremitting tendency to seek meaning in their lives. Human life is embedded within a shared system of signs based on public language; they dwell among symbolic objects that confer their sense of social existence and

identity (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1981, 1992; Umiker-Sebeok, 1987). The force of this recognition implies that people in general, and human consumers in particular, differ from atoms and molecules in their endless quest for meaning and that the phenomena of consumption demands understanding in that light. This recognition further dictates that it is not possible to escape the need for interpretation in one's attempt to explicate the meanings embedded in consumer behaviour.

This research study acknowledges the interpretive propositions described above. The objectives of the study require depth exploration of the experiential, meaningful and signifying aspects that surround, and underpin consumption, and this is most effectively achieved by adopting an interpretive research philosophy. The theoretical framework adopted lies on stages four and five of Morgan and Smircich's continuum, (circled in Figure 6.1). Reality is regarded in the realm of symbolic discourse; a person's relation to physical (objective) reality is a social construction mediated by the symbolic environment. The specific philosophical assumptions adopted for this study are identified in Table 6.4.

The philosophical underpinnings of this study are consistent with those of symbolic interactionism, and more specifically, with those of semiotic theory. Semiotic methodology has been implicated as an essential doctrine in the inquiry into consumer behaviour and has been propounded as a means of gaining a new depth of awareness of the experiential aspects that underpin consumption (Levy, 1959, 1971, 1978, 1981, 1982; Howard and Sheth, 1969; Holbrook, 1975, 1978a, 1978b; Holman, 1976, 1980a, 1980b, 1981a, 1981b, 1983; Kehret-Ward, a.k.a. Murray, 1981, Kehret-Ward,1982; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982, 1993; Thayler, 1982; Belk et al, 1984; Kehret-Ward and Yalch, 1984; Kehret-Ward et al, 1985; Holbrook and Grayson, 1986; Mick, 1986, 1988, 1997; Umiker-Sebeok, 1987; Lawes, 2002).

Table 6.4: Philosophical Assumptions of This Study

Assumption	
Ontological	Reality is regarded in the realm of symbolic discourse; a person's relation to physical (objective) reality is a social construction mediated by the symbolic environment. There is no concrete social world 'out there'. Society is a cultural construction which is carried from person to person, group to group, via signs and symbols. People understand the world and its meanings through cultural assumptions, shared meaning systems and taken-for-granted beliefs and values that are ideologically based and culturally reinforced. Reality is produced by and inscribed in language. All discourses structure the way people think about things.
Epistemological	Researcher interacts with that which is being researched is thus active and implicated in the research process. Inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer
Axiological	Researchers have values, which even if not made explicit, help to determine what are recognised as facts and the interpretations that are drawn from them. Researcher's goal is hermeneutic understanding or verstehen.
Rhetorical	Style of writing reflects the immediacy of the research and demonstrates the researcher's involvement, while at the same time maintaining some formality due to the nature of the qualification sought. Use of accepted qualitative words
Methodological	Research is an inductive process. There is an emerging design and categories are identified during the process Patterns and theories are developed for hermeneutic understanding or verstehen. Although research is context-bound, analysis seeks to understand what is happening in a situation and looks for patterns which may be repeated in other similar situations. Research is accurate and reliable through verification and triangulation.

However, as identified by Mick (1986), Holbrook and Hirschman (1993) and more recently Lawes (2002), whereas a wide range of consumer researchers identify the 'value' of semiotic methodologies applied to consumer research problems, the majority use it at a 'denotative' level, to describe the symbolic aspects of consumption behaviour. They do not get involved with depth semiotic investigation for detailed examination of meaningful consumption processes. Of those consumer studies that do get involved with the depths of semiotic investigation (Mick's (1986) pioneering work for example), they are predominantly based on positivist philosophical assumptions relative to the American neopositivistic semiotic tradition.

Whereas this research study lies within the realm of the 'applied semiotics' section of Mick's (1986) influential semiotic cube, its philosophical underpinnings are consistent with those prescribed to by the less-developed/used interpretive semiology approach (influenced by Holbrook and Hirschman (1993)). The study aims to employ an interpretive semiology approach to explore the creation, signification and movement of meaning relative to the adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption. It aims to employ, and advance the interpretive semiology approach as a technique that can be applied to gain an understanding of the constructs of cultural meaning so significant in consumer research.

The interpretive semiology approach employs postmodern perspectives which encourage interpretation of a text at multiple levels of meaning in order to gain rich, hermeneutic understanding of a phenomenon (Sherry, 1991, Holbrook and Hirschman, 1993). A key assumption of this approach is that every culture or subculture expresses itself through the overall package of communications that form its discourse. Discourse is the expression of that culture's own particular worldview, embodying similar cultural assumptions and taken-for-granted meanings. Every discourse is the voice of a culture/subculture that created it; as such, discourse becomes a rich and rewarding universe, a happy hunting ground for semiological techniques and analysis (Alexander, 2000).

A central premise on which the methodological assumptions of this study are grounded, is the strong interrelatedness, (identified by Alexander, 1999), that exists between brands, brand communications, culture and the consumer. It is recognised that popular culture plays a

highly influencing role in constructing the consumer, the brand and the company that owns the brand, and that brand communications (all elements of that same popular culture) also play their part in constructing the consumer. To gain an understanding of the key meaningful processes which underpin consumption, it is not only necessary to focus on consumer behaviour and the surrounding cultural/subcultural discourse, but also on the role of marketers in contributing to the cultural/subcultural world. Whereas many consumer research studies focus primarily on consumers and consumption, this study takes a holistic cultural approach that includes the highly significant role of marketers in *conveying* and *producing* the cultural world. This holistic approach is made possible through the use/development of an interpretive semiology approach that focuses on a specific subculture of consumption.

Implicit in this work is the model of culture developed by Penaloza and Gilly (1999) and modified by Penaloza (2000) (illustrated in Figure 6.4). This model highlights the role of marketers and consumers in belonging to the culturally constituted world, and stresses their interrelationship that exists through marketplaces and market stimuli.

Figure 6.4: Model of Culture
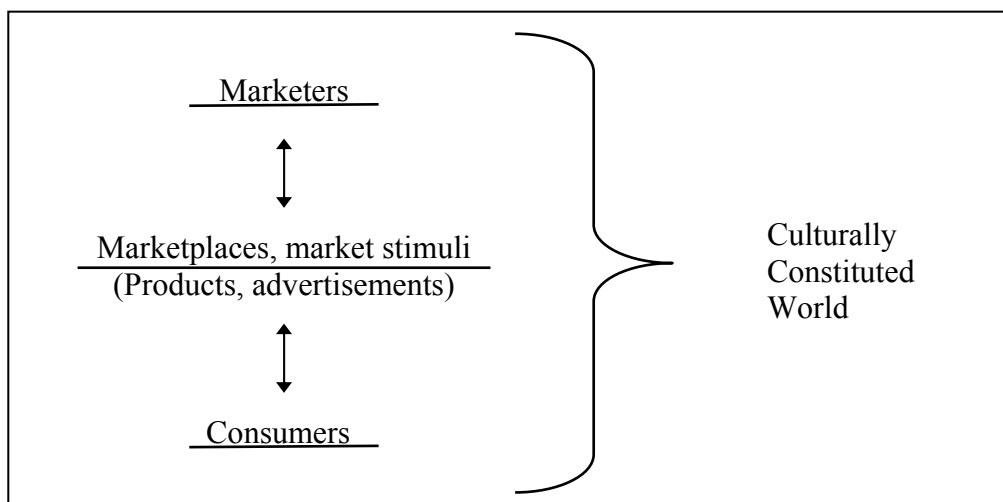
Source: Penaloza, L. (2000, p. 84)

From an epistemological standpoint, it is important to note that the researcher of this study accepts that she is implicated in the research process. Certainly, the same popular culture that

constructs the consumer, the brand and associated discourse, also constructs the researcher. The researcher is aware of this and recognises personal values that are consistent with British Western popular culture. However, as a non-member, 'outsider', or 'visitor' to the motorcycling subculture under investigation, it was possible to maintain an objective position whereby the researcher was 'looking in' on the subculture from the outside. This enabled subcultural meaning processes to be identified that would not necessarily be clearly visible to a subcultural 'insider.' Certainly methodological techniques employed did not aim for ethnographic researcher integration into the motorcycling subculture, but aimed to maintain the researcher's status as an objective 'outsider'.

6.4.2 Methodological Format

The methodological format that was chosen for the study reflects the assumptions of the chosen interpretive research philosophy. After depth consideration of the available interpretive methodologies, it was decided that the most appropriate methodological form is that of *case study*. Yin (1994, p. 13) states that case study "is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence."

A case study format is appropriate for this study for several reasons. Firstly, the research aims to further explore and develop existing theory that is primarily exploratory in nature; a case study approach accommodates this effectively. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that case study methodology is particularly relevant when the research aims to gain a deep understanding of tacit knowledge and semiosis. Also, this format allows for a rich description to be obtained of a specific phenomenon of interest, and this can be achieved through using multiple data collection methods. The case study approach involves a single unit of analysis such as an individual or a group of people with similar characteristics. Employing a single unit of analysis, this study focuses primarily on UK motorcycling subculture.

When researching a specific subculture of consumption, a *multiple case study* approach allows a replication strategy to be formed, which involves researching more than one participant. This provides an opportunity to build strength within the data collection method, to support the development of accurate, reliable and valid results, and to contribute to theoretical developments within the field. Overall, the case study approach offers a degree of flexibility, which is necessary within a piece of research of this nature. The case study process begins with the development of a conceptual framework model (illustrated previously in Section 1.2.1), from which the primary research design and data collection method/s are developed.

6.4.3 Research Design and Data Collection Methods

Adopting an interpretive semiology approach, a range of qualitative data collection methods were employed in the study which aimed to produce data that, as noted by Van Maanen (1983) seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain phenomenon in the social world. A holistic, cultural approach was adopted to examine the adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption. It was important to analyse subcultural discourse from a range of different angles and perspectives. Multiple methods of data collection allowed for verification and triangulation, which added validity, accuracy and reliability to the results. This also allowed for the development and incorporation of a number of original, pioneering semiotic and narrative techniques, which aimed to make a methodological contribution to the field of interpretive consumer research.

The bulk of primary data collection was carried out over a two year period, and included the collection of *documentary evidence* (representing motorcycle related subcultural discourse), *non-participant observation, informal interviewing* and *formal interviewing*. The data collection process broadly followed that identified by Hussey and Hussey (1997); illustrated in Figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5: Overview of the Data Collection Process

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Identify variables     │
│      or phenomena        │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│      Select sample       │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Select type of data    │
│        required          │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│    Choose appropriate    │
│    collection method(s)  │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Conduct pilot study or │
│   exploratory research   │
└─────────────────────────┘
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            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│         Modify           │
│   collection method(s)   │
└─────────────────────────┘
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            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│      Collect data        │
└─────────────────────────┘
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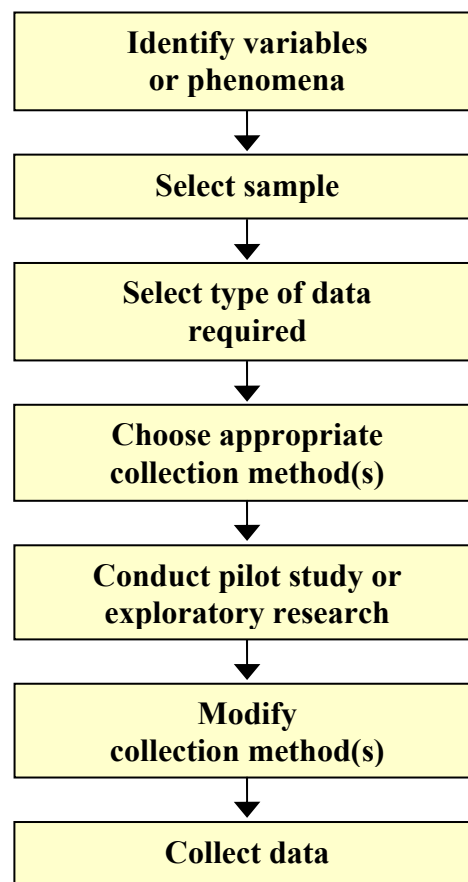
Source: Hussey, J. and Hussey, R. (1997, p.141)

In common with interpretive research in general, the very nature of this study meant that data collection methods were carried out simultaneously. As themes began to emerge and develop, continuous modifications and refinements were made to the methods to allow for more focused, accurate results gathering; whilst ensuring open, free response from interview respondents. Specific data collection methods and techniques employed are described as follows.

Semiotic Audit

Semiotic philosophy (as noted in Chapter 3) posits that people do not think independently as free agents, rather, each person is a product of the culture to which they belong. People perceive the world, draw up value-systems, make and share group meanings in accordance

with the perceptions, values and meanings of the particular culture to which they belong. Noting this, Alexander (1999, 2000, 2001), Lawes (2002) and Valentine (2003) propose that the most effective place to begin any qualitative semiotic study is by directly interrogating the culture for itself in order to later relate consumer response to the cultural foundations on which they rest; this is known as an 'outside-in' approach as opposed to the traditional 'inside-out' approach to qualitative consumer research (Lawes, 2002). This 'outside-in' approach proposes that in order to find out the true wellsprings of consumer attitudes and behaviour it is necessary to first interrogate the culture that surrounds them and, by the same metaphor, 'manufactures' them. This is achieved by carrying out a *semiotic audit.*

The first primary data collection method employed in this study was that involved in carrying out a semiotic audit of British motorcycling subculture. The aim of the semiotic audit was to first generate the big picture of the research problem before dissecting it for further research. It became possible to look through both the consumer and the marketers into the cultural processes and discourses that lie behind and condition much of their behaviour. Through the semiotic audit, it became possible to analyse the discourses that link both parties (consumers and marketers) in what can be described as an 'overall communication encounter' (Alexander, 2000).

Motorcyclist subcultural discourse is made up of the overall package of communications which embody its' shared cultural assumptions and taken-for-granted meanings, thus its' ideology. It was necessary to assemble a representative sample of evidence of motorcycle related subcultural discourse and this was done by taking samples from a wide range of sources. It would be virtually impossible to collect 'all' the communications discourse that surrounds British motorcycling subculture, but a representative sample provides a reliable microcosm of the whole (Alexander, 2001).

Discourse was taken from a range of sources, which represent consumers, manufacturers/suppliers/marketers, media, and a wider cultural perspective of motorcyclists/motorcycling. Documentary evidence was particularly important and included a range of books, motorcycle related magazines, advertisements, photographs, local and national newspapers as well as evidence from motorcycle web pages; note, all web page

material provided in the Results and Discussion was correct at time of writing. A number of motorcycle films were analysed as well as wider popular cultural films featuring motorcyclists. The primary data collection method of non-participant observation was also carried out to explore both consumer and staff interaction, and behaviour at motorcycle retail outlets. A breakdown of sources used for the semiotic audit is provided in APPENDIX C.

Internet search facilities were employed as a particularly effective method of eliciting evidence that represents motorcycle subcultural discourse. The 'Proquest' newspaper database search facility enabled a great number of local and national newspapers to be searched for articles from years 2001 to 2004 which feature motorcyclist/motorcycling issues. A search of motorcycle films, and wider films which feature motorcyclists, identified a number of films that were later viewed and analysed as part of the semiotic audit. Web pages of a wide range of motorcycle manufacturers, suppliers, interest groups and clubs, retail outlets, the motorcycle industry association (MCIA) and other motorcyclist establishments (biker's cafes) provided rich narrative for the subcultural discourse analysis. Discourse was analysed from a representative range of magazines spanning the diversity of the motorcycle market, and assembled over the period of the research study.

Interviewing

A key data collection method employed in this study, which formed part of the interpretive semiology approach, was interviewing. Whereas the semiotic audit allowed the researcher to take an 'outside in' approach to gain invaluable understanding of the historic movement of motorcyclist subcultural meaning through time (relative to Objective 1), interview techniques allowed this to be combined with a focused 'inside out' approach, to explore depth, detailed, and specific information relative to all three objectives of the investigation. Interviews focused on both motorcyclist consumers and representatives from the industry (manufacturers/suppliers/marketers), and a combination of formal and informal interviews were carried out.

As far as possible, interviews took place in respondents' 'natural' environments; i.e. for consumers, at their homes, regular retail outlet or bike meet venues, for company respondents

at their places of work. Interviewing in their natural environment encouraged respondents to take part in the study, as they did not have to make an effort to travel for interviews. Also, as noted by Glesne (1999), within their own territory respondents feel more relaxed and are thus more likely to speak freely and confidently; respondents in the study were witnessed enjoying the experience! This encouraged researcher objectivity and enabled rich, descriptive information to be collected.

Although formal personal interviews are difficult to organise and very time consuming (Hague, 1993), several advantages were identified which made them very appropriate and beneficial for this study. Firstly, they allow a deep understanding of the validity of the response to be gained as the opportunity arises for in-depth discussion of arising issues. In a face-to-face situation, better explanations are possible as respondents' face and hand actions are used to make points clearly. Longer explanations are possible and there is less pressure on time, unlike other forms of data collection. Tangible elements can be used to aid in expression; elements used included the core-values exercise table, self-assembly collage, motorcycle magazines and advertisements, company brochures and product details (detailed below). It is easier to maintain the interest of a respondent for a longer period if the interview is face-to-face and co-operation tends to be better. Also, with a personal interview it becomes easier to guarantee anonymity to necessary respondents. The issues identified here are likely to add accuracy and validity to the results.

Formal Consumer Interviews

Formal, semi-structured interviews were carried out with twenty consumer respondents. The researcher tried to encourage a sympathetic consumer interview situation (as identified by Lannon and Cooper, 1983) where trust could develop, and where permission was given to respondents to freely express personal thoughts and feelings without risk of social or personal censorship. This was achieved by interviewing in respondents' 'natural' environment (as mentioned above), and by employing a 'judgemental' approach to respondent selection which involved choosing individuals for personal, one-to-one interviewing or husband and wife couples (with the exception of Matt and Steven who are best friends). Male group interviews were particularly avoided due to the element of 'machismo' that exists within male

motorcyclist groups (identified by Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) which affects their interview behaviour and presentation of the self.

Although eighty percent of British motorcyclists are, in fact, male, an attempt was made to include female respondents in the sample, to gain a female perspective of the phenomenon under investigation. Six of the twenty consumer respondents were female, three themselves motorcycle owners and riders, and three pillion riders who ride alongside their husbands/partners. Consumer interview respondents were recruited at significant consumption venues, mostly retail outlets, and once those relationships were established, further recruitment was carried out through personal recommendation within social motorcyclist networks.

In this multiple case study approach, formal consumer interviews were carried out until, as recommended by Gibbs (2002) it became purely a superfluous exercise. The point where results were consistently repeated occurred by twenty consumer interviews (Approximately 35 audio cassette recorded interview hours and 207,500 fully transcribed words of interview material). It should be recognised that, in line with semiotic and symbolic interactionist philosophy, individuals with a common history of enculturation exhibit a considerable overlap in their interpretation of cultural meaning. As people take on different role identities, they also engage in the cultural discourse that is distinctive to each identity (Alexander, 2000). Whilst wearing the appropriate motorcyclist subcultural 'hat', motorcyclists share the assumptions, attitudes, taken for granted meanings, and subcultural discourse with other members of the motorcycling subculture. Probing one member of a particular motorcyclist subgroup should reflect the subcultural values, attitudes and meanings represented by the whole group.

The semi-structured nature of consumer interviewing enabled a flexible approach to be taken, where a broad interview outline (illustrated in APPENDIX D) was loosely used as a guide, and incorporated with the development of a number of pioneering *semiotic* and *projective* techniques; techniques which aimed to tap the personal, intuitive levels of the motorcyclist consumer psyche, and of motorcyclist consumption behaviour. Noted by Lannon and Cooper (1983), the use of empathetic projective, qualitative techniques produces data of a special

humanistic kind that allows the researcher to see the world as consumers experience it, from their frame of reference, with their own words, gestures and behaviour. Lawes (2002) notes that semiotics may be used alongside more psychological type qualitative techniques to extract maximum value from qualitative data.

Core-Values Exercise

The first projective, semiotic technique employed during formal consumer interviews was the *core-values exercise*. This (illustrated in APPENDIX E) was administered to all twenty consumer respondents and its aim was to directly interrogate members of the motorcycle subculture to ascertain their perceptions of the dominant myths of motorcycling today. It aimed to provide a focused and specific perspective to further validate the results of the semiotic audit.

The list of words chosen for inclusion in the exercise is based on semiotic foundations, specifically Saussure's ([1916] 1983) relational conception of meaning which is principally *differential*; meaning is established only by differentiating signs from other signs within the same system. Real understanding of anything is defined by knowing what it is *not*, rather than what it *is*. Lévis-Strauss (1962/1974) took this 'not-ness' principle a stage further, noting that all oppositional choices are controlled by certain fundamental binary oppositions. Nolan et al (1997), taking semiotic theory and their own experience, developed a number of what they term *universal oppositions*. These are fundamental binaries that seem to underlie the majority of cultures and language structures in the world. Their master-list of key universal binaries is illustrated in Table 6.5. Nolan et al (1997) contend that the archetypal world pairs constitute a universal checklist which can be used to map any product, brand, advertising or research idea. It is possible to extract from this list a more finely tuned sub-set of oppositions, which is relevant for the research task itself.

Table 6.5: World Pairs Master List

Self / Other	Good / Bad
Individual / Collective	Concrete / Abstract
Home / Away	Natural / Artificial
Inclusion / Exclusion	Present / Absent
Freedom / Constraint	Appearance / Reality
Life / Death	Permanent / Ephemeral
Pleasure / Pain	Similarity / Dissimilarity
Health / Illness	Beauty / Ugliness
Safety / Danger	Strength / Weakness
Desire / Satisfaction	Sacred / Taboo
Love / Hate	New / Old
Serious / Playful	Mind / Body
Happiness / Sadness	Rational / Emotional
People / Animals	Science / Art
Male / Female	Order / Disorder
Young / Old	Conformity / Transgression
Hero / Villain	Simplicity / Complexity
Dominant / Subordinate	Confident / Fearful

Source: Nolan et al (1997, p. 10)

The list produced for the core-values exercise (illustrated in Table 6.6) has been derived from the world pairs master list, and has been modified for the research task at hand. Words considered to have any sort of significance to motorcycle subcultural meaning processes were selected for the list, plus the term 'adventurous' and a number of binary oppositions related to the concept of adventure. These are marked in green on the table. These terms have been added to the list due to the central role of adventure within motorcycle subcultural involvement.

These words were randomly placed on the final version of the core-values exercise table (illustrated in APPENDIX E), and respondents were not obviously aware of the oppositions that were present. They were asked to fill in the table by ticking one column for each word, choosing either 'very important,' 'reasonably important' or 'unimportant' from the list. By separating the binary oppositions at this point, respondents would consider each word separately and it would be interesting to bring the oppositions back together during recontextualisation in the data analysis, to find any interesting results and implications.

Table 6.6: Core-Values Exercise, Binary Oppositions List

Individual / Collective	Appearance / Reality
Home / Away	Similarity / Dissimilarity
Freedom / Constraint	Strength / Weakness
Life / Death	Sacred / Taboo
Pleasure / Pain	New / Old
Safety / Danger	Rational / Emotional
Desire / Satisfaction	Order / Disorder
Love / Hate	Conformity / Transgression
Serious / Playful	Confident / Fearful
Happiness / Sadness	Adventurous
Male / Female	Natural Environment / Artificial Environment
Young / Old	Skilled / Unskilled
Hero / Villain	Excitement / Boredom
Good / Bad	Spontaneous / Planned

It should be noted that the core-values exercise was used primarily as a projective technique to stimulate respondent's thoughts about the subject under investigation. On completing the exercise, they were asked to interpret their responses and thus followed depth, meaningful discussion which elicited rich data for further analysis. The exercise was employed and analysed in a qualitative manner and was not intended for quantitative statistical analysis.

Self-Assembly Collage

Like the core-values exercise, the *self-assembly collage* was designed as a projective, qualitative technique and grounded in semiotic philosophy. It was based on the premise noted in the Literature Review that, for the semiotician, analysis of stage settings and props provides codes from which it becomes possible to explore the human quest for meaning. For this exercise, a collage board was used, which employed open stimulus material designed to help respondents articulate their feelings and opinions about the subject under investigation and to stimulate their imagination, creativity and interaction in the subsequent discussion.

The board consisted of eight contrasting images of possible motorcycling environmental scenes, and a wide range of images of motorcycles, clothing, equipment, accessories and magazines. The images used, in an aim to keep the visual stimulus material as open as possible, spanned product categories (as far as possible) across the motorcycle market as a

whole.   Figure 6.6 illustrates a small version of the board that was administered to respondents (in reality, each half of the board was A2 size – for larger/clearer illustrations of the images used see APPENDIX F).

Figure 6.6: Self-Assembly Collage Board
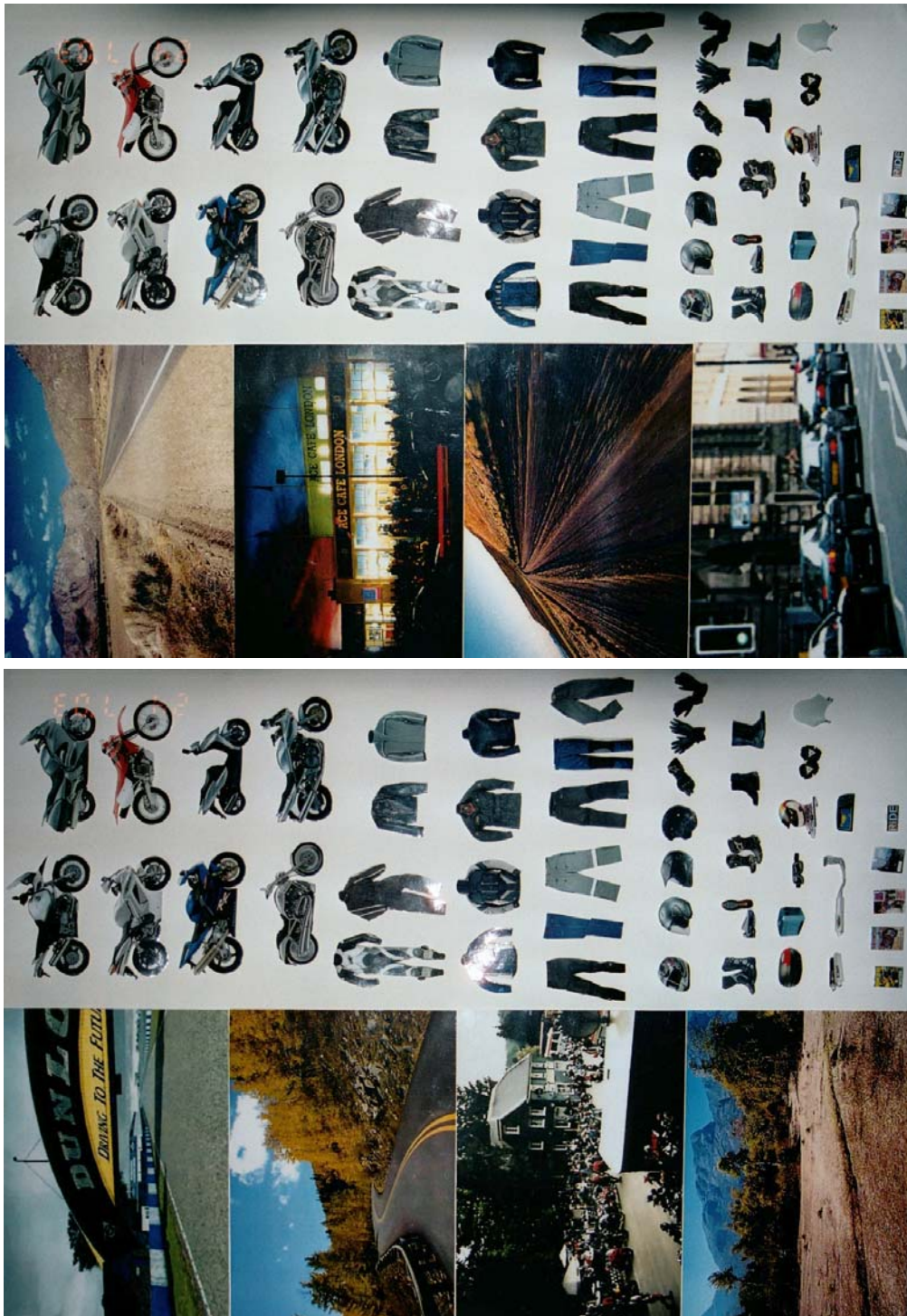
Notably, respondents were witnessed as having a very positive initial reaction to the imagery on the board in front of them, and this was reflected in positive body language such as smiling and sitting up in their chairs, as well as positive verbal comments such as *"wow!"* and *"look at that!"* The researcher noted an immediate change in atmosphere on producing the collage, as respondents obviously became more relaxed, enthusiastic and started to enjoy the interview experience.

The collage was explained in a very loose, vague manner to the respondents. They were told that the board consists of eight scenes/environments and the range of removable images of motorcycles, clothing, equipment, accessories and magazines was shown to them. It was noted that this range of products is duplicated on the board and there was a further sheet of spares next to the board should respondents choose to use them. Respondents were asked to spend as much time as they required, to place what they believe to be the most appropriate/relevant combination/s of products on each scene. They were told that there is no limit to the number of products that they may use, and they shouldn't feel obliged to use all of the products available to them.

For each scene/stage setting, from the paradigmatic options available to them, respondents placed a syntagm/syntagms of props on the scene, which reflected codes of motorcyclist identity. In effect, each of the eight scenes with its' combination of props represented a signifying system*,* and meaning could be determined from this system by interpretation of its discourse. Respondents held the key to this interpretation and the codes of motorcyclist identity which it, in turn, represented.

What remained was to unravel and understand these codes, initially at a denotative level, and later at deeper connotative, and even mythic/ideological levels. Initial questioning relative to the codes that respondents had built was deliberately very vague, and they were left to freely lead the conversation, describing and interpreting their choices and the associated discourse in their own way. Later, the researcher became more involved in focusing the discussion on the deeper, meaningful levels of identity by probing respondents specifically about the identity and aspirations of the characters that they had built on each scene.

This exercise proved to be a particularly effective projective, semiotic technique which elicited deep, meaningful and rich levels of data that otherwise would have been difficult to gather. The creative nature of the exercise, along with the open-style visual imagery employed, helped to relax respondents, stimulate their creativity and imagination, and aided them in articulating their feelings and opinions in the interactive discussion that followed. Because the exercise was carried out in the third person, respondents built and described codes of motorcyclist identity that were not directly related to their own self-identity. There was very little psychological risk to their own self-image and as such they were able to respond in an open and honest manner.

Following completion of the exercise, when respondents were feeling relaxed and their mind and thought processes were open, it was possible to probe them directly, and effectively about their personal experience of motorcycling, and the levels of meaning relative to the construction of their 'motorcyclist', subcultural self. This point in the interview provided a good opportunity to carry out the *narrative picturing exercise.*

Narrative Picturing Technique

The last twenty years have seen a tremendous growth in the use of narrative methodologies in research, with development taking place in the fields of psychology, sociology, health and education. Narrative studies have flourished as a means of understanding the personal identity, lifestyle, culture and historical world of the narrator. They are based on the premise that one of the primary ways, or perhaps *the* primary way that humans make sense of their experience is by casting it in narrative/story form (Barthes, 1977; Schank and Abelson, 1977; Sarbin, 1986; Bruner, 1986; Brody, 1987; Richardson, 1990; Zukier, 1990). This is an ability that develops early and rapidly in children, without explicit training or instruction. No human under normal conditions fails to make sense when narrativising his/her experience. Narratives therefore serve to relate individual experience to the explanatory constructs of society and culture and place the experience within the context of the particular individual's life history (Brody, 1987).

Narrative methodologies have been found to produce unique and rich data that cannot be obtained from using other methods such as experiments, questionnaires or observations (Reissman, 1993; Stuhmiller and Thorsen, 1997; Leiblich et al, 1998). With the exception of Zaltman and Coulter (1995), who developed the *metaphor elicitation technique*, the advantage of narrative methodologies, which have so much impacted other fields of research, have not yet been recognised by market and consumer researchers.

The narrative technique that was employed in this study originates from the field of therapeutic health research. It was developed by Stuhlmiller and Thorsen (1997) and is known as the *narrative picturing technique*. Stuhmiller and Thorsen (1997) recognise that intertwined with narrative are the mental images or pictures that transform private experience into words and language. To illustrate this, they use the example of a person who is asked to recall the number of windows in his house. To answer the question he must 'picture' his house from different sides and then count the windows represented in his various mental images. This means of accessing information points to the strategy on which the technique is based, that recollection relies on the reconstruction of visual images.

Narrative picturing consists of an active form of picturing followed by narration. The interview respondent is temporarily freed from the interactive dialogue of an interview in order to enter his/her private thoughts, feelings and experiences and allow the images that depict his/her world of understanding, lived or fantasised, to be spontaneously created. Stuhlmiller and Thorsen (1997) claim that narrative picturing brings the phenomena alive through self-engagement, thereby improving the description and, at the same time, minimising investigator co-construction.

Whereas the self-assembly collage provided respondents with a wide range of visual images with which to build codes of motorcyclist identity, the narrative picturing exercise tapped very personal imagery from the respondents' own imagination. The aim of the technique was to probe consumer respondents' imagination of their ideal/semiotic 'motorcyclist' self. When considering their ideal self-image, people are known to enter a fantasy or dream state (Lynn and Rhue, 1985; Taylor, 1989); people are commonly known to daydream about their ideal

fantasies. The narrative picturing technique enabled respondents to enter this fantasy/daydream state, and to narrate images of the ideal 'motorcyclist' self.

Respondents were asked to sit back, relax, close their eyes and imagine their ideal fantasy image of their personal motorcycling experience. After a few moments, they were asked to freely narrate the scene in their imagination. Sitting back with their eyes closed and often with smiling faces, respondents began to describe the scene, including the motorcycle, the place, the environment, the activity, the weather and the people who they were with. They became very closely, experientially, engaged with the phenomenon and their narrative became less conversational and more closely related to the imagined scene. After free narration, the respondents were probed about further details relative to each scene.

This technique proved to be effective for the collection of very rich, meaningful data. It successfully engaged respondents, allowing them to unlock and interpret images that reflect levels of understanding relative to the motorcyclist psyche, and to the construction/interpretation of the ideal/semiotic 'motorcyclist' self. Following completion of the exercise, several respondents noted their surprise at their own ability to express themselves in such a detailed way through the description of imagined pictures.

Story Elicitation

As noted above, narrative/stories play a central role in the structuring of one's ideas of self and in constructing one's self-identity. Riessman (1993) points out that during research interviews, respondents often include stories in their responses. These stories are likely to include key social actors and key events that have, somehow, made a difference to respondents within their lives. Denzin (1989) previously referred to these key events, or turning points as *epiphanies* and noted that an epiphany is something people say has made them, in their eyes, a different person. He notes that key events and persons are good indicators of how a person conceives of their life and what it means to them.

Gibbs (2002) provides a dramaturgical classification of stories (illustrated in Table 6.7), and notes that examination of the content and structure of short stories included in interview

narrative can be revealing. Events within stories are not just temporal; they have a causal sequence with a beginning, a middle, an end and a logic. Interestingly, the *genres* identified by Gibbs (2002) are consistent with the key tropes (discussed by White, 1973, 1978), illustrated in the Literature Review (Section 3.6.2).

Table 6.7: Dramaturgical Classification of Stories

Romance *(Metaphor)*	The hero faces a series of challenges en route to his goal and eventual victory
Comedy *(Metonymy)*	The goal is the restoration of social order, and the hero must have the requisite social skills to overcome the hazards that threaten that order
Tragedy *(Synecdoche)*	The hero is defeated by the forces of evil and is ostracised from society
Satire *(Irony)*	A cynical perspective on social hegemony

Source: Adapted from Gibbs (2002, p. 177)

Gibbs (2002) also notes that some stories told by respondents during interviewing may have a 'moral' dimension. 'Moral tales' are usually about others, but if the tale is about the narrator, it is often because it is an example of overcoming adversity or a key turning point or epiphany. These stories are one way of passing on cultural heritage and can play an important role in subcultural induction and definition for members of the group. They may also be used at an individual level to establish self-definition. It is known that stories present the narrator's inner reality to the outside world, and people know, discover and reveal their selves to others by the stories they tell. Spontaneous stories that respondents broke into during consumer interviews were elicited for further narrative analysis.

Company Interviews

Formal, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a range of representatives from the UK motorcycle industry; companies included motorcycle, clothing and equipment designers, manufacturers and distributors, motorcycle related magazine publishers, an advertising agency, and racetrack owners. Representatives interviewed included company directors and key people involved in the conceptualisation, creative design, development and communication of motorcycle related product/service packages and their surrounding 'subcultural' communications discourse. Again a 'judgemental' approach was taken to interviewee recruitment. Particularly, a number of key leads were formed at the Birmingham NEC International Motorcycle and Scooter Exhibition (2001). Once a significant interview lead was established, it was possible to link to significant others within the same company (i.e. product development managers and teams). Also a number of significant leads were generated through direct telephone calling. Overall, the industry response to a research project of this nature was generally very positive.

The aim of the formal company interviews was to gain a depth understanding of the significance (and perceived significance) of motorcycle related manufacturers/suppliers/marketers in constructing/contributing to this subcultural world of adventure consumption (thus, Objective 3). Through depth interview discussions, it was possible to gain an insight into if/how companies aim to achieve this. Approximately twenty five hours of formal, company interview material was audio-cassette recorded, which accounted for approximately one hundred and twenty thousand fully transcribed words.

Again, these interviews took a loose, semi-structured format. This enabled a flexible approach to be taken that gave a general guidance for exploration of conceptual areas whilst providing respondents freedom to express opinions and openly respond. The general structure followed is provided in APPENDIX G. The researcher encouraged the use of visual stimulus material to aid in understanding of key points.

Observation and Informal Interviewing

During the period of primary research, observation was carried out as a key data collection technique. Specifically, non-participant observation allowed the researcher to gain an insight into the 'natural' behaviour of motorcyclists and motorcycle related product/service suppliers at significant consumption venues whilst maintaining an objective, 'outsider' stance; it was possible to observe the cultural processes and discourses that lie behind and condition motorcyclist consumer and marketer behaviour. Observation was carried out at a range of motorcycle related retail outlets (approximately 45 hours), track day events (approximately 30 hours) and other motorcycle related events and exhibitions (approximately 30 hours).

Non-participant observation was combined with informal interviewing (note – no attempt was made for ethnographic integration into the consumption subculture under investigation), where the research objectives could be further explored. Spontaneous, informal interviews were carried out with a wide range of motorcyclist participants and company representatives at consumption enclaves and exhibitions; including retail outlet managers and staff, race track owners, track day event managers, instructors, staff, motorcyclist participants, company managers and representatives at motorcycle related exhibitions.

Overall, the observation and informal interviewing culminated in field notes and journal reflections that added validity to, and aided in triangulation of the results from the semiotic audit. It was possible to observe, 'in the field', and reconfirm data generated from prior formal company interviews, and it allowed themes to be generated that pinpointed to areas for exploration during formal consumer interviews. Also, themes identified here guided the design of the projective, semiotic techniques employed during formal consumer interviews.

Documentary Evidence

In such a semiotic study, documentary evidence played a highly significant role throughout the research process; from methodological design, implementation and analysis to data representation and reader interpretation of the Results and Discussion. Noted previously in

relation to the semiotic audit, documentary evidence serves as a blueprint of consumer culture, and its' analysis can provide a realistic interpretation of underlying cultural meanings and processes.

As well as evidence gathered to carry out the semiotic audit, a wide range of documentary material was gathered/used to fulfil the other research objectives. This included the core-values table and the self-assembly collage board administered to respondents during formal consumer interviewing. Here, documentary material was used successfully to stimulate creative, open, depth consumer response relative to the phenomenon under investigation. Particularly, in the self-assembly collage, the use of highly motivated, iconic photographic imagery encouraged a level of understanding, and depth of analysis for the consumer respondents, the researcher and the reader that otherwise would have been difficult to achieve. As recognised by narrative researchers such as Zaltman and Coulter (1995) and Stuhlmiller and Thorsen (1997), visual images play an important role in transforming private experience into thoughts and language. Photographic evidence was, in fact, widely collected (particularly during non-participant observation), used, analysed and displayed throughout the research process to add validity to the analysis, interpretation and display of the results.

Significant documentary evidence also collected/used in the study included marketers'/industry communications material (including motorcycle related magazines, newspapers, company/product/experience brochures and leaflets, product swing tickets, advertisements and web page material). This material provides discourse that reflects the 'voice' of the marketer, and particularly was used to validate/support results from the formal company interviews. Certainly, within the formal company interviews, product and experience brochures, and swing ticket evidence was used by respondents to highlight and illustrate points of discussion. Web page communications discourse certainly provided a wealth of information that represents the 'voice' of the marketer, and provided a rich insight into construction and signification of product/brand identity.

The importance of advertisements in constructing and signifying brand identity, and in creating structures of meaning that perpetuate mythic meaning and reinforce dominant cultural ideology was recognised in the Literature Review (Section 4.4.2). As noted by

Williamson (1978), advertisements aim to engage readers in their structures of meaning by encouraging them to decode their linguistic and visual signs, and to enjoy this decoding activity; they encourage the reader to decode and enjoy the social myths that represent the advertised product, the reader and wider dominant cultural ideology. Treating motorcycle related advertisements as cultural documents, a wide range of motorcycle magazine, television and web page advertisements were gathered and analysed for this study.

The semiotic approach (as recognised by Lawes, 2002) allowed advertising communications to be interrogated directly. As well as this kind of direct interrogation, a total of twelve motorcycle related advertisements (from motorcycle magazines – illustrated in APPENDIX H) were put to both company and consumer respondents during formal interviewing. The aim of this task was to gain a company perspective of the design, construction and intended signification (encoding) of brand communications messages, as well as a consumer interpretation (decoding) of the messages. Consumer respondents were shown each advertisement separately, and given time to freely reflect and comment on the feelings evoked by the ads, as well as their interpretation of the archetypes and meanings which they believe surrounds each one.

Primary Research Schedule

A schedule of primary data collection is provided in Table 6.8 and Table 6.9. Note; documentary evidence was collected throughout the period of the research study. Also, express permission was given by company respondents to identify company names. Job titles have been used to identify specific company interviewees and personal names omitted. Also to ensure consumer respondent anonymity, pseudonyms have been used.

Table 6.8: Formal Interviews

Formal Company Interviews			
Date	**Company**	**Job Position**	**Interview Type**
15/6/2001	Emap Automative Ltd.	Business Intelligence Director	Formal Face-to-face
11/1/2002	Phoenix Distribution	Commercial Director	Formal

			Face-to-face
11/1/2002	Phoenix Distribution Ltd.	Product Design Manager	Formal Face-to-face
16/1/2002	Triumph Motorcycles Ltd.	Clothing and Merchandising Manager	Formal Face-to-face
21/1/2002	Cogent Elliott Advertising Agency	Creative Director	Formal Telephone (not recorded)
7/2/2002	Lloyd Lifestyle Ltd.	Marketing Manager	Formal Face-to-face
7/2/2002	Lloyd Lifestyle Ltd.	Product Development Team	Formal Face-to-face (not recorded)
24/4/2002	Octagon Motorsports Ltd.	Group Director	Formal Face-to-face
	Total interview hours = approx. 25		
	Total transcribed words = approx. 126,000		

Formal Consumer Interviews			
Date	**Place**	**Pseudonym**	**Motorcycle**
21/7/2003	Retail outlet	Anna	Peugeot scooter
23/7/2003	Retail outlet	Matt	Kawasaki supersports
23/7/2003	Retail outlet	Steven	Aprilia supersports
28/7/2006	Respondent's home	Brian	Yamaha cruiser
28/7/2006	Respondent's home	Maggie	
29/7/2006	Retail outlet	Rob	Honda supersports
6/8/2003	Respondent's work	Dan	Yamaha sports-tourer
9/8/2003	Retail outlet	Katie	Honda supersports
10/8/2003	Respondent's home	Adam	Harley cruiser
10/8/2003	Respondent's home	Kirstie	
15/8/2003	Respondent's home	Bill	Kawasaki supersports
15/8/2003	Respondent's home	Tracey	
18/8/2003	Respondent's home	Tom	Kawasaki supersports
19/8/2003	Respondent's home	Chris	Honda supersports
21/8/2003	Respondent's home	John	Aprilia supersports
21/8/2003	Respondent's home	Tony	Harley cruiser
23/8/2003	Respondent's home	Sam	Suzuki sports-tourer And off-road/trails
29/8/2003	Respondent's home	Angela	Aprilia supersports
5/9/2003	Respondent's home	Jack	Suzuki sports-tourer
5/9/2003	Respondent's home	Helen	
	Total interview hours = approx. 35		
	Total transcribed words = approx. 207,5000		

⏌ = Joint interview – best friends   ⏌ = Joint interview – husband and wife

Table 6.9: Observation and Informal Interviews

Retail Outlets			
Date:	**Name:**	**Hours:**	**Informal Interviews:**
11/1/2002	Robinson's of Rochdale	3	Store Manager Various sales staff
17/7/2003	Hein Gericke (Leicester)	6	Store Manager Various sales staff
18/7/2003	Motorcycle Accessories Leicester Ltd. (MCA)	5 minutes!	Store Manager (ejected researcher from store!)
18/7/2003	Planet Bikes (Leicester)	6	Store Manager Various sales staff
19/7/2003	Planet Bikes (Leicester)	6	Various sales staff
21/7/2003	Planet Bikes (Leicester)	3	
23/7/2003	Planet Bikes (Leicester)	3	
29/7/2003	Planet Bikes (Leicester)	3	
8/8/2003	Windy Corner (Barwell – Leics.)	6	Store Manager Various sales staff
9/8/2003	Planet Bikes (Leicester)	3	Store Manager Various sales staff
16/8/2003	Sycamore Harley Davidson (Uppingham – Leics.)	6	Store Manager Various sales staff
	Total retail outlet observation hours = approx. 45		

Motorcycle Racing Track Days			
Date:	**Track Day Organiser/Location:**	**Hours:**	**Informal Interviews:**
11/6/2002	100 % Bikes/Oulton Park	6	Octagon Group Director 100 % Bikes Event Manager Various instructors Control tower staff Safety car driver Medical staff Professional photographer Various participants
12/8/2002	Hot Trax/Cadwell Park	6	Event Manager Various instructors Various participants Professional photographer – Fresh Orange Photography
20/6/2003	Focused Events/Mallory Park	6	Event Manager Various instructors Various participants

9/7/2003	Octagon/ Snetterton	6	Event Manager Various instructors Various participants
4/8/2003	Speed Freak Track Day/ Donnington Park	6	Director (James Witham – ex world Supersport and GP rider) Varioius instructors Flag marshal Various participants
	Total racing track day observation hours = approx. 30		

Other Events and Exhibitions			
Date:	**Event/Location:**	**Hours:**	**Informal Interviews:**
20/6/2001	Bike meet/Squires Café, Sherburn in Elmet (Yorks.)	3	Motorcyclist participants
8/11/2001	International Motorcycle and Scooter Show /Birmingham NEC	7	BMW - Tour Director Honda (UK) Racing, MAC & Business Development – General Manager, Marketing Manager Suzuki Motorcycles – Dealer Development Manager Triumph Motorcycles – Clothing and Merchandise Manager Lloyd Lifestyle – General Manager Frank Thomas – sales representative H-C Travel – Director American V – News Editor
16/1/2002	Phoenix Distribution retailer exhibition/Coventry	3	Phoenix Commercial Director Various staff – Phoenix Various retail outlet representatives
5/8/2003	Bike meet/Coach and Horses, Leicester	2	Motorcyclist participants
5/11/2005	International Motorcycle and Scooter Show/ Birmingham NEC	6	
2/7/2006	British Moto GP/ Donington Park	9	
	Total event/exhibition observation hours = approx. 30		

6.4.4 Reliability, Validity and Generalisability

In an interpretive study of this nature, validity is innately high. However, increased validity and reliability were ensured through use of the multiple case-study approach, which allowed for a replication strategy to be adopted. Also, as mentioned previously, triangulation was achieved through the use and combination of a variety of different data collection methods and techniques. Following the recommendations of Gibbs (2002), an effort was made to produce trustworthy and credible results by constantly demonstrating to the reader how they are grounded in the original data. This was achieved through the continuous use of quotations and references to the cases and examples studied. Also, 'selective anecdotalism' was avoided; the use of specific, 'exotic' examples to make a general point. Quotes provided in the Results and Discussion chapter represent a range of possible quotes that make a particular point, and in general, three quotes were used to make/support each point.

The use of the NVivo qualitative data analysis computer package allowed for the generation of robust results. Whereas the package does not do the researcher's reading and thinking, and the researcher must remain close to the material collected, and the phenomenon under investigation, it does provide and support effective ways of data management and the handling of data. It makes the process of writing and editing much easier and accounts for the generation of more accurate, reliable and transparent results.

Questioning the reliability of semiotic findings (particularly pertinent to the semiotic audit), one may question what makes semiotic findings reliably true and therefore different from a subjective opinion that anybody could have come up with? Lawes (2002) argues that semiotic work focuses on existing communications material, material that exists ready-made before the research begins. It therefore uses hard evidence, and it is possible to continue to gather this hard evidence until reliable themes are established.

No attempts were made to over-generalise results identified from the study. However, it should be recognised that, in such a subcultural study, various data collection methods were

employed to investigate the subculture as a whole; i.e. documentary evidence and evidence for the semiotic audit, non-participant observation and informal interviewing. As noted previously, semiotic and symbolic interactionist philosophy posits that, whilst wearing a particular cultural/subcultural 'hat', members of a particular culture/subculture (i.e. motorcyclists) share the assumptions, attitudes, taken for granted meanings, and subcultural discourse with other members of the same culture/subculture. Probing motorcycling consumers should therefore provide a reflection of the shared values and attitudes of the whole subcultural group.

It should be noted that the findings reflect, that within motorcycling subculture, there are a number of subgroups which reflect their own subcultural idiosyncrasies. They have been accounted for in the analysis of the results.

6.5   Data Analysis Strategy

The very nature of qualitative data implies that different analysis techniques are necessary from those used with quantitative data. It was neither practical nor appropriate within this study to use quantifying techniques to analyse the rich qualitative data. The key challenge when analysing qualitative data is to find out how to reduce the data, how to give it structure and how to use it in a form other than simply extended text. Commonly, the nature of interpretive work implies that a number of data collection and analysis activities are engaged in simultaneously; certainly this was the case with this study. These activities are likely to include collecting information from the field, sorting the information into categories, formatting the information into a story or a picture and actually writing the interpretive text.

Engaging in the process of qualitative data analysis, one becomes involved with 'data reduction' and 'interpretation' (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Large amounts of information are taken and reduced into certain patterns, categories, or themes and are then interpreted, taking into account the key research objectives. Tesch (1990) names this process 'de-contextualisation' and 're-contextualisation' and contends that it results in a higher-level

analysis. While much work in the analysis process consists of 'taking apart', the final goal is the emergence of a larger consolidated picture.

The interactive process of data analysis employed in this study is illustrated in Figure 6.7. All kinds of data collected, whether documentary evidence, written field notes, journal reflections or fully transcribed formal interview material were broken down, coded, categorised, and later re-contextualised to provide an accurate, consolidated picture of the phenomenon under investigation.

Figure 6.7: Components of Data Analysis – Interactive Model
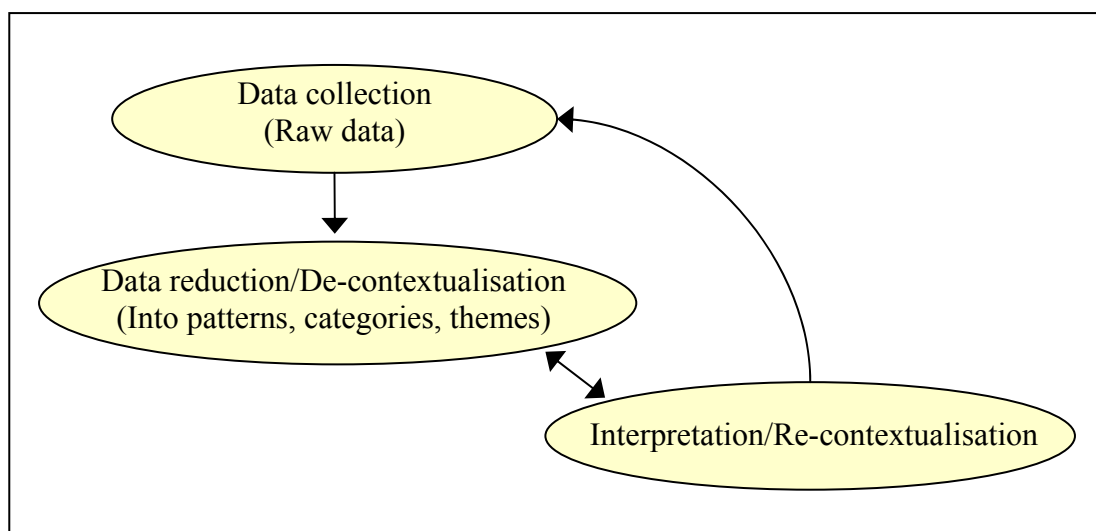
Source: Adapted from Miles, M. and Huberrman, M. (1994, p.12)

6.5.1 Semiotic Analysis and Treatment of Documentary Material

Semiotic analysis was carried out of a vast range of the documentary material collected. Specifically, for the semiotic audit, motorcycle/ist subcultural discourse was analysed to identify and explore the pattern of *communication codes* that structure meaningful subcultural processes. Alexander (2000, p.4) states that "communication codes, with their understood and shared assumptions, are a form of cultural shorthand; and whether visual, verbal, aural or in any combination they are typical expressions of the discourse (and the culture that discourse represents) at any particular moment in history." Communication codes are thus

markers for each period of cultural history and they provide, in this case, vivid insights into the adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption, over changing periods of time.

Discourse was categorised into *residual, dominant* and *emergent communication codes.* Styles and content of cultural discourse change over time as a consequence of political, economic, social and technological trends and it was possible to trace these changes through this three-part categorisation. Residual codes are codes of the past which are, in effect, leftovers from an earlier set of cultural values and usages. Although they are still in existence today, they are slowly weakening and becoming increasingly outdated, likely to disappear altogether or be replaced by newer codes. They are generally the easiest codes to identify because they represent values of the past, which are becoming more clearly differentiated from current day values.

Dominant codes are codes of the present day, full of cultural energy because they are codes that members of the culture/subculture accept and live by; as such, they can be more difficult to identify. As noted previously, in this case the researcher maintained the status as a subcultural 'outsider', which ensured an objective stance and enabled a perspective to be gained which would not necessarily be possible from within the subculture. Emergent codes are codes of tomorrow and are only just beginning to emerge over the cultural horizon. Some of them will become tomorrow's dominant codes and as such are of particular interest to researchers, analysts and commercial companies alike, searching for potential future market opportunities.

The concept of 'contextualisation' is particularly pertinent to semiotic philosophy, which, as noted in the Literature Review and proposed by Saussure ([1916]1983), is built on the premise that the generation of meaning is specifically differential*,* and that meaning arises from the differences between signs within a system. Alexander (2000) proposes that all discourses must be thought of as contexts. People recognise and understand any sign by immediately contextualising it into some kind of pre-existing framework. Analysis for the semiotic audit involved contextualisation of motorcyclist subcultural discourse within its' own paradigm, that of motorcycling, as well as contextualisation relative to wider popular culture. Specific contextualisation allowed a number of changing code structures to be

revealed; for example, changes in 'product' codes, codes of 'behaviour', codes of 'looking' and motorcyclist 'language' codes.

Popular cultural discourse is arguably the most influential driving force discourse of any subculture at any point in time (Alexander, 2000). Once popular culture is moving in a certain direction it is very difficult for an individual discourse to reverse that movement. Motorcyclist subcultural discourse was traced from a number of sources of wider popular culture, such as popular films featuring motorcyclists and newspaper articles, to identify a number of residual and dominant communication codes which represent the role of motorcycling and changing public perceptions of motorcycling/ist subculture through time.

Semiotic analysis of a range of documentary evidence, which included advertisements, photographic evidence and company communications materials, followed the process identified in Figure 6.8; note that any material which includes signs can be analysed in this way. This process allowed for independent researcher analysis of the material. It should be noted that where company and consumer respondents were requested to analyse company communications material, their interpretation was transcribed and analysed as textual data, and later re-contextualised in parallel with the original visual material.

Results from the core-values exercise and the self-assembly collage exercise carried out with consumer respondents during formal interviews were tabulated to enable frequencies to be generated that reflected common themes in the response. Rather than treating them in a quantitative manner, these themes were supported and further enriched by depth, meaningful interview narrative. Analysis of data surrounding the core-values exercise enabled a number of key subcultural *myths* to be identified and explored, that supported and enhanced results from the semiotic audit. Also, an interesting discussion surrounding a number of binary mythic oppositions ensued.

Analysis of data surrounding the self-assembly collage exercise enabled a very rich understanding to be gained of respondents' perceptions of the constructs of motorcyclist self-identity. Illustrations of common syntagms of props placed on each scene by respondents allowed for more accurate researcher analysis and provides for easier reader interpretation in

the Results and Discussion. Combined with rich levels of respondent interview narrative, this provides a very interesting outlook on issues surrounding the motorcyclist psyche and constructs of motorcyclist self-identity.

Figure 6.8: Semiotic Analysis of Advertisements

Denotative Level
• Note various signs in ad
• Sign = anything that seems to convey meaning
• Identify – linguistic and visual (iconic and graphic) signs

Connotative Level
• In analysing signs – pass from denotative to connotative level
• See how signs organised by paradigmatic and syntagmatic selection
• Look for anchorage between texts and pictures – directing the reader towards 'correct' reading of the ad

Mythic/Ideological Level
• Connotative meanings ingredients of myth – overall message about meaning of product which the ad is constructing
• Look for intertextuality – borrowing signs and meaning from other media texts
• Consider how mythic meaning constructed in the ad relates to wider cultural meaning outside it – ie. Understand its ideological function

6.5.2 Treatment of Textual Data

All textual data, including field notes, journal reflections and fully transcribed formal interview transcript material were handled through use of the NVivo qualitative data analysis package. Mentioned previously, this contributes to the generation of robust, quality results.

Weitzman and Miles (1995) identify the types of qualitative analysis that computer assisted packages can aid with; illustrated in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10: Types of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis

- Text retrievers – search for words or phrases
- Textbase managers – sort and organise data
- Code and retrieve – support coding and reporting by codes
- Code-based theory builders – coding and the ability to build conceptual structures and test hypotheses
- Conceptual network builders – diagrams, concept mapping, charts

Source: Adapted from Weitzman, E. and Miles, M (1995, pp. 16-18.)

NVivo was used in this study as a textbase management system to help store and organise textual documents. All documents were saved in RTF format and imported into the package. Through the 'Document Explorer' function it was possible to manage the collection of documents, and to store any extra information relating to documents through *proxy documents, other documents, annotations* and *memos*. It was also possible to make continuous edits and reformats to documents as new evidence was collected from the field.

A key function of the package which aided in data-reduction was the 'code and retrieve' facility. Through continuous researcher reading and re-reading of the texts, a number of *codes (themes)* began to emerge from the data; note, the importance of the emergence of codes through researcher familiarity with the data rather the forcing of codes was recognised. NVivo allows the researcher to code passages of text in documents and it keeps a track of each code and its' associated text. This is particularly beneficial because similarly coded text can be retrieved at any time without loosing any information about where it came from. NVivo terms codes *'nodes'*, and through the 'Node Explorer' function, as the analysis advanced, it was possible to create, delete, merge or move nodes and to change the text to which they refer. It was also possible to browse text coded at a particular node and change that coding or view it in the context of the original text.

The 'Node Explorer' function proved to be particularly effective during data re-contextualisation as it allowed for code-based theory building. Nodes were either left as 'free nodes' or organised into a tree or hierarchical structure. The development of *node trees* (as illustrated in APPENDIX I) allowed for patterns of codes and *categories* to be developed which contributed to the development of more advanced conceptual structures.

Overall, experienced in manual forms of qualitative analysis, the researcher found the use of NVivo to be very beneficial in relieving time consuming, tedious elements of manual analysis, and found that the NVivo approach allows flexibility for the manipulation of data that is simply not possible through manual methods; the task of data analysis became enjoyable! Ultimately, it should be noted that although computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) helps structure and manage qualitative analysis, the skilled researcher plays a critical role in allowing the content and consistencies in the data to drive the development of *themes* in the analysis process.

Narrative Analysis

A narrative analysis strategy known as *categorical-content analysis* (Lieblich et al, 1998) was applied to the narratives collected during the narrative picturing exercise and story elicitation. This type of analysis focuses on the content of narratives as manifested in separate parts of a story. From the respondents' narratives it became possible to define a number of *content categories* (coded at nodes in NVivo). Separate sentences, or even utterances were assigned to relevant categories. Each content category consisted of sentences and utterances from a number of different respondents. From these content categories it was possible to re-contextualise to identify a number of core *themes*.

It was interesting to find that results of the narrative picturing exercise revealed 'Romantic' stories of the motorcyclist self-ideal that reflect overarching myths of motorcycle subcultural involvement and experience, and support results of the core-values exercise. Analysis of spontaneous stories revealed that respondents use a combination of 'Romantic', 'Comic' and 'Tragic' moral tales to narrate actual motorcyclist self-defining experiences.

6.5.3 Representation of Data

Due to the interactive nature of qualitative research, it was necessary to draw the results and discussion of results together in a single chapter. Textual discussion is supported with evidence in the form of quotations, images, figures and diagrams. This aims to give the results accuracy, validity and vibrancy, to demonstrate as well as possible how the results are grounded in the data and it allows the reader to share in, and understand the world being analysed. Quotations used are contextualised and discussed within the surrounding analysis, and are kept as short as possible to serve as clear illustrations for points being made. As noted previously, three highly relevant quotations are generally used to support wider themes. As recommended by Kvale (1996) an effort was made to provide a careful balance between quotations and text; no more than half of the text is made up of quotations.

Quotations used from formal interview transcript material begin with the relevant paragraph number from the respondent's transcript. This referencing allows information to be traced back to the original, now anonymous, transcript. Quotations are also provided verbatim (exactly in the respondents' words) to capture the essence of the original meaning. A number of symbols were used to edit/clarify the quotation data; these are illustrated in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11: Symbols to Edit/Clarify Quotation Data

…	Pause
…	Deleted transgression
( )	Extra notes made by researcher to clarify a point
(ie. laughing)	Note expressions, body language, tones of voice
Bold text	Emphasised word

It should be noted that key words throughout the study are highlighted in *italic* text. Also, motorcyclists are regularly referred to as 'he.' This is not a sexist comment but allows for ease of writing, adhering to the fact that the majority of motorcyclists are, in fact, male.

6.6   Problems and Limitations of the Study

The key limitations faced in this study were associated with *financial*, *time* and *people* constraints. A limited financial budget was available which allowed a small reward (£10 motorcycle retail outlet vouchers) to be offered to formal consumer interview respondents. Motorcyclists generally were found to be very approachable/friendly, and very enthusiastic and passionate to talk about their subcultural involvement. This certainly eased the informal interview process and eased recruitment for formal interviews. With the retail outlet voucher reward and the researcher's efforts to travel to respondents' 'natural' environments to carry out the interviews, this limited financial constraint was overcome. It was not necessary to offer any form of financial incentive to company respondents and, as mentioned previously, a generally positive industry response was generated from the research study.

Time and people constraints were arguably the most significant limitations of the study. It is known that interpretive data collection and analysis can be very time consuming (Saunders et al, 1997), but, even with the aid of NVivo qualitative data analysis techniques, the sheer scale of this project implied that it overran its desired time scale. Certainly, but obviously not possible due to the nature of qualification sought, it would have benefited from a team of researchers who could have shared data collection and contributed to cross-validation of the results.   Particularly with regards to Objective 3, with a research team it would have been possible to broaden the scope of the investigation beyond three subcultural categories/market sectors. However, the results that were generated provide a valid and credible contribution to fulfil the research objectives.

Due to time constraints and the number of projective, semiotic methods employed during formal consumer interviews, the narrative picturing technique was not exploited to its full potential. This technique has significant potential when applied to the context of consumer research and this certainly represents an opportunity for further research (explained in more detail in Section 10.5)

Overall, the research methodology and data collection and analysis techniques were very carefully designed and organised, and steps were put in place to overcome any minor

problems and hitches which occurred along the way. This led to the successful completion of the project.

6.7 Chapter Summary

After detailed discussion and critique of the positivist and interpretivist research philosophies it was decided that the most appropriate philosophy to adopt for the purpose of this research was the interpretivist philosophy. Specifically, an interpretive semiology approach would allow for exploration of the creation, signification and movement of meaning relative to the adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption. It would enable a holistic cultural approach to be taken that includes the highly significant role of marketers in conveying and producing the cultural world. The study aimed to employ, and advance the interpretive semiology approach as a technique that can be applied to gain an understanding of the constructs of cultural meaning so significant in consumer research.

The methodological format of case-study was adopted that allowed for the production of data that seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency of certain phenomenon in the social world. It was important to analyse subcultural discourse from a range of possible angles and perspectives, and this was achieved through application of a multiple case-study approach. This enabled the use of multiple methods of data collection and allowed for verification and triangulation which added validity, accuracy and reliability to the results. It also provided the opportunity for the development and incorporation of a number of original, pioneering semiotic and narrative techniques, which aimed to make a methodological contribution to the field of interpretive consumer research.

The data analysis strategy was outlined, with focus on the importance of careful and planned data reduction/de-contextualisation and interpretation/re-contextualisation. Semiotic analysis was carried out on a wide range of documentary material/evidence, and the NVivo qualitative data analysis package was used to aid in analysis of all textual data. The use of the narrative analysis technique of categorical-content analysis was also highlighted. Finally, the problems and limitations of the study were outlined.

A schematic representation of the research methodology adopted is provided in Figure 6.9.

Figure 6.9: Schematic Representation of the Methodology

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         State Research Aim and Objectives         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               Research Philosophy                 │
│              - Interpretive Semiology             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                         ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Methodological Format                │
│            - Multiple case-study approach         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                         ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 Research Design                   │
│              - Phenomena identified               │
│                - Sample selected                  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                         ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         Data Collection Methods/Techniques        │
│        - Documentary evidence (semiotic audit)    │
│             - Non-participant observation         │
│                - Informal interviewing            │
│  - Formal consumer interviewing (core-values      │
│  exercise, self-assembly collage exercise,        │
│  narrative picturing exercise)                    │
│             - Formal company interviewing         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Issues of Reliability, Validity and             │
│              Generalisability                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Data Analysis Strategy               │
│  - Raw Data (documentary evidence, field notes,   │
│        journal reflections, interview             │
│              transcripts)                         │
│  - Data reduction/de-contextualisation – into     │
│       codes, nodes, categories and themes         │
│    - Data interpretation/re-contextualisation     │
│   - Semiotic analysis of documentary material     │
│               - NVivo and textual data            │
│   - Narrative analysis – categorical content      │
│                   analysis                        │
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Chapter 7

Signification and the Adventure Subculture of Motorcycling Consumption

<p style="text-align:center;">**Signification and the Adventure Subculture**
of Motorcycling Consumption</p>

7.1   Introduction

The Results and Discussion of this study begin with a detailed semiotic audit that focuses on the adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption. As noted in the Methodology (Section 6.4.3), this is the most effective place to begin any qualitative, semiotic study as it enables the 'big' picture of the research problem to be generated before later, more focused research. This 'outside-in' approach takes a holistic, cultural perspective that analyses a wide range of subcultural, and wider popular cultural communications discourse, to identify the key myths/communication codes that drive the construction, signification and movement of meaning relative to British motorcycle subculture.   A number of *residual, dominant* and *emergent* communication codes are identified that represent the historic movement of British motorcycle subcultural meaning through time.

The chapter continues with more focused 'inside-out' analysis from the core-values exercise. This pioneering technique elicits results that explore respondent perception of the core-values/dominant myths of motorcycling today; results are consolidated with data from the semiotic audit. In addition, the results provide an insight into the motorcyclist consumer psyche, tapping consumer construction of 'motorcyclist' self-identity, and 'aspirational' involvement in motorcycle subculture and experience for the achievement of desired, ideal-self; an area which forms the focus of chapter 8.

7.2   Semiotic Audit

7.2.1   Residual Communication Codes

Motorcycling is an adventure subculture with a notably rich cultural history and heritage.   It   carries   with   it   a   number   of   highly   significant   residual myths/communication codes that remain associated with the subculture to the present

day. It is only possible to identify and understand these myths by outlining this history, and noting the significant groups, icons, films, places and media portrayals along the way.

Motorcyclists as Outlaw Rebels

The first recorded motorcycle was constructed in 1885, when Paul Daimler rode his engineer father, Gottlieb's new contraption named 'Einspur', or 'One Track' around the countryside near Stuttgart in Germany. From the birth of this motorcycle in its embryonic form, developments began and the first production motorcycle was completed in 1894. Developments continued in Europe and America in the early twentieth Century, where the motorcycle became a convenient, cheap and functional means of transport. It wasn't until after the Second World War, in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, a period termed 'The Golden Age of Motorcycling' that extremely significant, strong residual myths formed, myths that remain associated with motorcycling to the present day.

The Golden Age represented an era of 'blood and thunder' biking in which specific motorcycle subcultures were formed, and members of these subcultures became perceived as *outlaw rebels, dangerous, bad-boys, folk-devils*, or *heroes*, and motorcycles became symbolic of *speed, rebellion* and *youthful aggression*. Significant icons of this period include the 'Hell's Angels' in America, the 'Ton-Up Boys' and later the 'Mods' and 'Rockers' in the UK. Ultimately, in both America and the UK, bikers became influenced by the Hippie scene.

The first Hell's Angels club was formed in San Bernadino, California, but is best known by its sub-group or 'Chapter' based in Oakland, near San Francisco, the biggest and most powerful of the American 'outlaw' groups which included 'Satan's Slaves', 'Gypsy Jokers' and 'Commancheros'. The groups were formed by disaffected white immigrant youths whose parents had seen the 'bright lights' and moved their families from the rural countryside to urban Pacific Coast locations, in search of work. Life in the slums worsened and the youth became increasingly dissatisfied with accepting their parents' ideology of 'work hard, stay quiet and wait for future prosperity.' In search of their own, unique identity the youths turned to

motorcycling, which offered them a release from the drudgery and dead-endedness of everyday life. They formed clubs, hung out together in bars, rode out together and, in time, developed their own specific biker lifestyle. Thus the first American post-war 'delinquent' subculture was born, that of the *motorcycle outlaw*.

The clubs became more tight-knit and divorced from the world of the ride-to-work, citizen motorcyclist. Hell's Angels members adopted a specific 'dress' code as well as a specific 'behaviour' code and code of 'language'. Also levels of hierarchy and authenticity began to develop within the subcultural groups. Typically, the Hell's Angels rode chopped Harley Davidsons and their dress code included the 'colours', a sleeveless leather or denim jacket with the famous winged and helmeted skull symbol on the back. Also the jacket would be adorned with other patches, badges and logos of group affiliation. Members would wear jeans and portray a particularly scruffy looking, dirty image with long hair, beards and often tattoos on their bodies (as illustrated in Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Hell's Angels members

Source: Brown, R. (2000, p. 29)

The Hell's Angels groups remained isolated in the Pacific Coast locality until an event which occurred in Hollister, California in July 1947, which was to bring them to the attention of the great American public and create a legacy which remains with motorcycling till the present day. At an American Motorcycle Association organised

event, a minority of motorcyclists caused trouble, drinking, speeding in the streets and indecently exposing themselves.

The media anxiously seized the opportunity to report on the Hollister events, producing reports that were, if not fictitious, highly coloured and selective. National newspapers reported on these youth menaces and the threat they were causing to the American 'way of life'. Life Magazine, later in July, 1947 published an article which spread the news on a national level of the potential threat to law and order precipitated by the Hollister events. Included in the article:

"... 4000 members of a motorcycle club roared into Hollister, California, for a three-day convention. They quickly tired of ordinary motorcycle thrills and turned to more exciting stunts. Racing their bikes down the main street and through traffic lights, they rammed into restaurants and bars, breaking furniture and mirrors. Police arrested many for drunkenness and indecent exposure but could not restore order. Frankly, after two days, the cyclists left with a brazen explanation, 'We like to show off, it's just a lot of fun.' But Hollister's police chief took a different view. Wailed he, 'it's just one hell of a mess.'" (Life Magazine, 21 July, 1947)

Over the next ten years the image created of these 'wild men on machines' became the subject of a number of books, films, television programmes, newspaper and magazine articles. This image was guaranteed to attract a wider audience, and over time it spread across America, becoming the new American *outlaw culture*, taking over where Billy the Kid, Wild Bill Hickock and Jesse James had left off. For working-class, white youths, and young GIs who had returned from fighting for 'freedom' in the war and felt dissatisfied with life back home, the Hell's Angels became the new American *folk hero*. For the rest of society and lawmakers they emerged as the new American *folk devil*. For the media, journalists, writers, television and film producers this new threat to American ideology provided the subject for sensational and exciting stories.

Perhaps the most iconic, influential imagery of the outlaw motorcycle culture was that provided in the1953 movie 'The Wild One' which is loosely based on the Hollister riots. Riding a Triumph motorcycle, dressed in a black leather jacket, denim jeans,

boots and a peaked cap pulled down low (as illustrated in Figure 7.2), the film's star, Marlon Brando, epitomised, in the eyes of the great American public, the real motorcycle-borne *outlaw*. This mean, moody rebel became the stereotype upon which the universalised motorcycle subculture of the late 1950s and 1960s was founded. The film symbolised a resistance to the all-embracing hegemony of the dominant culture of the time. It was so controversial in Britain that it was actually banned from public showing for fifteen years, perhaps in an attempt to ward off the potential threat to British ideological way of life.

Figure 7.2: The Wild One

Source: www.motorbiker.org

In reality, like America, traditional working-class patterns of life in post-war Britain were in a state of flux. A series of 'delinquent' subcultural groups evolved which aimed to defend symbolically, a constantly threatened space and declining status. The first group, whose appearance generated considerable adverse societal reaction and who received widespread alarmist publicity in the media were the 'Teddy Boys'. Considered the 'archetypical bad boys' of the time, they received a reaction similar to the outlaw biker subculture in America. As manufacturers and record companies recognised the market potential of the Teddy Boy subculture, their fashion and rock 'n' roll music were diffused and became mainstream.

A new threat to emerge from the Teddy Boy subculture were the 'Ton-Up Boys', effectively Teddy Boys on motorcycles. Riding BSA, Triumph Bonnevilles or Norton Dominators, and dressed in black leather jackets and jeans, these 'coffee-bar

cowboys,' driven by the beat of rock 'n' roll soon used their increased mobility to venture beyond the working class communities. In so doing they spread the message of nonconformity to new areas. Like America, the media was inspired by this new outlaw subculture, and sensational stories began to emerge of their 'wild' behaviour including largely fictitious stories like the 'chicken run' where two bikers would ride head on towards each other, the victor being the one who held his course the longest. Before long, anyone who rode a motorcycle and wore a black leather jacket and jeans posed a threat to British 'civilised' society, and to the dominant 'work and leisure' ideology of the time.

In reality, much of the Ton-Up Boys' time was spent hanging around the café, where their code of 'behaviour' included a great deal of *communitas/brotherhood*, chatting with mates, telling tall stories of bikes they couldn't afford and girls they'd never met. They famously partook in street racing on local highways, which did not have speed limits at the time. Café racers were named as bikers who rode their bikes from café to café, and one favourite past time was to put an Elvis or Eddie Cochran single on the jukebox, 'drop the coin right into the slot' and attempt to race to a given point and back before the record finished.

Biker cafés were significant places of the day, and names like 'The Ace', 'The Salt Box', 'Johnsons' and the 'Nightingale' were legendary. In particular the Ace Café, London remains an iconic place representing the residual myths of motorcycle subcultural *heritage* and *freedom* to the current day. In the Golden Age of Motorcyling The Ace was a Mecca of all that was cool. Open twenty-four hours a day, with its jukebox blaring out rock 'n' roll it was a central location for Ton-Up Boys and later Rockers to hang out (as illustrated in Figure 7.3).

In the early 1960s, the Ace Café became a launching pad for a number of British rock 'n' roll bands, such as 'Johnny Kidd' and 'The Pirates'. But by the mid 1960s the rock 'n' roll period was over, made safe by 'The Beatles', 'Carnaby Street' and the 'Mod' era. Changes in social, demographic and economic order occurred, with the economy beginning to boom and the effects of the abolition of National Service in the late 1950s. There followed an increase in the car market and an associated decrease in motorcycling, and the Ace Café closed in 1969.

Figure 7.3: The Ace Café, London (1950s)

Source: www.motorbikestoday.com

In 1994, the Ace Café reopened, marketing itself as an iconic place representing residual myths of motorcycle subculture; myths of *freedom*, *British motorcycling subcultural heritage* and *nostalgia*. Today's Ace Café (illustrated Figure 7.4) attracts a wide range of visitors, including motorcyclists with custom bikes, naked bikes and even supersports bikes. Motorcyclists travel there from far and wide to indulge in the residual myths associated with 'The Golden Age' of motorcycle history.

Figure 7.4: Ace Café Today

Source: http://www.ace-cafe-london.com

With the changing wider cultural trends in the mid 1960s, only a hard core of motorcyclists were left, and they were to reassert themselves as the 'Rockers'. Continuing the Ton-Up Boy biker lifestyle, they gained much media publicity through clashes and skirmishes with a new form of motorised subculture, the 'Mods'. The Mods represented a totally different form of outlaw culture from anything that had gone before. They were generally well paid, well dressed, well groomed young office workers who arrogantly strutted around and rode Italian scooters such as Vespas and Lambrettas. Their scooters were adorned with peacock fans of wing mirrors, numerous headlights, crash bars, white wall tyres and backed seats. 'Dress' code included the iconic army surplus parka coat which they wore to protect their best weekend suit underneath (as illustrated in Figure 7.5). Their behaviour also included indulgence with amphetamine drugs. For the working-class leather clad, heavy motorcycling, greasy Rockers, the Mods represented *effeminate snobs*.

Figure 7.5: The Mods

Source: http://groups.msn.com/TheSixtiesPleasureZone

It was a series of skirmishes between the Mods and Rockers on the South Coast, on the Spring Bank Holiday Weekend, in May 1964 which received national newspaper coverage and subsequently revitalised the ailing motorcycle subculture, rallying thousands of new teenage recruits to the cause. To have the Mods as an opposing force to the Rockers, created new possibilities of excitement and a new sense of purpose for media writers. Newspaper narrative after the events included:

"Marauding army of Vikings going through Europe massacring and plundering, living by slaughter and rapacity." The Star, Sheffield, 18 May, 1964

"Mutated louts wreaking untold havoc on the land," Time and Tide, 21 May, 1964

Figure 7.6 illustrates the front cover of the national newspaper, the Daily Mirror shortly after the May Bank Holiday events. The Mods and Rockers era was short lived but it resulted in attracting a new generation of youths to motorcycling.

Figure 7.6: Mods and Rockers in the Daily Mirror

Source: http://groups.msn.com/TheSixtiesPleasureZone

In the late 1960s the outlaw bikers in both America and Britain were heavily influenced by the wider drugs and hippie scene. The Hell's Angels in America were courted by influential members of the drugs subculture, such as the writer and LSD innovator Ken Kessey. The roughest and craziest of bikers were introduced to the delights of acid and free love. Suddenly the Angels' image once again became cool and they were sought after by writers, religious mystics and political activists, all interested in discovering their philosophy of life.

Similarly, in Britain, bikers became an integral part of the hippie way of life, sharing its drugs, music and its festivals. Dope smoking and Country Joe became replacements for light ale and rock 'n' roll. Suddenly the old 'Rocker' image became

dated as they adopted a new 'dress' code as well as a new 'behaviour' and 'language' code. They adopted the West Coast style, growing their hair and beards, wearing fringed suede jackets and exploring the mind-bending properties of psychedelic drugs. The new 'behaviour' code involved a change in riding styles. Speeding down the highway, chin on petrol tank and bottom in the air suddenly lost its appeal and bikers began to ride down the high street, feet up, laid back, and not glancing to the side as citizens turned their heads in disgust as they passed by. Within the new 'language' code, bikes became known as 'choppers,' 'hogs' or simply 'wheels,' birds (women) became 'chicks' or 'old ladies' and fights became 'rumbles' or 'stompings.' Here was a new breed of bikers who were *outlaw heroes* par excellence. Even with a change of image, they still remained the *outlaw, bad boy folk devils* challenging the dominant ideology of the time.

It was the iconic film 'Easy Rider' of 1969 that played a significant role in influencing the wider popular cultural change of biker image. The film features three characters, one of them nicknamed 'Captain America', riding across America on a pair of customised chopped Harleys, complete with drugs, rednecks and the symbolic song 'Born to be Wild' by Steppenwolf (illustrated in Figure 7.7). Easy rider provided a strong message on a mythic level, criticising American ideology of the time through its illustration of the miasma of paranoid brutality that lurks uneasily behind the carefully groomed façade of the 'Land of the Free.' In their venture across America in search of the American myth of *freedom* and *freedom of the road,* the bikers discover that in reality, this freedom does not exist and what does in fact exist is quite the opposite, *conformism*. The bikers, who in fact represent *freedom* are treated as outlaws and ultimately murdered by mindless *conformists*, indulged in a paranoia which stems from the fear of freedom.

Figure 7.7: Easy Rider, 1969
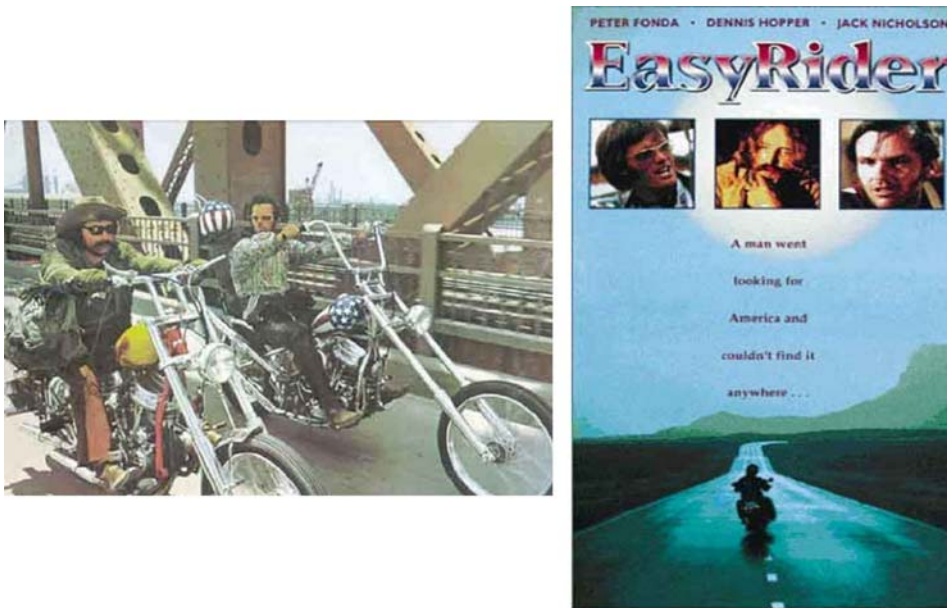
Source: www.motorbiker.org

7.2.2 Residual and Dominant Communication Codes

Whilst residual codes represent myths of motorcycling which are becoming less dominant and filtered with time, there are a number of significant codes which were dominant as residual codes of the past and remain dominant, representing core myths of motorcycling today.

Freedom

The motorcycle provides a method of transport, a means of giving the motorcyclist *freedom* to move from one place to another. From the Golden Age of the Post War years, motorcycling offered disaffected youth *mobility* and *freedom* to escape the *constraints* of the culture that left them feeling confused, with no real sense of purpose, direction or identity. Involvement in motorcycle subculture, and prescription to its codes of subcultural ideology offered them freedom to develop a unique, meaningful sense of self-identity. Youthful and fashionable ownership of Vespa's in post-war Italy, for example, provided youngsters with *mobility, freedom* and *communication* opportunities rather like the mobile phone of today.

Today, the myth of freedom remains a central value of motorcycling and motorcycle subculture. People take up motorcycling, a pursuit famously symbolic of freedom, in a quest for release from the constraints put on them by modern society which is dominated by symbols of *confinement* such as congested roads, offices, schedules, relationships and authority; a point which supports the work of Schouten and McAlexander (1995). The mythic *freedom versus constraint* battle is further discussed in Section 7.2.4.

Communitas/Brotherhood

Riding a motorcycle is essentially a solitary pursuit. The rider sits there, gripping the handle bars, peering intently ahead through visor or goggles, ears full of noise from the wind and engine, mind concentrating on the road ahead. Yet, for a high majority of motorcyclists the social element and *communitas* development is an essential part of involvement in adventurous motorcycle experience/subculture (thus supporting work introduced in Section 5.3). Wherever in the world there are bikes, there are riders who congregate to compare machines, modifications, cornering lines, to swap information, spare parts and tell tall stories.

From The Golden Age, when specific biker groups began to develop, a strong sense of *communitas/brotherhood* developed with it. Subcultures had their own specific ideology which members or 'brothers' adhered to. This included specific codes of 'behaviour', 'language', 'bike' codes and codes of 'dressing'. Subcultures had their own membership hierarchy, and more experienced, authentic members demanded respect from lesser 'prospects.'

Today communitas continues to be a central myth of motorcycling. Hundreds of motorcycle clubs exist throughout the world, ranging from owners clubs and clubs for specific motorcycle classes to clubs for owners who have other common characteristics such as female owners, or gay and lesbian owners. Many clubs organise events such as group rides out, charity events, or purely social events. They organise group holidays and often publish their own magazines and newspapers. Often they have their own websites where members can login to stay updated on

recent information, and enter motorcycle forums and chat rooms to exchange narrative online.

Motorcyclists regularly gather at bike meets, which take place at bikers cafes and pubs. Some venues attract hundreds of motorcyclists from a wide range of backgrounds, with wide ranging styles of motorcycle. What draws them together is a common bond of passion for motorcycles and the associated adventure experience. They admire each others machines and modifications whilst indulging in a great deal of 'bike talk' which includes lots of story telling (as illustrated in Figure 7.8).

Figure 7.8: Squires Bikers Coffee Bar, North Yorkshire

Source: www.squires-café.co.uk

Today motorcycle retail outlets are increasingly becoming popular locations for motorcyclists to meet and socialise. Retail outlet observation revealed a significant number of motorcyclists who visit retail outlets purely to meet other motorcyclists, view others' bikes and modifications, chat bikes with other visitors as well as staff from the outlet. A number of retail outlets have formed their own motorcycle clubs, members of which regularly use the outlet as a meeting place, organising events and rides out from there.

Retail outlets are increasingly recognising the social requirement of their clientele, or prospective clientele by employing 'authentic' motorcyclist staff and offering physical social facilities such as coffee machines and seating areas. One retail outlet was regularly observed providing free drinks to regular visitors, who seemed to gain a great deal of fulfilment from exchanging narratives with 'expert' members of staff, and thus role models and opinion leaders. The significance of the retail outlet is analysed in more detail in Section 9.7.

Scantily Clad Women

Surrounding the imagery of motorcycling, past and present, there is often imagery of *scantily clad women*. From motorcycle magazines to film media, and imagery provided from motorcycle events and meets, discourse reveals a significant presence of scantily clad women. At work here are the *male/female* mythic oppositions, occurring at opposite extremes of the binary opposition scale, but which complement each other so well. The motorcycle, and a significant proportion of their riders, connote an image of *masculinity, machismo, hard machinery* and *power*. At the other extreme, women mythically connote an image of *soft, femininity* and *female beauty*.

The Black Leather Jacket

Arguably the most significant symbol which represents motorcycling imagery past and present is the black leather jacket. It was Marlon Brando, dressed in turned-up jeans and a double-breasted Schott black leather jacket (as illustrated in Figure 7.2) who epitomised the classic style of the 1950s. Over the years this basic item has been added to, modified with various tassels, patches, badges and metal studs, but its essential significance remains the same, that of motorcyclist 'attitude' and 'identity'.

Heroes

Throughout time motorcycling has always produced its own breed of heroes and this continues to the present day. Past heroes were those *outlaw heroes* who were often leaders of biker gangs. Also, particularly influential heroes in spreading the outlaw motorcycle subculture on a national and international scale were movie stars such as

Marlon Brando, in The Wild One and Peter Fonda and associates in Easy Rider. They formed dominant role models of their day and particularly influenced the youth of the period. Particularly influential heroes of today are the stars of the racetrack. Motorcylists purchase supersports race-replica machines and don race-replica clothing and equipment in an attempt to create an identity that resembles their racing heroes.

Racing and Speed: Myths of the Motorcycle Racer

Almost as long as bikes have been built, people have been holding contests to see who could make them go the fastest, last the longest, and even get to the top of the biggest hill. Mostly it is the thrill of high velocities that attract riders and spectators to the sport, and throughout their history, people have been intrigued with setting speed records on powered two-wheelers. Famously, the Triumph Bonneville, nicknamed the 'Bonnie' was named after Johnny Allen, who in 1955 took a 650cc Triumph Twin to over a hundred and ninety miles an hour in the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah.

The 1970s saw the arrival of 'The Modern Era' of motorcycling with the introduction to the market of the Honda CBR 750 sports bike, soon to be followed by the other Japanese manufacturers Yamaha, Suzuki and Kawasaki, and later by the Italians, Ducati, Moto Guzzi and Laverda. Whereas previously, individual motorcyclists had modified their motorcycles for a sports look, manufacturers recognised the great market potential that existed from mass-production of sports styled motorcycles. By the 1980s the sports motorcycle market sector had truly taken off with the increasing fitment of fairings to sports motorcycles and the influence of technological developments that made the motorcycles strong but light.

The Isle-of-Man Tourist Trophy (TT) is an iconic event, and location, that represents the residual and dominant code of *racing and speed* (illustrated in Figure 7.9). Beginning in 1907, the forty-mile round mountain course was epitomised as the world's greatest motorcycling event for many years. Competing on public roads, which was banned on British mainland roads, the TT tests both the rider and the machine to their limits and to this day it continues to produce its own breed of heroes, heroes such as Joey Dunlop, who won a total of twenty four times, and David Jeffries who, until recently, held the all time lap record with an average speed of over one

hundred and twenty seven miles per hour. Tragically, both Joey Dunlop and David Jeffries have since been killed in accidents at road racing events.

Figure 7.9: Iconic Isle-of-Man Tourist Trophy

Source: http://www.iomtt.com

Motorcycling, and in particular motorcycle racing is a high risk, adventure sport with incumbent dangers and there is always a risk of injury or death when the motorcyclist pursues the activity. It is anticipated that motorcyclists have an awareness of their own mortality but the subject of death does not appear as a theme from the discourse analysed for the semiotic audit. The concept of *death* and its' significance as a myth that contributes to the *uncertainty* of motorcycle *adventure* experience is discussed in the core-values exercise, Section 7.3.

The arrival of the World Superbike Championship in the late 1980s changed the face of motorcycle racing. The machines are visually very similar to, and directly derived from road-going machines and have strict limitations on the modifications allowed. The major manufacturers invested heavily in sponsoring teams and championship racers to ride their superbikes and to wear their clothing and kit. When Ducati took three titles in a row in the early 1990s there was a subsequent increase in sales of their race-replica V-twin. They realised the commercial potential to be gained from this success and invested heavily in sponsorship of supersports racing and marketing road-going race-replica bikes. Other manufacturers soon followed in pursuing this market

potential. The similarities between Suzuki's 2006 road-going GSX-R1000 and the professional racing version can be seen in Figure 7.10.

Figure 7.10: Suzuki GSX-R1000 (2006), Road-Going and Professional Racing Models

Source: www.suzukicycles.com   *Source:* http://teamsuzuki.com/RoadRacing

Manufacturers' activity, along with the associated media coverage which projected superbike racing on a worldwide scale, led to a subsequent increase in the uptake of supersports motorcycle related products and brands. Supersports motorcycle brands have dominated the motorcycle market for a number of years, and as mentioned previously, remain the highest selling motorcycles of today (accounting for 23% of total motorcycle sales in 2005 – see MCIA figures – APPENDIX J).

Superbikes has bred its own range of sporting heroes, Kevin Schwantz, Valentino Rossi and Carl Fogarty to name a few. Manufacturers seize the imagery associated with sporting heroes and include it in the extrinsic design of their sporty products. Heroes' names and the colours they adorn regularly appear in motorcycle fairings, leather racing suits, and helmets in particular (as illustrated in Figure 7.11).

Figure 7.11: Sporting Heroes' Race-Replica Helmets

Valentino Rossi   **Troy Baliss**   **Max Biaggi**

Source: www.rossimerchandise.com   *Source:* www.azsbk.com   *Source:* www.azsbk.com

Supersports motorcycle related brands are often steeped in a communications discourse that reflects racetrack *racing and speed*, and *heroic adventure racing performance*. This is evident in Suzuki's recent (January – March 2006) television advertising campaign (storyboard illustrated in Figure 7.12). Set to fast beating, exciting music, the racetrack sequence features a Suzuki GSX-R750 motorcyclist, fully clad in Suzuki branded racing leathers, leading a race in a pose of knee down, speedy, highly-skilled adventure racing performance. The advert reaches its climax as the rider's heroic performance ends in eventual, outright victory. The message clearly signified from this advert is that through purchase, use, and symbolic display of this motorcycle, and its associated clothing and equipment, one can 'be' like, ride like, and achieve 'victory' like a racing hero. The self-identity implications of consumer ownership of supersports related brands in considered in detail in Sections 8.2.1 and 9.3.

Figure 7.12: Suzuki GSX-R750 – Television Advertisement Storyboard
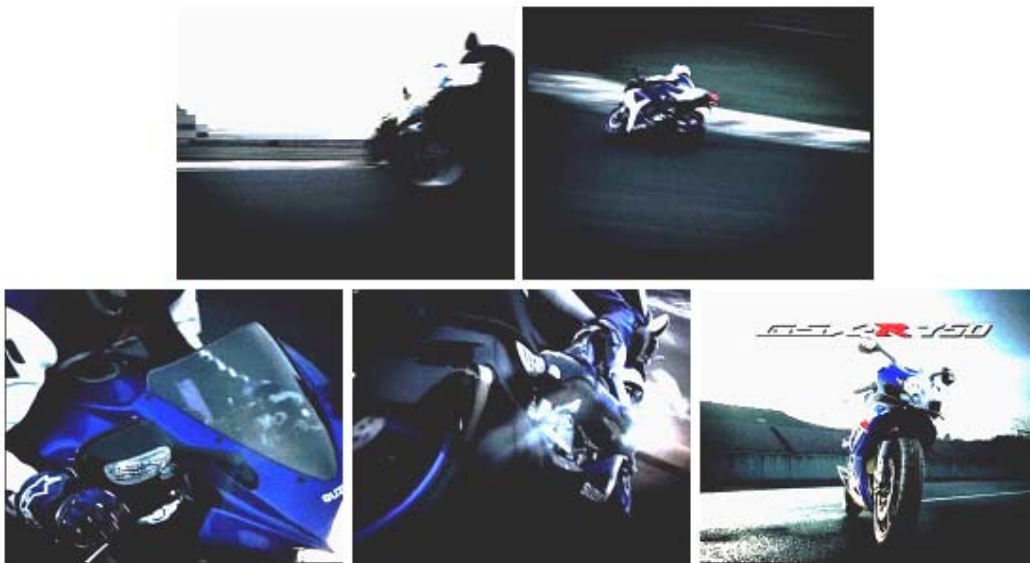
Source: www.creativeclub.co.uk

The Rise of the Bambi

A significant proportion of those who own supersports motorcycles today are 'Born-Again Middle Aged Bikers (Bambis)'. They are middle-aged, forty-something years old, highly educated men, who previously rode bikes twenty or thirty years ago. Bambis are often baby boomers attempting to down-age and determined not to give

way to the stultifying conformity of middle-aged life. They represent part of a wider socio-cultural trend to keep mid-life going as long as possible and of the blurring of the life-stages. Motivated by the desire to recapture their youth, subcultural myths of *freedom* and elements associated with *adventure*, such as speed, adrenaline, buzz, thrill seeking, acceleration, risk and 'the edge' are commonly used in descriptions of the Bambi. They take up motorcycling in a bid to renew their sense of self-identity and signify a self-image that says 'I am young, exciting and adventurous.' Typical statements from Bambis include:

"I say that after nearly twenty years of suits and ties I have earned the right to a bit of fun." (The Independent on Sunday, 26 September 2004)

"We live on the edge, on the very cusp of existence where life is at its most pleasant and sweet. Life is at its best when it is at risk." (Sunday Times, 10 October 2004)

Bambis' desire to signify a youthful, exciting, adventurous self-image is reflected in their choice of products and often they are not limited by the amount of disposable income required to support this identity. Motorcycle choice comes from the paradigm of supersports bikes, and Bambis are regularly seen on flashy new bikes such as the Yamaha YZF R1 or the Suzuki GSXR 600. Emulating the heroes of the racetrack, their 'dress' code includes one-piece racing leathers, brands such as Dainese or Alpine Stars, with full body armour, colour co-ordinated with their motorcycles. One writer compares their image with that of the late, two times world champion, Barry Sheene:

"A new generation of born-again riders, forty-something thrill-seekers dressed like the late Barry Sheene…" (The Independent, 10 May 2004)

Bambis are mostly seasonal riders, and their 'behaviour' code tends to involve pleasure riding for six months of the year or less, on fair weather weekends. They leave towns and cities for rural countryside roads where they open up their bikes and test themselves to the limit, viewing the road as an extension of the racetrack:

"It seems that the majority of sports bike riders use leather suits, EU approved body armour… The eager adoption of this racetrack equipment betrays an attitude that the road is simply an extension of the racetrack." (The Independent, 10 May 2004)

7.2.3 Dominant Communication Codes

"When I was a child mum said she'd always support me in life unless I bought a motorcycle… Two-wheeled monsters, a threat to civilization, life and limb, suitable only for strange, leather clad men with tattoos as big as their bellies." (The Independent, 10 February, 2004)

This old fashioned caricature of motorcyclists is now outdated and has given way to more significant dominant myths of today.

Diversity and Positive Public Attitudes

The world of motorcycling today represents a much more diverse and positive popular cultural image than it previously did. Although the residual outlaw, bad boy image does continue to hang on, today motorcycling is much better represented by the codes of *diversity* and *positive public attitudes*.

A recent Motorcycle Industry Association (MCIA) press article (included in APPENDIX K) published the key findings of research that it commissioned into public perceptions of motorcycling. The study surveyed one thousand non-riding individuals across the UK and revealed that public attitudes towards motorcycling are either positive or neutral for the majority of men and women; over forty percent of people are neutral and twenty three percent have positive attitudes. This evidences a weakening of the residual, outlaw, bad boy imagery associated with motorcycling and significantly, a wider popular cultural move towards more *positive attitudes*.

Market segmentation figures (illustrated previously in Section 2.3.2) reveal increasing fragmentation of the UK motorcycle market. With the increasing popularity of a wide range of motorcycle categories, each attracts a different type of target audience with

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different requirements for their motorcycling activity; thus within the holistic motorcycle subculture a number of individual subgroups/cultures exist. From touring bikes such as Honda's mighty Gold Wing tourer to scooters, via supersports, sports-tourers, cruisers, naked/retro, adventure-sports and trail bikes, manufacturers today are increasingly attempting to produce something for everyone.

The MCIA illustrates the increased growth and diversity of motorcycle usage in its published press information:

"Craig Carey-Clinch, MCIA's Director of Public Affairs said 'this month's figures provide further evidence both of the continued interest in motorcycling and the growing diversity of people taking it up. These figures reflect the changing face of motorcycling, no longer polarised between enthusiasts and commuters. Riders are increasingly realising just how much choice and diversity exists in manufacturer ranges'." (MCIA Press Information, October 2004)

The MCIA also highlights government statistics that reflect these trends:

"Department of Transport statistics have shown that the greatest rise in transport use was in motorcycles and scooters which increased by an estimated 10.4 percent." (MCIA Press Information, August 2004)

Noted previously, supersports motorcycles still represent the highest selling sector of the UK motorcycle market today. This reflects the dominant myth of racing and speed that drove the introduction of the 'Modern Era' to motorcycle subculture.

Nostalgia

Recent years have seen a significant growth in the nostalgia market, represented by greying motorcyclists interested in recapturing the residual imagery related to motorcycles from their youth. The prices of 'original' cruiser motorcycles, whose appeal is based on simplicity and nostalgia, have more than doubled in the past two years, due to increasing demand, and there has been increasing interest in the restoration of original motorcycles. MCIA statistics reveal the increased popularity of

the naked retro motorcycle, which reflects these trends. By the end of 2005, the naked bike was the second highest selling motorcycle in the UK, with a 17% increase on the previous year. Companies such as Triumph and Harley Davidson with motorcycles such as the Triumph Rocket 111 and Harley Davidson FLSTCI Heritage Softail (illustrated in Figure 7.13) have made the most of this market opportunity, producing bikes which combine the advantages of modern engineering with the name, look and nostalgic appeal of the originals. What they have created is a nostalgia-tech blend of looks and performance which provides the nostalgia market with connotations of the desired residual imagery combined with the advantages of modern technology.

Figure 7.13: Triumph Rocket III and Harley Davidson Heritage Softail

Source: www.triumph.co.uk   *Source:* www.harley-davidson.com

Scooters

Scooters are the third highest selling motorcycle in the UK today, representing 17% of total market share in 2005 (illustrated previously in Figure 2.5). They are often purchased as a means to avoid traffic congestion, and congestion charging in urban areas. Recent years have seen the revival of the scooter as a means of transport and as a fashion item for teenagers. The scooter provides them with an affordable means of mobility, and the combination of modern technology, design, colour and names such as the Peugeot Speedfight 100 (scooter illustrated in Figure 7.14) and Honda ANF 125 Innova have promoted the scooter to the position of 'cool', a status so sought after by teenagers.

Figure 7.14: Peugeot Speedfight Scooter

Source: www.mypeugeot.com

The renewed image of the scooter does not appear to be influenced by the Mod subculture of the 1960s.

Touring

In their quest for *freedom*, to escape the constraints and normalities of everyday life and to do something exciting, challenging, thus *adventurous*, a large number of motorcyclists enjoy the experience of touring. Touring can range from a gentle weekend trip to an epic journey around the world; from a fully organised packaged tour involving a group of people, to one person's sudden urge simply to get on a motorcycle and ride. The essence of touring is that the journey itself is as much a part of the experience as the stops and destinations. Motorcycles used for touring cross the market sectors, from supersports bikes to sports touring bikes, pure touring bikes and cruiser bikes.

Manufacturers have exploited the touring market by producing large capacity touring bikes, with lots of comfort and storage space, and also by producing sports touring motorcycles. Sports tourers, such as the Suzuki SV 650S and Yamaha FZ6 Fazer (illustrated in Figure 7.15) are a highly popular class of motorcycle today, designed to fit between the supersport and touring categories. Their extrinsic design connotes the

sporty, racy image desired by so many consumers, and this is combined with intrinsic, functional comfort and safety elements required by tourers.

Figure 7.15: Sports Tourers (Suzuki SV 650S and Yamaha FZ6 Fazer)

Source: www.suzukicycles.com   *Source:* www.yamaha-motor.co.uk

Clothing and equipment manufacturers have also benefited from the popularity of motorcycle touring. Equipment manufacturers produce a vast range of products from storage boxes and panniers to satellite navigation systems and intercoms. Recent technological developments have also seen the successful development of a range of textile clothing for motorcycling.   Materials like Gore-Tex and Kevlar offer breathable, all weather protection as well as strength and protection for the motorcyclist. Products like Belstaff's Explorer (illustrated in Figure 7.16), Adventure and Xtreme jackets offer intrinsic, functional benefits for the motorcycle tourer, combined with extrinsic names and design features that aim to signify desired *adventure* imagery.

Figure 7.16: Belstaff Explorer Touring Jacket

Source: www.pheonixnw.co.uk

Related to touring and the quest for freedom and adventure is the spectacular growth of the adventure-sports market over the past five years (illustrated previously in Figure 2.6). This is examined in more detail in Section 7.2.5, Emergent Communication Codes.

Magazine Analysis

A wide range of motorcycle magazines are regularly published which appeal to the diverse range of segments within the market. Magazines provide a discourse of specific motorcyclist lifestyle and offer the reader opportunities for role integration within their chosen motorcycle adventure subculture. Discourse commonly includes imagery and narrative relating to new product launches, product and road tests, news and letters as well as experts' advice on product choices, modifications and riding skills. Analysis of discourse from a range of magazines provided an insight into the narrative which reflects/directs motorcyclist self-identity construction, and revealed a number of dominant communication codes/myths that represent motorcycle subcultural identity today.

Motorcyclist Identity

Ownership of a powered two-wheeler involves automatic inauguration into the motorcycle subculture; a subculture with a common bond of shared values, emotions and ideology. The amount of role acquisition a motorcyclist partakes in is a matter of choice, but magazines provide a discourse of motorcycle lifestyle which aids in and supports the process of authentic role acquisition. Experts, likely to be perceived as authentic role models, are commonly featured, providing advice and feedback on product and road tests, riding skills, carrying out motorcycle modifications and even providing diaries and regular updates of their own riding experiences. Their narrative is regularly supported with photographic imagery featuring them with motorcycles, often in 'action' shots. Performance Bikes (February 2005) is an example of this, beginning with a series of launch reports in which a number of new motorcycles are tested and reported on by experts. Dale Lomas, an authentic motorcycle racer tests and reports on the new Kawasaki ZX-6R (as illustrated in Figure 7.17).

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Figure 7.17: Dale Lomas on the New Kawasaki ZX-6R

Source: Performance Bikes, February 2005, pp. 4-5

This issue of Performance Bikes includes an extra pull out section, introduced by Dale Lomas, explaining the benefits of modifying motorcycles. Referring to these 'modified monsters,' he adds 'authenticity' to the art of making modifications by noting the unique identity, history and personality that modified machines acquire:

"They've got soul, they've got history and they've got stories behind them… they are real peoples' real bikes…" (Dale Lomas, Performance Bikes Reader's Special, 2005, p. 2)

Modifications give the motorcycle a unique personality, a character that is inspired by the owner. The owner breathes the soul into the motorcycle and it, in effect, becomes part of his/her extended self. The history and stories which support the motorcycle's new identity can be used as a means of authentic role construction by the owner.

Motorcycle magazines commonly include 'write-in' sections, where motorcyclists can write in to ask the 'experts' motorcycling related questions. Analysis of this kind of discourse reflects the reader's desire and concern for the creation of 'authentic' 'motorcyclist' self-identity. One motorcyclist asks:

"Are sparky kneesliders cool?" (Bike, October 2004, p. 14)

Three experts reply, each claiming that they are not! Within the same issue of Bike magazine an article is published entitled:

"49 Things You Need to Know about the Bike you Ride" (Bike, October 2004, front cover)

Here the experts aim to answer what they believe to be the forty-nine most important questions in motorcycling. One question focuses purely on authenticity gained from embellishing one's motorcycle with stickers:

"Q.4. Should I put stickers on my bike?" (Bike, October 2004, p. 69)

The experts respond:

"…You don't have to be a 250 GP rider to have a cool bike. Get the look with sharp stickers…" (Bike, October 2004, p. 69)

They continue to give further detail about where to purchase stickers and how and where to apply them to achieve a 'cool' image.

The final question provokes a response, the subject of which appears numerous times in the magazines analysed, that of the relationship between motorcycle and owner. As man and machine move together as one, experiencing moments of sheer emotion and transcendental flow experience, a bond is formed of sheer intensity and love; a bond of desire akin to that focused on by Belk et al (2003). The question is posed:

"Q.49. Why do I do it?" (Bike, October 2004, p. 98)

The response includes the following narrative:

"Your own bike, it's great, it's yours. You chose it, picked it out, struggled to afford it, but you got it… Familiarity descends and you really start to gel… Now you're forming a bond. Shared experiences, both joyous and near-death, memorable trips, lifetime firsts… You're proud of it and you look after it. It works hard for you so you give it some treats… Cleaning, polishing… You and your bike are shiny, glamour amongst the grime… It's your trademark, wherever you are it's outside. Whenever you want to leave it's ready to go… Cup of tea, fag and half an hour looking at the bike. This bit blends into that bit, that angle works so well with that line. Surely the ultimate in design and execution, perfectly formed, perfectly functional…Love it and enjoy it." (Bike, October 2004, p. 98)

Motorcyclists appear to develop an extremely strong emotional relationship with their motorcycles, loving, desiring and admiring them like a person rather than an object. This relationship is explored in detail in analysis of the motorcyclist consumer psyche, Section 8.3.4.

Communitas/Brotherhood

The *communitas/brotherhood* that plays a central role in motorcyclist subcultural membership (identified in Section 7.2.2) is reflected in motorcycle magazines. Magazines are generally written in an informal style, with editors and experts using informal, restricted communication code which is so distinctive amongst members of shared cultures. Although experts are treated and respected as authentic role models within the motorcycle community, they ultimately have a sense of common brotherhood and shared ideology with readers, which is apparent in the language used in magazine narrative. Narrative commonly features specific motorcycle jargon, with phrases such as 'sunny side up' (keeping the bike upright), and 'avoiding roadside furniture' (roadside obstacles such as trees and buildings) for example.

Magazines commonly offer readers opportunities for interaction with letters columns, lifestyle sections and the inclusion of opinion polls. All of the motorcycle magazines analysed included a 'Letters' section in which the readers are given the opportunity to freely submit discourse of their choice. Back Street Heroes even includes a 'Reader's Lives' section in which motorcyclists are invited to send photographs and stories of

their motorcycle experiences. Many magazines also offer associated websites that provide readers with further opportunities for shared subcultural involvement, such as email sections and motorcycle chat rooms and forums.

One of the most common subjects that appears in letters across the range of magazines focuses on, perhaps the most significant symbolic gesture of biker language and shared ideology, the 'nod.' Motorcyclists, when passing each other whilst on the move nod to each other to recognise each other as affiliate members of the same subculture. One motorcyclist takes the symbolic gesture of nodding to a philosophical level in his letter:

"I thought bikers nodded to each other to reinforce fellowship. But the reasons are a lot deeper and darker than that, I fear. There's a conspiracy among drivers to purposely not see bikes, therefore making riders believe they really are invisible. As with the famous philosopher who wrote 'I think therefore I am', bikers who think they are invisible really are – thus completing the car drivers' aim to have the road for themselves, because bikes cease to exist! So by nodding to other riders you acknowledge they can be seen and are 'real' and thus destroy the car drivers' devious plan." (Anon, Bike, October 2004, p. 11)

The highly significant motorcyclist nod, in fact, forms the subject of a great number of reader letters submitted to magazines, and perhaps surprisingly these letters tend to focus on the 'lack' of nodding between motorcyclists from different market sectors, and the consequent communitas breakdown. One letter states:

"...I received no end of nods from all riders when I was learning, which made me feel included in the biking community from the start. Having passed my test I've bought a CBR 600RR (supersports motorcycle) but now nobody on a non-sports bike nods any more – and they don't acknowledge mine either. It's like I've developed BO overnight. It is such an unsolvable chicken and egg situation where nobody is willing to nod first." (Anon, MCN, September 1, 2004, p. 15)

Another motorcyclist comments on this subject, reinforcing that even though motorcyclists representing different market sectors in fact prescribe to their own

succinct motorcycle subcultural ideologies, there is a common bond that binds all motorcyclists together, which should be acknowledged by the 'universal' motorcyclist subcultural nod:

"I've been biking for more than twenty years and I've observed the 'nod or not' interaction between bikers from many angles. I even became a no-nodder for a couple of years. Now I give a cheery nod, especially in the winter or sh*t weather. In fact, if I sense the rider coming towards me is a 'no-nod,' I pre-empt this with a particularly friendly nod and maybe even a wave. This is to remind them, like it or not, that there's a common link between us." (Anon, Bike, August, 2004, p. 10)

The significance of the motorcyclist nod as a symbol of subcultural affiliation is explored in further detail in Section 8.3.1.

Racing and Speed

A number of the magazines analysed feature a significant amount of racing imagery. Not only magazines specifically aimed at the sports segment but also magazines such as Bike magazine and MCN which are targeted more generally at the motorcycle market as a whole. Front covers typically feature racing heroes on brand new race replica supersports machines, fully kitted out, knee down on the track in a pose of racing performance (as illustrated in Figure 7.18). Launch reports typically begin with supersports bike launches, and regularly feature narrative from racing heroes who have tested the product. For example, MCN (September, 2004) features the launch of the new Suzuki GSX-R1000, and includes in the report opinions from Suzuki team racers John Reynolds and Yukio Kagayama.

Figure 7.18: Racing Imagery on Magazine Covers

Source: Bike, October 2004, p. 1

Magazines regularly feature personal interviews with motorcycle sports racing heroes, and commonly feature supersports bike tests and sports news sections where up to date racing news is published. The dominance of the theme of *racing and speed* within motorcycle magazines is not surprising when one considers the strength of supersports motorcycle sales within the UK market.

Heritage and Nostalgia

A number of magazines exist which focus on the *heritage* and *nostalgia* associated with 'The Golden Age' of motorcycling. Classic Bike magazine, for example, is aimed at the custom bike enthusiast and features older, custom bikes, providing a narrative of history and restoration advice. Imagery is provided that has connotations to 'The Golden Age', featuring older bikes and riders typically adorned in jeans, black leather or wax jackets, open faced helmets and goggles (as illustrated in Figure 7.19).

Figure 7.19: Imagery of Nostalgia in Classic Bike Magazine

Source: Classic Bike, June 2003, p. 17

Scantily Clad Women

Scantily clad women appear to have a significant presence in motorcycle magazines. Images of motorcycles often feature half-naked models posing with them. Somewhat ironically, in a male dominated market the beauty and sex appeal communicated by imagery of scantily clad female models aims to have associated connotations with the motorcycles featured. The front cover of Performance Bikes (February 2005) is an example of this, featuring a bikini adorned female model with the text *"Up for it! Ultimate mods to improve your motorcycle's sex appeal"* (illustrated in Figure 7.20).

Figure 7.20: Scantily Clad Women and Motorcycle Magazines
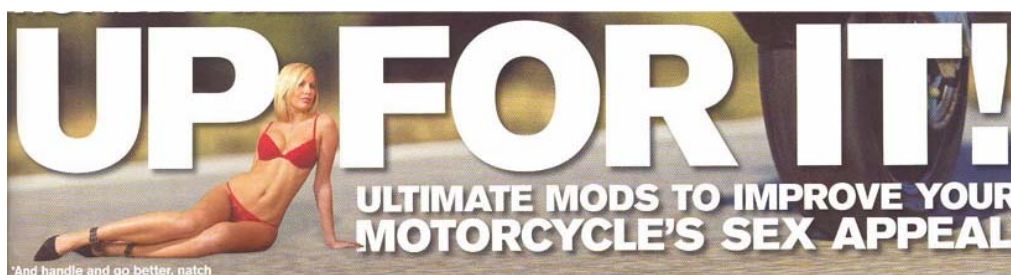
Source: Performance Bikes, February 2005, p. 1

The female model featured here appears again in a double page centre pull out poster of a Kawasaki ZX-6R motorcycle in the same edition of Performance Bikes. This edition also features an opinion poll where readers are asked:

"How many half-naked girls should our magazine contain?" (Performance Bikes, February 2005, p.30)

Scantily clad women form the subject of two of the letters within this section also. One reader asks to see more and another asks to see less! The magazine also includes a double page classifieds section of phone lines of an adult nature.

Bike magazine, MCN and Back Street Heroes also feature their share of scantily clad women, but by far the most extreme is Streetfighters magazine. Streetfighters are motorcycles which are customised with modifications to make them appear radical, with attitude and an aggressive stance. Language used in this magazine is very basic and raw, and the pages are full of images of scantily clad women. Bikes adorned with trinkets appear alongside women festooned with tight latex and very little else. The centre page spread contains a classifieds section of an adult nature, and this is not the only one within the magazine. Perhaps one may question the true motorcycle related motives of both the publishers and readers of this magazine!

7.2.4 Motorcycling in Popular Culture

As mentioned in the Methodology, and forming a central premise of this research, all types of discourse, whatever their nature are likely to be significantly influenced by the wider popular culture of their time. This has been shown in the motorcycle subculture, where 'The Golden Age' of motorcycling was highly influenced by post-war culture, both nationally and internationally. Dominant trends in motorcycling today are also affected by wider national, and international trends; trends such as the general increase in the consumption of 'experiences,' which include the uptake of high-risk adventure leisure pursuits. This trend is the result of current day constraints put on people by working patterns, responsibilities and society. Through analysis of motorcycle related wider popular cultural discourse it is possible to identify the key

residual and dominant communication codes/myths that reflect the role of motorcycling in popular culture, and the historic movement of popular cultural perception of motorcycling/motorcycle subculture through time.

Motorcycling in the Movies

There is no better way to identify the changing public perceptions of motorcycling than through the residual and dominant imagery created in popular films. It is possible to analyse specific biker films, of which over a hundred have been produced to the present day, and also to analyse the occurrence of motorcycles and motorcyclists in wider popular films. From this the residual and dominant codes specifically related to motorcycle subculture can be identified as well as its role and image in wider popular culture.

As mentioned previously, the films 'The Wild One' and 'Easy Rider' were the most significant of their day, and perhaps the most iconic motorcycle movies of all time. They represent bikers as *outlaw, delinquent, rebel* subcultures, and highlight their quest for *freedom,* questioning the dominant hegemony of the wider culture of the time. The narrative plot used in 'The Wild One' was to be used time and time again in various movies of the 1960s and onwards. The terms 'Hell' or 'Angel' commonly appear in the titles of biker movies, having connotations to the residual mythology dominant in 'The Wild One'. The plot and imagery used in 'Easy Rider' have also been used in a number of films since then, including the 1987 film 'Angel Unchained' which outlines the story of a motorcycle gang, riding chopped Harley Davidsons, who help a hippie commune from being driven out of a town by local townspeople. Images from the film are illustrated in Figure 7.21)**.**

Figure 7.21: Angel Unchained influenced by Easy Rider

Source: www.motorbiker.org

A number of biker films from the 1990s seize upon the residual mythology of motorcyclists as *outlaw rebels,* members of unruly gangs, often with involvement in drugs subcultures and often in combat with the police. More often than not, the bikers are cast as the villains of the piece. The movies have become more sophisticated but the residual mythology relating to bikers remains the same. Examples of these films include 'The Final Alliance' (1990), 'Beyond the Law' (1992) and 'Point Doom' (1999). Images of the 'outlaw' motorcyclist villains from 'Beyond the Law' and 'Point Doom' are illustrated in Figure 7.22.

Figure 7.22: Beyond the Law and Point Doom

Source: www.motorbiker.org

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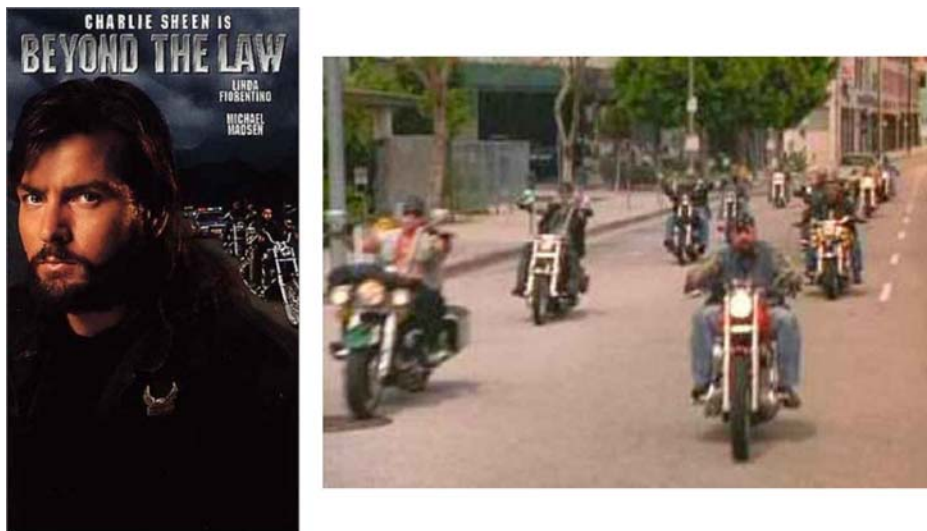
Two recently released biker films are based on the dominant myth of *racing and speed*, which is significant in motorcycling today. Both 'Biker Boyz' (2003) and 'Torque' (2003) feature biker gangs and include vast amounts of speed and racing on today's highly popular and powerful supersports bikes. Biker Boyz (scenes illustrated in Figure 7.23) focuses on a motorcycle club, 'Black Knights,' made up of members who are all African-American men, mostly white-collar workers who exchange their suits and ties at night and on weekends for racing-leathers and supersports bikes. The leader, and most authentic and highly respected member is Manuel, who has gained status through his unbeaten record in street racing. Suddenly a 'prospect,' who later turns out to be his son, and who has no status within the group, becomes a serious contender for the championship.

Analysis of film material reveals a fascination of film producers with motorcycles and *scantily clad women*. A number of biker films from all time include scantily clad women, ranging from films in which the 'biker chicks' are part of biker gangs, socialising, dating and riding pillion with their male counterparts, to films of a more adult nature, of which there are a significant number. Ironically, these films employ sexual exploitation of women on the one hand, but aim to create imagery of powerful, rebellious women on the other, by dressing them in black leather and associating them with imagery of the Hell's Angels and their motorcycles. Names such as 'Naked Angels,' 1969 and 'Hell's Bells,' 1980, to name two 'acceptable' ones, connote this imagery.

Figure 7.23: Scenes from Biker Boyz (2003)
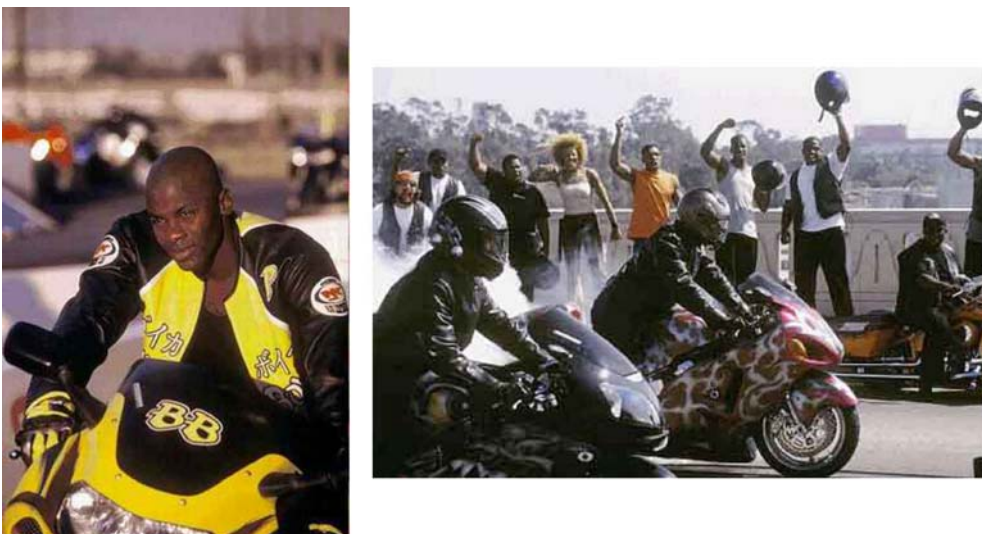
Source: www.motorbiker.org

The majority of wider popular films featuring motorcycles fit into the 'action' film genre. Perhaps not surprisingly, motorcycles appear in fast, furious, stunt-filled chases, often being pursued either by the police, or by the villains. The motorcycle here represents the dominant code of *racing and speed*, which is reflected by the popularity of the supersports bikes of today. Traditionally action films employ a great range of powered vehicles to provide exciting chases, James Bond being a key example of this. The 1997 James Bond film 'Tomorrow Never Dies' (scenes illustrated in Figure 7.24) features a high-speed action chase where Bond, riding a BMW R1 200C motorcycle, with a beautiful woman attached to him, escapes his pursuers. BMW in fact, used this product positioning to support the launch of its R1 200C motorcycle. Aiming to appeal to the aspirations of its forty-something, middle aged, male target audience, this product positioning anchored a connotative association between the R1 200C motorcycle and the fast, thrilling, excitement-packed, 'sexy', 'heroic' Bond lifestyle featured.

Figure 7.24: Action Chase in James Bond: Tomorrow Never Dies

Source: www.motorbiker.org

A number of action films since the year 2000 have mounted *powerful women* on motorcycles, and thus the motorcycle with its' connotations of *strength, masculinity* and *power* have contributed to the identity development of these female characters. Perhaps this represents the increasing power of women in society in general. Examples include, 'Lara Croft: Tomb Raider' (2001), 'Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle' (2003), 'Kill Bill Vol II' (2003) and 'Catwoman' (2004). Heroine tomb

raider Lara Croft uses a Yamaha motorcycle as a means of transport, and to aid in her fight against the villains (scenes illustrated in Figure 7.25).

Figure 7.25: Lara Croft: Tomb Raider

Source: www.motorbiker.org

Charlie's Angels ride KTM off-road enduro bikes in a stunt filled scene whilst in combat with their enemies (as illustrated in Figure 7.26).

Figure 7.26: Charlie's Angels

Source: www.motorbiker.org

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Not only are the women featured in these films *strong* and *powerful*, but also they are *beautiful*. The ironic connotative link between female beauty, sex appeal and the motorcycle was clearly seen with widespread imagery of scantily clad female models in motorcycle magazines (Section 7.2.3).

Ironically, the wider popular films do not appear, like the specific biker films, to insist on mounting the 'villain' on a motorcycle, thus associating imagery of the villain with the *outlaw*, *bad-boy* image so prominent in residual motorcycle mythology. Although it does sometimes occur, for example in 'Blade II' (2002) and 'Daredevil' (2003), more often than not it is the *hero* who rides a motorcycle. Perhaps this represents the changing perceptions of motorcycling in modern day popular culture. All of the wider popular films mentioned above star the heroes on motorcycles. A particularly famous example of this is in the 'Terminator' movies, starring Arnould Schwarznegger, where the Terminator heroically saves the future and is typically featured riding a motorcycle.

A particularly iconic popular cultural classic film of the 1980s that featured a motorcycle scene is 'Top Gun' (1986). Tom Cruise, playing Maverick, infamously rode his Kawasaki motorcycle speedily to the Top Gun theme tune by the side of a fighter jet taking off (illustrated in Figure 7.27). Connotations of *speed, freedom, excitement* and *adventure* are clearly signified from this, where the imagery of the jet is clearly anchored with that of the motorcycle.

Figure 7.27: Scene from Top Gun

Source: www.motorbiker.org

Celebrities and their Motorcycles

In today's popular culture where celebrities play an important role in opinion leadership, lots of them famously own motorcycles; ranging from famous royals, to sports people, actors and actresses, musicians and politicians, they own a varying range of motorcycles. Prince William, for example, is a keen motorcyclist, and owns Triumph and Kawasaki motorcycles (illustrated in Figure 7.28). The list of famous actors and actresses and musicians is extremely long and includes such stars as Ewan McGregor, Ben Afflec, Brad Pitt, Bruce Willis, Tom Cruise, Keanu Reaves, Paul Norman and Sting, all of whom likely have vast amounts of disposable income to be able to indulge themselves in a range of motorcycles. Famous women include Elizabeth Taylor, Anastacia and Cher, all of whom own Harley Davidsons (illustrated in Figure 7.29).

Figure 7.28: Prince William on his Triumph Daytona (Supersports)

Source: www.motorbiker.org

Figure 7.29: Elizabeth Taylor, Anastacia and Cher on Harley Davidsons

Source: www.motorbiker.org

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The MCIA and Positive Public Opinions

As mentioned in the previous section, the MCIA recently published research which found that public perceptions of motorcycling in Britain today are, on the whole, positive, and this is reflected in the associated increase and diversity of the motorcycle consumer and fragmentation of the UK market. The Motorcycle Industry Association is a trade association which represents the voice of the supply side of the industry and which aims to take a positive outlook on motorcycling to encourage an environment whereby motorcycling can flourish. The industry publishes monthly discourse for the press in the hope that the dominant codes it aims to communicate will, through the press, infiltrate the wider general public. It also organises events and campaigns to communicate its' dominant messages of *diversity* and *positive public attitudes*.

Its campaigns include the annual National Motorcycle Week that includes a range of events that aim to communicate the positive benefits of riding a motorcycle to the press, politicians and wider general public; benefits such as freedom, fun, decreased congestion and pollution, faster journey times, avoidance of congestion charging as well as the economic benefits. Events such as the annual 'Ride to Work Day', endorsed by celebrity motorcyclists such as sportsman Iwan Thomas, television presenter Jonathan Ross and Liberal MP Lembit Opik, encourage riders to take pillions to work, visiting the iconic and sacred Ace Café for breakfast on the way (images illustrated in Figure 7.30). Ultimately, through this kind of activity, the MCIA is attempting to fuel a cultural change in perceptions of British motorcycling.

Figure 7.30: Images from MCIA's Ride to Work Day

Source: www.mcia.co.uk

Motorcycling in the Newspapers

Despite all the MCIA's efforts, very little evidence of the National Motorcycle Week appears to be reported on in the wider newspaper media. Newspaper analysis reveals that journalists appear to be content to stick to the residual mythology of motorcyclist as *outlaw, bad boy,* rather than reporting on the *positive, diversity* which, in reality, exists today. Of the twenty newspaper articles relating to motorcycling which were extracted from the Proquest local and national newspaper search for years 2003 and 2004, a number employed residual outlaw connotations in their titles:

"Easy Packing for an Easy Rider" (The Times, 9 October, 2004)

"Born to be Wild (again)…" (The Independent on Sunday, 26 September, 2004)

"Too Old to be Wild?…Nicholas Pyke reports on an issue that has even put the Hell's Angels on the side of the sober and sedate" (The Independent, 10 May, 2004)

These titles have connotations to the residual imagery created in the 'Easy Rider' film, the second one using the title of Steppenwolf's famous 'Born to be Wild' song which accompanied the film. In addition, the word 'wild' has direct connotations to the title and the imagery signified in 'The Wild One'. The third title above goes as far as comparing Bambis to Hell's Angels, and claiming that in comparison to the Bambis, the Hell's Angels, with their outlaw, bad boy image, are more sedate!

Freedom versus Constraint

Today's newspaper journalists appear to be intent to focus their stories on the modern day phenomenon, the Bambi. Rather than reporting on positive public attitudes to motorcycling and diversity in today's market, they are more interested in flirting with the concept of the Bambi, linking them to the residual, somehow romantic, outlaw imagery associated with motorcycling. Articles focus on Bambi 'behaviour' codes and the issues that surround them. In effect, what they are courting, and documenting, is the mythic battle between freedom and constraint. This ultimately provides

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sensational narrative which aims to sell newspapers. Within the articles, terminology of the past is used to describe current issues:

"The days of the bearded warrior have largely passed. There are no knives or chains on view, let alone shotguns, and this time round, the villains of the piece are clean-shaven. But the biker wars are back, and there is blood on the roads. Lots of it" (The Independent, 10 May, 2004)

Motorcyclists are no longer commonly perceived as *dangerous, rough looking rebels,* but this writer still casts them as the *"villains of the piece."* Today's affluent, highly educated, image-conscious Bambi may be visually different from the bearded, big-bellied, tattooed residual image of the motorcyclist of the past, but their lust for *freedom* and *adventure* remains the same. The conflict between the freedom represented by motorcyclists and constraint represented by society, lawmakers and law-keepers is something illustrated in the newspaper articles. Writers of the articles frequently use warlike terminology. The above passage is an example of this, using words such as '*warrior,*' '*villains,*' '*wars*' and '*blood.*'

A minority of the articles are written by motorcyclists themselves who defend their right to *freedom* and *adventure* by arguing that they are only a risk to themselves, and they should be given freedom of choice to partake in this risky adventure sport, which offers them such self-fulfilment:

"Let me plead that we bikers don't kill other people the way other motorists do. We only kill ourselves – so far as the general public is concerned we are the safest people on the road… Bikers kill themselves? Yes, they do. That is what biking is all about. I don't mean that we set out bent on suicide. I mean that we live on the edge, on the very cusp of existence, where life is at its most pleasant and sweet. Life is at its best when it is at risk." (Sunday Times, 10 October, 2004)

Motorcyclists also use warlike language to defend their right to freedom. One motorcyclist describes the threat to motorcyclist freedom made by the dominant hegemony of the 'mother state'.

"Its (the Government) instinct is to export to Britain's roads the contempt for civil liberties it has pioneered in the war against terrorism… Born-again bikers are simply the latest group to be identified as targets in a war against those who do not conform." (The Independent, 9 August, 2004)

This quote certainly resonates with the residual mythology of the motorcyclists' search for *freedom*, portrayed in the film 'Easy Rider.' One article written by a motorcyclist illustrates the motorcyclists' perception of the *constraint* which is being put on them by law-makers and law keepers. The article is entitled:

"Safety police are stealing my right to freedom" (Sunday Times, 10 October, 2004)

The motorcyclist in this article notes how today's society is constrained by an obsession with *safety* by those in positions of power:

"In our society, adrenaline has become a dirty word. Masses of civil servants and others sit thinking of things they can forbid. Food is inspected and health and safety executives lurk at every corner, ready to pounce if there is any chance that you are enjoying yourself… I mourn that we live in a society obsessed with safety. We are all individuals, we do not need inspectors to make our path straight." (Sunday Times, 10 October, 2004)

It should be noted that only a minority of the newspaper articles analysed represent the motorcyclists' stance and the majority are interested in highlighting the rise of the Bambi and providing accompanying accident, death rate and injury statistics. Many of the articles appear to revel in providing statements that include shocking statistics. One article claims:

"A new generation of born-again bikers have been blamed for a shocking thirty six percent increase in fatal accidents. Nationally, twenty eight thousand bikers were killed and injured last year" (The Independent, 10 May, 2004)

Newspaper narrative supports the shocking statistics with quotes from people in positions of power and highlights strategies which are to be enforced to curb these ageing thrill-seekers:

"Reckless middle-aged 'born again bikers' with a taste for smashing the speed limit on rural routes have been blamed by the government for the highest annual death toll on Britain's roads since 1997" (The Guardian, 25 June, 2004)

"From the Association of Chief Police Officers to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the message is the same: the balding funsters are out of control." (The Independent, 10 May, 2004)

"John Dawson, the AA Motoring Trust's Director said 'No engineering measures will protect the lunatic fringe who treat every winding road as a potential racetrack, and the only way to deal with them is a high level of enforcement'." (The Scotsman, 15 June, 2004)

Noting the so-called desperation of this situation, references are made to motorcycle organisations such as the British Motorcycle Federation (BMF) and the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG), showing their concerns about this issue. One article is eager to highlight the extraordinary measures taken by MAG:

"The MAG, which made its name campaigning against crash helmets and is still associated with the 1970s world of heavy rock and beer, has taken the step, which once would have seemed extraordinary, of writing to the Government because fellow-bikers are going too fast." (The Independent, 10 May, 2004)

This article also includes criticism of the bike press, claiming that it is a key influencer in encouraging motorcyclists to speed. Again the battle-like word *blood* is used:

"MAG also wants measures to tone down a bike press which glamorises speed and, the MAG President, Ian Mutch said, 'has blood on its hands.' Packed with pictures of

race-style riding, one knee on the ground and wheelies, they rely on adverts for powerful machines and stylish accessories" (The Independent, 10 May, 2004)

"Even Bike magazine, which attempts to place itself at the responsible end of the sports market, has offered features on 'secret motorcycling playgrounds' and the best way to beat speed traps." (The Independent, 10 May, 2004)

The Deputy Editor of Superbike magazine is given the opportunity to respond to these comments, stating:

"We take the view that they (motorcyclists) are big enough to decide what they do with their own time, their own money, and their own machines. People listen to gangsta rap albums. Does that make them go out and kill people? No. We're interested in making exciting, entertaining magazines for people to buy. And what's wrong with that?" (The Independent, 10 May, 2004)

In May 2004 the MCIA hit back at the media representation by claiming that it was, in fact, misrepresenting the facts in an aim to sell sensational stories. It published an article entitled:

"Motorcycle Industry hits back against motorcycle safety 'feeding frenzy' and challenges the media to put the record straight" (MCIA Press Information, May 2004)

The article states:

"Wild claims about 180mph motorcycling, distorted casualty figures, danger to other road users from racing bikes and 'blood on the roads' has become the latest fashionable way of presenting motorcycling as dangerous and unacceptable." (MCIA Press Information, May, 2004)

The MCIA does admit that stories have been fuelled by increasing casualty figures in rural areas, but these figures have been distorted and exaggerated and an unfair generalisation has been made from a small minority. In reality, instead of twenty

eight thousand deaths and serious injuries in 2002, the actual number was seven thousand five hundred. Nearly half of the deaths occurred in urban areas at low speeds due to riders coming into collision with cars that had pulled into the path of the rider. Also it puts the number of casualties into perspective by noting that when compared to the massive increase in motorcycle usage over recent years, the casualty rate has actually fallen by twelve percent below the Government's 1994 to 1998 baseline target. Claims of motorcyclists 'terrorising' rural residents by speeds of up to one hundred and eighty miles an hour only apply to a very small minority of motorcyclists who are risking almost certain death or serious injury by their actions. MCIA's Director of Public Affairs stated:

"Sensationalism and anti motorcycle campaigning is doing nothing but painting all motorcyclists as hooligans… We don't need laws; neither do we need biker demonisation by the media. This type of negativity – or 'Bikeism'- will only lead to a continuation of the current problems, with the benefits of motorcycling for both leisure and commuting continuing to be under developed." (MCIA Press Information, May 2004)

The article concludes:

"This may not be a nice sexy or sensational story, but it's what's really going on out there. The MCI invites the media to write the really challenging story – putting the record straight." (MCIA Press Information, May 2004)

More recently, in November 2004, MCIA press discourse stated:

"… the public are demonstrating that they have a more favourable view of biking than some campaigners with an anti-motorcycle, 'bikeist', viewpoint would suggest. The research has shown that the bikeist rhetoric that we often hear is misguided…" (MCIA Press Information, November 2004)

On a mythic level, the residual battle between freedom and constraint continues, with motorcyclists and motorcycle bodies representing *freedom* and lawmakers and law keepers representing *constraint*. The media, with its influential role in popular

culture, and symbolising the value of freedom of speech, appears in this case to be siding with the value of constraint, publicising the need to 'constrain' the outlaw, rebel freedom fighters.

Analysis of the newspaper media and MCIA information reveals that there appears to be one mediator within this battle. This is represented by Bikesafe, a police led initiative to encourage *safer* motorcycle riding and advanced training. This is accepted and encouraged by the MCIA who believe that lack of experience and basic motorcycle control is a key contributor in the majority of casualties. Therefore educating and providing advanced training for motorcyclists is a better option than heavy legislation and armies of speed cameras. It also has a proven record of accomplishment with motorcyclists themselves who respect the police motorcyclists who implement the scheme. The police motorcyclists are ultimately motorcyclists themselves and as such, share a common bond of language, experience, brotherhood and ideology with participants of the scheme.

Signs that hint to a governmental shift towards more positive attitudes to UK motorcycling are starting to become evident. In February 2005 the Department for Transport launched its first ever motorcycling strategy. This signaled that central government has begun to recognize the important role that motorcycling can play in reducing congestion, journey times and emissions. It requires interested stakeholders, such as the MCIA, Local Authorities and the Motorcycle Action Group for example, to take account of the needs of motorcyclists, promote safety measures and 'mainstream' motorcycling so that its needs are considered as fully as any other transport mode in the development of transport policy. It appears to signify a move away from the kind of government opinion commonly portrayed in the newspapers that represents powered two-wheelers as the pariahs of the road, responsible for little more than appalling accident statistics. It is more consistent with the more positive attitudes to motorcycling evidenced as a dominant communication code of today.

7.2.5 Emergent Communication Codes

Technological Age

Changes in motorcycle consumption patterns and motorcycle subculture have been influenced by social, economic and political factors. However, the most significant influence has been from advances in technology, a factor which has considerably influenced the automotive industry as a whole. In a bid to remain competitive, and successful in an increasingly competitive market, manufacturers have invested heavily in researching and developing stronger, lighter, better handling machines. Over time, engines have become more efficient and powerful, frames have become stronger and lighter, designs have been improved and fairings fitted to a range of motorcycles.

Futuristic concept machines which regularly appear at motorcycle shows can give some hints to the future technological developments which may be seen in motorcycles (as illustrated in Figure 7.31). In the immediate future, more bikes are likely to incorporate a number of intrinsic features already seen in limited numbers. Features include catalytic converters, as a response to social and political concern for the environment, fuel injection, variable valve timing as well as smart-card engine-management systems.

Figure 7.31: Concept Bikes of the Future

Source: www.bikemenu.com

Congestion Constraints and Concern for the Environment

The number of people turning to the moped and scooter as a means of transport to work, to avoid congestion, congestion charging, and reduce pollution is likely to increase. As more and more cities adopt congestion charging strategies there is likely to be an associated increase in the purchase and use of scooters on a national scale.

Heritage and Nostalgia

The resurgence of interest in custom motorcycles, and the associated increase in sales (17% in 2005 – see MCIA figures – APPENDIX J) of naked/retro bikes looks set to continue. As the UK's 'greying' population increases in size, so the target market grows for those manufacturers offering motorcycles that combine residual subcultural imagery of the past with advanced, innovative technology of today. Interestingly, the discourse analysed pinpoints to an emerging cultural shift that reflects increasing popularity of naked styled motorcycles across the range of market sectors. Manufacturers are increasingly producing, and marketing motorcycles that limit, or omit the plastic fairing to reveal the engine, frame and suspension hardware that make up the bike's 'muscle' underneath. This is illustrated in Figure 7.32 with Kawasaki's current Z1000 naked-sports bike. It appears that the naked look of 'The Golden Era' is regaining fashionability and positive subcultural acceptance.

Figure 7.32: 2006 Kawasaki Z1000 Naked-Sports

Source: www.kawasaki.com

Adventure-Sports Motorcycling

Motorcycle related manufacturers and service suppliers have begun to respond to the wider popular cultural trend towards involvement in high-risk adventure pursuits, along with the trend towards increasingly positive public attitudes towards motorcycling in the UK by giving birth to the adventure-sports market sector. Existing in its embryonic form in Continental Europe since the 1990s, products and services were particularly introduced to the UK in the early 2000s. Since its introduction, this sector has achieved significant, consistent annual growth in sales. It was particularly influenced by the 2004 release of 'The Long Way Round' book/ television documentary that featured Hollywood actors Ewan McGregor and Charlie Boorman riding BMW R1150 GS Adventure motorcycles on an epic round the world adventure trip. The influence of 'The Long Way Round' epic is considered in detail in Section .9.5.2.

As manufacturers and service suppliers are increasingly entering the adventure-sports market sector, it remains the fastest growing segment, achieving a growth rate of 28% in 2005 (full MCIA figures illustrated in APPENDIX J). Although the number of adventure-sports motorcycles sold (9% of total UK motorcycles sold in UK, 2005 – see MCIA figures, APPENDIX J) is not yet comparable with top selling supersports motorcycles, it is, in fact, the highest growing motorcycle market sector by far. Manufacturer's/suppliers appear to have found a niche in a society searching for adventure experiences as a means of release from the constraints of everyday life. The MCIA defines Adventure-sports motorcycles:

"These bikes are similar in style to Trail/Enduro motorcycles but are predominantly designed and capable for on-road use only. Often they will have features similar to machines included in the Touring category…" (www.mcia.co.uk)

Considered in detail in Section 9.5, adventure-sports brands are built on core myths/communication codes of *travel, freedom of travel* and off-road, enduro type *adventure* that moves away from seeking *freedom* and *adventure* merely by speeding on asphalt roads. Involvement in this kind of motorcycling, and its associated

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lifestyle, offers the opportunity to avoid the constraints increasingly put in place by 'armies' of speed cameras on British roads.

Manufacturers are increasingly producing motorcycles, clothing and equipment products specifically targeted at the adventure-sports motorcycle niche. Motorcycles such as the BMW R1200GS, Triumph Tiger and KTM 990 Adventure S are specifically designed and styled to resemble enduro motorcycles. They look like large trails bikes with high saddles, deeply treaded tyres and 'grunty' engines (as illustrated in Figure 7.33). They are, however, predominantly designed for on-road use and include features such as suspension settings, riding positions and luggage carrying capabilities. They are, in effect, 'all-rounder' machines that manufacturers claim are designed to be versatile to handle any *adventure* in which the motorcyclist desires to be involved.

Figure 7.33: Adventure-Sports Motorcycles

Adventure-sports motorcycles are appearing more and more predominantly in motorcycle magazines, with new product launches and product tests. For example, Performance Bikes (February, 2005) carried out extensive tests on a number of manufacturer's adventure-sports bikes (BMW R12000GS, Kawasaki KLV1000, KTM 950 Adventure and Triumph Tiger). They noted the benefits of *fun* and *satisfaction* that riders can achieve from this new and increasingly popular style of motorcycling. Motorcycle Voyager is a recent addition to the motorcycle magazine market and appears to focus primarily on the emerging code of adventure-sports motorcycling. The magazine contains much imagery and narrative relating to this new sector, and the myth *adventure* appears regularly throughout the magazine. The title 'Motorcycle

Voyager' is followed by the phrase *"Your Adventure Starts Here,"* and terms such as *"capturing the spirit of adventure"* regularly appear throughout.

Manufacturers have supported the introduction of their adventure-sports motorcycles with a series of marketing communications campaigns that include magazine advertising. Adverts, including those illustrated in Figure 7.34 and Figure 7.35, employ a combination of iconic, graphic, and textual signs that aim to provide a discourse that connotes the bikes' ability to be driven by their riders in *extreme, fantastic adventurous environments*. Depth semiotic analysis of these adverts is provided in Section 9.5.2.

Figure 7.34: BMW R1150 GS Adventure Advert (2003)
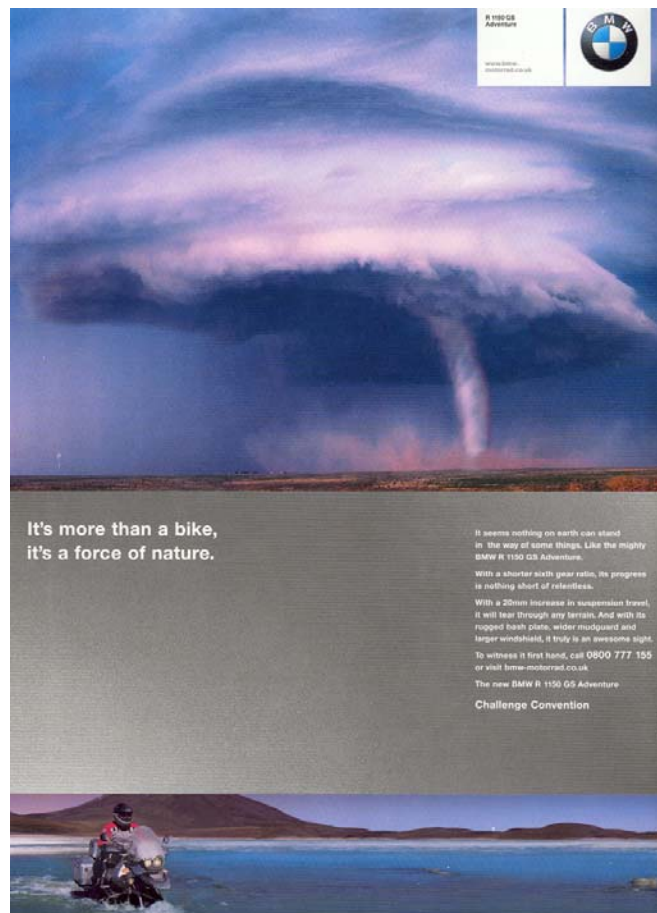
Source: Motorcycle Voyager (2003, p.116)

Figure 7.35: Suzuki DL1000 V-Strom Advert (2001)
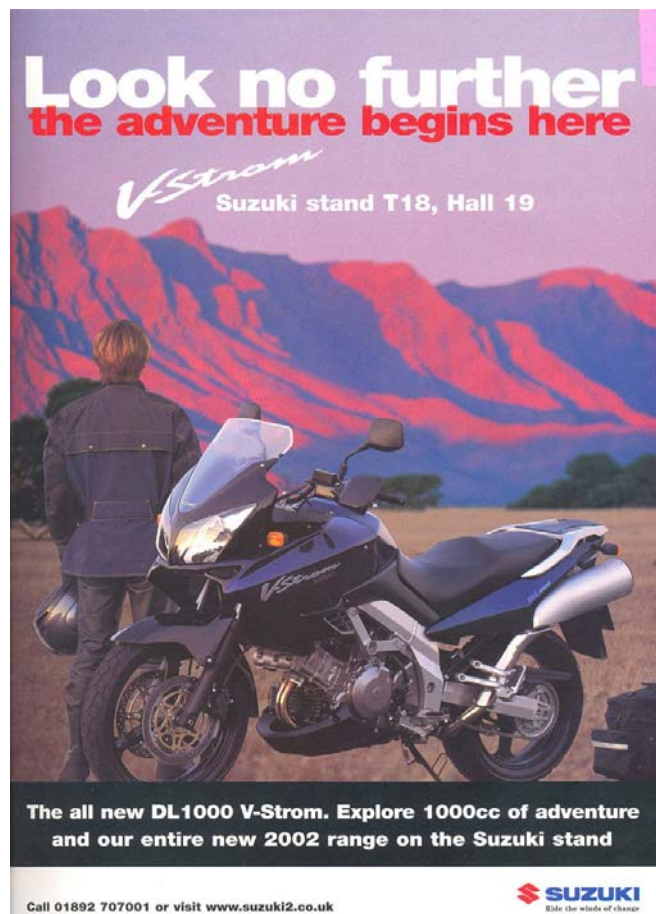
Recognising increasing consumer demand for adventure experiences and lifestyles, a number of packaged motorcycling holiday specialists have entered the market, providing complete packaged adventure tours that include bike hire, food, accommodation, local guides and even a support vehicle to carry excess luggage and deal with problems. From riding a BMW in the Alps, to riding a Harley Davidson across America or an Enfield Bullet through India, there are now companies who can arrange it.

Motorcycle manufacturers have also seized upon this market potential with companies such as BMW, Honda, Harley-Davidson and Yamaha offering motorcycle adventure experience packages.   Harley-Davidson tours have included an eighty strong excursion to Norway's Nordkapp, keep inside the Arctic Circle and Yamaha

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organised a series of 'Spirit of Adventure' trips which took their Super Ténéré trail-bikes on demanding treks in Egypt, Mexico, America and Australia, giving customers the opportunity to ride through harsh terrain with organisation, riding gear, machinery and back up which included a medical helicopter for emergencies! Supplier configuration and communication of packaged motorcycle adventure experiences is explored in detail in Section 9.6.

7.3   Core-Values Exercise

Results from the core-values exercise table along with rich respondent interpretation enabled a number of dominant core-values/myths to be elicited which, the consumer respondents in the study believe, represent motorcycle subculture today. These values are contextualised, ultimately contributing to the central myths of *freedom* and *adventure* relative to motorcycle subculture.

Freedom

75. Kirstie
"... it's almost like... you can't fly, but you've got that feeling..."

Freedom was identified as both a residual and dominant code of motorcycling in the semiotic audit. All respondents in the core values exercise also identified it as a very important core value of motorcycling today. Freedom is perhaps the most significant myth which represents motorcycle subculture both past and present. As mentioned previously the motorcycle, as a symbol of freedom, not only provides freedom to its owners as a means of transport, but provides freedom for self-expression and identity development as well as a means of liberation from sources of confinement which are ever present in today's society. Society is dominated by symbols of confinement such as congested roads, offices, schedules, relationships and authority. Respondents clearly sided with motorcycling as freedom in the mythic *freedom versus constraint* battle:

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38. Tony

"… It's just, you feel as though… you've got the opportunity to do what you want, within reason… but there's definitely as sense of 'well ok, I'm not constrained by anything.'"

52. Rob

"It's one of the reasons why I got involved with it in the first place, because there's no phone, there's no radio, you don't have to sit in traffic. You can bug**r off for the weekend without planning exactly where you're going…"

For the motorcyclists in the study, if the motorcycle is a symbol of freedom, the car is clearly a symbol of its' mythic opposition, *constraint*. They used terms such as 'steel box' and 'cocoon' to describe the car:

116. John

"… you haven't got the constraints of being stuck in a box…"

203. Rob

"… I can't see the point in sitting in a steel box all day. I'd rather not bother spending that sort of money on a car thanks."

180. Maggie

"…(Speaking sarcastically) You think you're so safe sitting in your little cocoon."

This supports the work of Schouten and McAlexander (1995), who noted that motorcyclists in their study used terms such as 'cage' or 'coffin' to describe the car as a symbol of confinement. In this study, respondents generally spoke negatively about the car, inferring that it is a threat to freedom, and thus some sort of mythic enemy. Several of them noted the satisfaction that they feel when overtaking cars, effectively overcoming the mythic enemy:

84. Chris

"… the most satisfying thing about riding a bike is passing cars… Especially lines of traffic… passing the cars in traffic makes it all worthwhile… I just love it, I absolutely love it."

273. Helen

"Racing a car down the motorway knowing that you can still overtake him and beat him, that's satisfying (laughing)."

Not only did the respondents display their adversity to cars and what they represent, but they frequently noted their adversity to being trapped on congested roads and facing parking restrictions. The motorcycle thus provides them with the freedom to avoid these constraints:

65. Matt

"In my perception you're just not held back on the roads… even if there's plenty of traffic around there's nothing to hold you back, you can go as fast as you want, when you want, where you want…"

102. Bill

"… it's better riding than driving because you don't get stuck in traffic obviously, you know if you're going anywhere you're gonna get there in a certain time because you can avoid the traffic jams by overtaking vehicles, you don't get stuck behind things, so it is a sense of freedom that you don't get in a car."

116. John

"... If there's a gap and it's safe to go through, then you can go through… You don't get the restraints of parking on your bike…"

Respondents also noted that motorcycling provides them with freedom from the constraints and stresses of everyday responsibilities, particularly those of work, and personal relationships:

79. Adam

"… it is quite hard to describe but you can switch off from your everyday cares on a bike."

62. Tony

"… to be able to leave everything else behind and say 'well I'm gonna do my own thing and I'm not going to have to worry about, or think about work or, whatever else.' It's a sense of sort of leaving your baggage behind for an hour or a couple of hours and going and doing something for yourself…"

120. Katie

"… I mean, if I've had a sh*t day at work, the best thing in the world is not to go directly home on my bike, is to take the long route and it just gets it all out of my system."

Specifically, respondents mentioned the amount of mental focus and concentration needed to perform on the motorcycle frees them from the responsibilities mentioned above:

119. Sam

"I think it's because you get your head round what you're doing. You don't have to think about the wife and the kids and the mortgage and work… I think that's what the main thing is, because you do have to concentrate and take so much in, you're just not thinking about anything else."

24. Angela

"Because when you're on your bike, well for me anyway, when I'm on it and I'm riding, the only thing that I think about is my riding. I don't think about anything else… if you're going out on it just for fun then you're just completely focused on what you're doing and any worries or anything that you've got, it just goes, and that's what, part of what I love about it as well."

The law was noted as a constraining factor on their motorcycling freedom by a number of respondents. In particular they mentioned the presence of speed cameras

on the roads. The law was, in fact, not provided as a word on the list within the core values exercise but it did transpire from the data as a threat to respondents' freedom:

22. Angela

"Well it's just like, well you've just got. It's difficult to explain, you just go out there you know, in the open and there's nobody, well apart from speed cameras to bother you…"

65. Matt

"… you can go as fast as you want, when you want, where you want within reason, unless there's a GATSO there… and that's something they haven't got in Europe, GATSOs, oh it's fantastic, you know what I mean, they don't have cameras"

Freedom and Adventure

Within depth discussion of the concept of freedom, what a number of respondents actually described were several of the elements of *adventure*, previously defined by Ullman (1964), Ewert (1987), (1989), Ewert and Hollenhorst (1989). Closer analysis of the transcript data revealed that elements of adventure play a significant role in providing the respondents with the sense of freedom which they so much desire. For example, when describing freedom and the motorcycling experience, respondents described the importance of interaction with the natural environment, with being *at one with nature:*

104. Bill

"…it is a different feeling being out in the open, feeling the wind coming at you and experiencing, you know, more the elements really."

116. John

"… The actual feeling of the wind, for instance, the smell. Although you're more vulnerable, you're more close to nature…"

Jack and Helen described the *uncertainty* of the experience:

141. Helen

"... I suppose a good word for it would be vulnerability as well... We're going away in two weeks time. What we've got is the money in the pocket, the clothes in the bag behind us and that's it, nothing more"

142. Jack

"We've got nothing booked, that's freedom really isn't it"

144. Helen

"... that'll be an adventure"

Later, when discussing freedom, Jack and Helen went on to describe the *excitement* of the experience:

200. Jack

"... what's that chemical?"

201. Helen

"Endorphins... that's your favourite word"

202. Jack

"Yeah... that gives you a good kick, it's the endorphins..."

Chris described freedom and flow experience, that transcendental state of heightened emotions which Csikszentmihalyi (1990) noted is closely affiliated with adventure experience

56. Chris

"... it's the cliché, man and machine... on a bike you don't feel like you're part of the machine, the speed that you go... the sort of buzz that comes from it."

Adventure

Noted in Section 2.2.1 of the Literature Review, motorcycling, across the range of market sectors is essentially a high-risk, adventurous pursuit. Along with freedom, *adventure* is arguably one of the strongest myths that represents motorcyclist subcultural discourse of the past, present, and into the future; certainly manufacturers/service suppliers are increasingly creating products/services that signify a clear and apparent semiotic link between adventure and motorcycle ownership and experience – evident in the emergent adventure-sports sector. During the core-values exercise, respondents not only described elements of adventure in relation to motorcycle freedom, but they identified *adventurous, exciting, skill* and *spontaneous* as 'very important' core values of motorcycling today.

Excitement is a core motivator that drives the respondents' involvement in motorcycling experience:

117. Dan
"… that (excitement) and freedom is why people… I think that's the reason why you buy a bike. That's why you spend some mad money like four and a half up to seven or eight thousand pounds on a two-wheeled chain."

172. Rob
"You can't beat the feeling of doing a hundred and eighty mile an hour, because you won't get that buzz anywhere else.

280. Helen
"Well it's exciting isn't it… You know, much more exciting than sitting watching a movie on telly or, you know."

Respondents often used the word *adrenaline* when describing motorcycle excitement and adventure*:*

50. Angela

"(describing adventure) Something that gets your adrenaline flowing, and for me, riding a bike fast, it gets your adrenaline flowing."

104. Rob

… Ok, you must talk to a million people that go 'yeah I'm an adrenaline junkie, I got balls this big,' but at the end of they day, guys and girls do it for the same reasons, and it is an adventure."

When probed directly about why they ticked 'adventurous' as very important, several respondents described and noted the importance of several elements of adventure (as previously defined by Ullman, 1964; Ewert, 1987, 1989; Ewert and Hollenhorst, 1989). They mentioned the *novel* and *natural environment*:

188. Tom

"Going abroad, going to different countries… You know, it's just all, I think it's a big adventure. And then there's the other side of it where there's the off-road stuff. You know, you can go to places in Scotland and then travel around different places…"

159. Maggie

"… I think on a bike you perhaps go to places that you wouldn't normally go in a car… we used to go down gated roads through fields with cows and… it sounds silly but you wouldn't dream of, 'look there's a road there with a gate,' you wouldn't think, 'right lets point the Cavalier in that direction and go,' you just wouldn't."

During this discussion of adventure as a core value of motorcycling, respondents described the self-identity implications of involvement in this kind of adventure activity/subculture. Specifically they described how it 'releases' them to *do* something different, and to *be* somebody different, somehow unique and non-conforming to the cultural hegemony of wider society:

149. Adam

"… Almost anytime you're out on the bike it's adventurous, even when there's a queue of traffic, cars aren't moving, you feel like you're achieving something. You're doing something that other people can't do, because you're going by on a bike."

66. Tony

"… I like to see things that I don't necessarily see in an average day or on an average holiday, to be able to do something different that means I can actually… broaden my experience and do things that a lot of people maybe wouldn't get the chance to do…"

123. Dan

"… I think it's quite deep this but everybody wants something… everybody wants to do something different, you know, my desire is to go to the TT or to tour for a couple of weeks on my bike… it's verging on non-conformism, you know, I don't want to conform, I desire to be somebody different, I want to do my own thing…"

When describing the adventurous nature of motorcycling involvement, a number of respondents discussed the importance of *skills development*. For them, adventure experience, such a riding a bike, requires the development of specific skills, with the ultimate aim of *mastery* of the activity:

102. Rob

"You push yourself every time you go out. I think you try and become a better rider every time you go, and try and get a bit more from it…"

130. John

"You've got to be skilled to ride a bike properly, it's important… having skills is important, and it's not just being satisfied with passing your test, it's trying to improve it."

Through skills development and mastery respondents' achieve a state of optimal experience or, as described in Section 5.2, a state of 'flow', in which their skill level matches the level of the challenge involved. John noted a sense of oneness between

himself and his motorcycle as he experiences a merging of action and awareness associated with flow experience:

124. John

"... When I'm actually on the bike, because I feel like my bike and myself are together, whatever I want to do, my bike will do for me, you know, I don't have to sort of think about it, it's all one."

Involvement in this adventure subculture, and the associated opportunities for skills development offers respondents the opportunity for personal self-betterment, to construct a positive self-identity, and for self-affirmation that brings the actual self into congruence with the ideal self. Motorcycling provides them with a *challenge* which gives them the opportunity to do this:

158. Adam

"It's a challenge on my bike."

128. Katie

"... I think everybody I know that rides a bike wants to be a better rider. That just passes all boundaries that does, everybody wants to be a better rider, you know. And I think if you like stopped and asked the likes of Colin Edwards and all that, they wanna be better, course they do, they wanna win more, you know."

Detailed analysis of respondent self-identity implications of involvement in this kind of adventure experience is provided in detail in Section 8.3.1.

A number of respondents identified *spontaneous* as a very important core value of motorcycling; a value which notably constitutes an element of adventure:

164. Rob

"Phone rings, Sunday morning, half past six, 'coming for a ride?' 'yeah I'm up for it.'"

109. Dan

"Yeah spontaneous, it's just... 'I'm off, I'm going, I'm on my bike,' you know. The bike can sit in the garage for three weeks. I don't sit there and think 'oh right on Saturday the 5th I'm gonna go and do X, Y, Z'. I'll just get up in the morning and think 'I've not got a lot to do today, I'm off out,' and that's just, you know, spontaneous."

Adventure and Uncertainty

Respondents highlighted *danger* as a dominant myth of motorcycle activity. When probed about this they described how danger and risks, thus *uncertainty* provide the excitement and adrenaline buzz that not only attracts them to the experience, but makes it adventurous:

88. Katie

"I think the element of risk is part of the adventure thing, the element of risk, but you know, that doesn't put me off in the slightest..."

151. Kirstie

"There's an element of danger isn't there, you're more vulnerable on a motorbike just because on the road you're less visible for a start."

188. Tom

"And then there's the other side of it where there's the off-road stuff. You know, you can go to places in Scotland and then travel around different places and that's quite adventurous... you turn up on a track, you've never been to it before, you don't know where you're gonna end up, you don't know what you're gonna encounter, that's adventure don't you think?"

Sam described how the uncertainty of motorcycling experience makes it adventurous. He illustrated this by narrating a humorous story of a recent experience where his motorcycle broke down. Picking up the story part way through, he stated:

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297. Sam

"… I set off home, going through the middle of nowhere, and the bike broke down, and it broke down again, and it broke down again. I checked all my spark plugs, checked this, checked that. Managed to get to a shop eventually… and he took my bike to pieces. I hadn't got a penny on me, it was absolutely red hot, I'd got all my leathers on, I were wet through, I was upset, I was angry with the bike… Eventually, I mean my bike were in bits, and then he turned round and said 'Oh I can see what's going on here,' 'what?' and I'd got a toilet roll underneath my seat from the Farmyard do (bike meet), and it had unravelled and it had got sucked into the air filter and it had filled all the air filter box up (laughing)…"

Interestingly, respondents not only identified danger as a very important value/myth of motorcycling, but they also identified its binary opposition *safety* as very important. Related to this, they also identified both *life* and its binary opposition *death* as very important. Section 7.2.2 of the semiotic audit, focusing on the communication code of *racing and speed,* pinpointed that *death* may form a dominant myth of motorcycling, although it was not directly recognised from the discourse analysed. Perhaps the strongest basic human instinct, and the core myth for human existence/survival is to stay *alive* and to stay *safe*, and this is reflected in comments made by respondents when questioned further about their choices:

39. Anna

"That's very important because you only get one chance…"

191. Rob

"Very important, you've only got one."

176. John

"Yeah as I say that is important, because if you're not alive you can't enjoy it (motorcycling)."

Their notable value for life is, perhaps, a surprising result when one considers that motorcycling is a high–risk adventure activity. One would consider; why are they motivated to partake in such a high-risk activity if it puts their lives' at risk? The

respondents were aware of their own mortality, and when probed about the concept of *life* some of them immediately related it to its mythic opposition, *death*:

94. Chris

"I think if you've said death's very important you've got to say life's important"

96. Chris

"It's two things that go so well together and you can't have one without the other… It's pointless experiencing one if the other ones' not there."

64. Rob

"It (death) sits on your pillion, because you never know, you really never know."

However, whereas nineteen respondents rated life as a very important core value of motorcycling, only ten identified death, illustrating that life is more important to them than death. Although they are aware of death and of their own mortality, it is their strong passion for the experience, its subcultural lifestyle, and the strength of its associated self-identity implications, which drives them to be involved in this risky activity:

72. Rob

"… it's not a crime to die doing what you love is it."

191. Adam

"… that element of risk is an accepted part of riding a bike."

88. Katie

"I think the element of risk is part of the adventure thing, coming back to the adventure isn't it, the element of risk, but you know, it doesn't put me off in the slightest… If I die tomorrow, it's not as if I'd die unhappy, I mean yeah it's dying young isn't it but I wouldn't be unhappy, you know."

Illustrating this point, Matt and Steven narrated a story about a fatality that closely affected them. Although it did affect their riding behaviour for a while after the

accident and they remain aware of it, it did not stop them from pursuing the activity, and after a time they readopted their normal riding behaviour:

76. Matt

"We went on a ride out from here (retail outlet), and within ten minutes of leaving here, one of our lads got killed in an accident…"

79. Matt

"… I actually organised the ride out, and I was actually leading it, and he'd literally just overtook me by five seconds, went round the corner and paid the ultimate price… I think it's gonna affect anybody isn't it. You know, to actually see him there and try and help him…"

They continued:

84. Steven
"It slowed you down, it slowed everybody down"

87. Matt
Mine (wife) did come on, but when the rest of the pack went off, we just dropped back, you know, cause it's always in the back of your mind. So yeah, but we've got past that stage now, we're back up. It's still always there."

Like other respondents in the study, it became evident in their interview that Matt and Steven are very passionate about motorcycling experience and their involvement within this subculture forms a central part of their self-identity construction. The risks involved are an accepted part of involvement in this adventure experience, and for them it is worthwhile. One respondent, John, was interviewed just three weeks after having a serious motorcycle accident in which he sustained serious breaks to his hip, leg and arm. He spoke determinedly about how he will return to motorcycling as soon as he is able and he normalised this risks involved in the following narrative:

90. John

"It reminds you of how fragile life is… One of the things I noticed in hospital… how many people have had quite serious breaks from doing day to day things."

92. John

"… There was one chap taking his dog for a walk, slipped on a cow pat, broke his leg (laughing)"

94. John

"He said, 'who'd have thought that?' There was another lad got two breaks in his leg from playing football, and he's gonna be off work the same length of time as I am, and yet I had a bike accident."

Analysis of respondent narratives revealed that the subject of a significant number of stories told in the interviews was accidents and the overcoming of adversity in risky, or near-miss situations. Evidenced in further detail in Section 8.3.3, respondents use stories/epiphanies as a means of supporting and signifying a desired 'authentic' 'motorcyclist' self-identity. Comparing scars from previous motorcycle accidents appears to be a normal ritual in social motorcycle circles, and the associated tales become exaggerated as each member strives for social acceptance and admiration of his peers.

Ultimately, the respondents do value life and they are aware of their own mortality. They are motivated, and very passionate about involvement in this high-risk adventure lifestyle. A key factor which gives them confidence for involvement is their perception of safety. The binary mythic opposition of *danger*, they rated *safety* as a core-value of motorcycling and when questioned about it, discussed it in relation to the core-values of life and death:

193. Rob

"Be safe with what you do and you can carry on living the life you lead"

102. John

"… if I feel that I'm going a bit silly I think that I can kill myself, so that puts me down to being sensible. As I say I can ride really quick if I want to, but I don't because I value life."

32. Angela

"It's important not to die… So you know, important to just be careful, watch what you're doing, don't fall off… I think I'm quite safe and I think probably my fear of not wanting to hurt myself or anything like that could have an influence there."

The respondents are aware of the risks and danger involved in motorcycling but perceived self-confidence in their ability to perform, and the amount of skill required to do so effectively lowers these risks. Brian noted that he actually feels safer on a motorcycle than he does in a car:

248. Brian

"… I still feel safer on the motorbike than I do in a car."

250. Brian

"You have to think more, look over your shoulder more, be more aware of your position on the road, think of other drivers… you can't just sit there…"

253. Brian

"Yeah, it does give you a greater perception of life and safety."

Also when probed about the issue of safety, respondents repeatedly described the importance of 'protection' gained from wearing appropriate, functional clothing and equipment for this kind of adventure performance:

192. Brian

"I mean if you think about it you cover yourself in armour, and you put your helmet on. Remember what you're doing isn't kind of that safe really"

222. Maggie

"For me it's safety, knowing that I've got the right gear on, in case I come off."

294. Bill

"... Safety plays a big role in what you buy because that's what you are wearing it for, to keep you safe if anything does happen."

John had very strong opinions about this issue, and noted:

130. John

"... according to what the government's said, for every second you're travelling along the tarmac at thirty mile an hour (without protective clothing) you will loose an inch of bone and flesh."

The functional role of motorcycle related clothing and equipment products for providing *'safe – adventure'* for self-confident engagement in high-risk motorcycling activity that allows one to push the performance envelopes of himself and his motorcycle is considered in detail in Section 8.3.4.

Motorcyclist Identity

The core-values exercise revealed a number of values that respondents rated as 'very important' that relate specifically to the motorcyclist psyche; to their construction of 'motorcyclist' self-identity and to the desired achievement of personal aspirations, satisfaction and self-esteem that contributes to the self-ideal. Namely, these factors are: *pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, confidence* and *desire*.

Self-Fulfilment

Pleasure, happiness and *satisfaction* are all factors that contribute to one's ultimate sense of *self-fulfilment* and as such they have been grouped together under this title. Motorcycling plays an important role for respondents in their quest for the self-ideal that humanity is so much searching for:

129. Matt

"Bikes just give you core pleasure, you know what I mean…"

124. John

"…And when you're out on that (the motorcycle) and you've just managed to get a nice bend and you just took it right, and you've got that sort of sense of going round the corner quick, that feeling, you get a great deal of pleasure and happiness from riding, and it's just the whole feel about it."

Respondents were probed to provide more detail about what specifically gives them satisfaction from their involvement in motorcycle ownership and experience. Some mentioned the enjoyment of the experience:

124. Katie

"… again the pleasure thing, the satisfaction I get from riding it and just, you know, the enjoyment factor."

278. Rob

"Every time you go out you come back with a smile."

Others mentioned that satisfaction is gained through mastery of the riding skill:

126. Katie

"I suppose just having, I think there's a lot of personal achievement in it if you feel that you've had a good day and you've ridden the bike well and you've got a sense of personal achievement from it"

164. John

"… for me it's going on a nice twisty road. Getting all the corners set up right and taking them well… It's being able to take a series of bends, and get the corners correct, that gives you quite good thrills. And if you get it wrong you think 'rats' (laughing)."

Self-Confidence/Esteem

A number of respondents noted the importance of *confidence*, rating it as a very important core-value of motorcycling. Specifically, they discussed confidence in relation to the self, and the positive conception of the self that motorcycling provides them with. On this subject, Rob noted how the ownership of a motorcycle boosts his self-confidence, and how he gains confidence from the fact that he does not have to rely on a car, perceived as a symbol of constraint, in his life:

201. Rob

"… It makes me feel more confident as a person, to be honest, knowing I don't have to have a car…"

Respondents also discussed the importance of having self-confidence in their own, and their motorcycle's performance capabilities to facilitate *'safe – adventure'* performance:

94. Tom

"It's important to be confident in what you do on a bike. It's when you begin to be indecisive, that's when you make mistakes and have accidents, I find anyway…"

180. John

"You've got to be confident in your own riding… confidence is important, confidence, not just in yourself, but obviously in the bike itself, that it can do that, and not getting over confident."

76. Tony

"Confident's important because… It's a question of balance here I suppose but you can say 'well I know that I'm going to do whatever it is I've set out to do and I can, I know that I'm confident that' I'll be able to make this bend' or whatever else, are important."

Respondents identified the potential negative consequences of over-confidence in one's ability to perform, which could lead to excessively risky situations and

adventure breakdown, including accidents and fatalities. They recognised that this is common amongst newly qualified novice motorcyclists who often purchase very powerful motorcycles:

102. Matt

"...most of these machines now, even the small ones do a hundred and fifty miles an hour, you know, and if you was to put a complete novice on something like that, he'd just hop up the road and be dead within minutes."

Rob identified the negative popular cultural media portrayal that is created by inexperienced, unskilled motorcyclists riding powerful bikes:

106. Rob

"Some of these guys that ride these bigger bikes especially, they haven't got a clue what they're riding. It's gives the creation of a lot of very bad press. They ride the big bikes and they've got no idea or should have no reason to be riding them."

The semiotic audit clearly identified how popular cultural newspaper media is courting with the concept of *safety* issues surrounding the modern phenomenon of the born-again middle aged biker to indulge in the *freedom versus constraint* battle, that reasserts old-fashioned, residual connotations of motorcycling with *dangerous, outlaw* imagery.

Desire

When probed about why they rated *desire* as a very important core-value of motorcycling, respondents passionately described both desire for the motorcycle itself, and desire in terms of the sensual and emotional aspect of the riding experience. The strength of the relationship that forms between a motorcyclist and his/her motorcycle, which was highlighted in the magazine analysis of the semiotic audit (Section 7.2.3), was also reflected by respondents here. They reported investing much psychic energy into purchasing, maintaining and personalising their motorcycles. John compared the desire for a motorcycle with that of a piece of jewellery:

178. John

"... Again it's down to this passion, some people buy a bike purely on the way it looks. They've probably never ridden it, but they love the look of that bike, it's that desire, 'yes I must have that,' like a piece of jewellery... you know, you must have it, at all cost. And there is that sort of thing with bikes, there is a lot of emotions involved with it..."

What John described here is the kind of 'embodied passion' that consumers hold for certain consumption objects, as identified in Belk et al's pioneering (2003) work on consumer desire. Respondents in the study reported intense feelings of desire for the motorcycle, due to the intense, emotional 'otherworldly' experience that it provides them. Describing his motorcycle and the associated experience, Adam stated:

252. Adam

"It's very very sensual"

254. Adam

"You know what you like about the machine and you love the feelings it gives you."

Akin to Belk et al's (2003) sense of 'otherness', the motorcycle fulfils respondent desire to escape the everyday, for highly emotional, transcendental, adventure experience that releases them from the profane present. Jack's desire and 'embodied passion' for his motorcycle and his riding experience is so strong that if there is a problem with his motorcycle, or he cannot ride for one day, for whatever reason, it directly impacts his mood and his personality. Jack and Helen described this:

188. Helen

"He gets miserable if he's not been on the bike for a day, he gets really uptight and grumpy."

189. Jack

"I mean when the bike was off the road, there was something wrong with the bike... (shaking his head)"

190. Helen

" It doesn't matter what you do, you can't appease him till he gets that bike back on the road. And he'll come home from work and he's absolutely pooped, and he'll say 'I'm just going for a blast,' and he'll come back fine."

The passionate relationship between motorcyclist and motorcycle is discussed in more detail in Section 8.3.4.

7.4   Chapter Summary

Through employment of the semiotic audit, it has been possible to gain depth insight into the historic movement of cultural meaning relative to the UK adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption. Through analysis of a wide range of subcultural, and wider popular cultural material, it was possible to unlock a number of key communication codes/myths that drive the construction, signification and movement of meaning within this subculture, and to contextualise these codes/myths relative to wider popular culture.

It became evident that British motorcycle subculture is enrobed with a particularly rich cultural heritage. Residual communication codes/myths are driven from the post Second World War period, when during this 'Golden Age,' motorcyclist groups were portrayed by the media, and perceived by wider society as outlaw rebels, dangerous, bad-boy folk-devils, and a threat to the dominant cultural hegemony of the time. Motorcycles became symbolic of speed, rebellion and youthful aggression. The powerful role of the popular cultural media of the time (books, films, television programmes, newspaper and magazine articles) in generating sensational discourse surrounding the motorcyclist gangs was highlighted; particularly, its role in attracting youth on a national and international level, to the subcultural cause. Iconic biker films 'The Wild One' and 'Easy Rider' epitomised biker groups as archetypal outlaw rebels with an overarching quest for freedom from the fetters put on them by the 'conformist' society of the time.

Outlaw motorcycle subcultural groups such as the Hell's Angels, Ton-Up Boys and the Mods and Rockers were bonded by common ideologies prescribed to by their members through shared codes of looking, language and behaviour. Elements of these biker 'codes' ultimately cascaded into, and influenced wider popular culture; for example, in leather biker high-street fashion, blue-jeans and popular Rock 'n' Roll music.

A number of key myths/communication codes were identified that not only represent residual subcultural meaning of the past, but which remain dominant and highly significant today. Namely, these are: freedom, communitas/brotherhood, scantily clad women, the black leather jacket, motorcyclist heroes and racing and speed – myths of the motorcycle racer. The quest for freedom to escape the constraints of society, of congested roads, of offices, schedules, relationships and authority was identified as one of the most significant myths that drives motorcyclist involvement in their activity. Motorcycling is essentially a lonesome pursuit, but one cannot dismiss the significance of subcultural involvement for the development of communitas/brotherhood, that provides motorcyclists with a vehicle for the construction of meaning in their lives, and for the construction of the 'motorcyclist' self-identity.

The significance of manufacturer/marketer action in driving the 'Modern Era' of motorcycling was identified. The mass-production of sports motorcycles followed by heavy investment in professional racing team/rider sponsorship for the World Superbikes Championships, essentially road going machines used on the racetrack, along with worldwide media coverage, had a phenomenal impact on the sales of supersports motorcycle related products. A new breed of celebrity racing heroes was born, and the code of 'racing and speed' had become a central dominant myth of British motorcycle subculture. Today supersports products essentially 'commodify' the racetrack experience and allow their owners to emulate their racing heroes.

Analysis revealed that motorcycle subculture today is represented by dominant codes of diversity and positive public attitudes to motorcycling. Manufacturers are increasingly attempting to produce 'something for everyone' and this is reflected by fragmentation of the motorcycle market. A wide range of market sectors exist, each

representing a unique range of subcultural ideological idiosyncrasies. Manufacturers and the MCIA are actively engaged in effecting the popular cultural change towards positive public attitudes and motorcycling. Analysis of motorcycle/motorcyclist appearance in popular film discourse, and celebrity/opinion leader ownership of motorcycles reflected these positive wider cultural changes. Only popular newspaper media appears to be intent to court with residual outlaw, biker discourse, ironically siding with constraint in the mythic 'freedom versus constraint' battle.

A number of emergent communication codes were identified that are likely to influence the construction/signification of motorcycle subcultural meaning of the future. Namely, they focus on manufacturer/consumer response to the modern technological age, to increasing political concern for congestion constraints as well as political/social concern for the environment and 'green' issues. With an increasing 'greying' British population and a resurgence of interest in unfaired, 'muscle' style motorcycles, the growth trend in the cruiser and naked style market sectors looks set to continue. Significantly, as consumers search for adventure quests as a means to escape the constraints of modern life, and as motorcyclists search for an alternative means to adventure than purely seeking speed on asphalt roads, the adventure-sports market sector looks set to continue to increase its explosive market growth, becoming a leading market player. As manufacturers and service suppliers increasingly 'commodify' adventure through their products and experience packages, myths of freedom, travel, off-road style adventure and fantasy adventure lifestyles are likely to dominate motorcycle subculture of the future.

The core-values exercise, based on semiotic principles, enabled a detailed consumer respondent perspective to be gained of the core values/myths that represent motorcycle subculture today. Analysis revealed a number of elements which, respondents perceive, ultimately contribute to freedom and adventure of motorcycle subcultural involvement and experience. An interesting insight was gained into respondent constructs of freedom, and the role of adventure within this, as well as the mythic oppositions 'safety versus danger', and 'life versus death', prevalent in discussion of uncertainty and the adventure experience.

Findings from the semiotic techniques employed in this chapter revealed interesting data regarding the motorcyclist consumer psyche, specifically the construction and signification of authentic 'motorcyclist' identity, and 'aspirational' involvement in motorcycle subculture and experience for the achievement of the desired self-ideal. Motorcycle magazine analysis revealed discourse of authentic motorcyclist lifestyle that outlines codes of 'behaviour', 'language' and 'looking' consistent with dominant subcultural ideology, that can be bought into, shared and used for the construction of authentic self-identity by motorcyclist consumers.

Figure 7.36 provides a summary, outlining the key communication codes/myths identified that drive the construction, signification and movement of meaning relative to the adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption.

.

Figure 7.36: Signification and the Adventure Subculture of Motorcycling consumption

Red Text = Communication Codes/Myths

Residual Communication Codes

'The Golden Age' – 1940s, 50s and 60s
Era of 'blood and thunder biking'

OUTLAW REBELS
FREEDOM
COMMUNITAS/BROTHERHOOD
CULTURAL HERITAGE

Motorcyclists: Iconic **outlaws, dangerous, bad-boy rebels, folk devils/heroes**

Motorcycles: Symbolic of **freedom, speed, rebellion** and **youthful aggression**

Hell's Angels (USA), Ton-Up Boys, Mods and Rockers (UK), Hippie influence (USA and UK)

Motorcycle/Dress codes:
Hell's Angels - Chopped Harley Davidsons, the 'colours' - sleeveless leather/denim jackets with winged and helmeted skull symbol on the back, long hair, beards, tattoos

Ton-Up Boys, Rockers - BSA, Triumph Bonnevilles, Norton Dominators, blue jeans and black leather jackets

The Mods – Italian scooters, Vespas, Lambrettas, army surplus parka coats covering best weekend suits

Behaviour Codes ('Biker' Lifestyle):
Group riding, 'hanging out' (**communitas**), drinking light ale, speedy café racing, skirmishing with other motorcycle groups and societal conformists
Later courting the hippie scene – dope smoking, psychedelic drugs, slower riding speed, feet up, laid back. Language of choppers, hogs, wheels, chicks, rumbles and stompings!

Iconic Venues:
UK Biker cafes – The Ace, The Salt Box, Johnsons, The Nightingale

Symbolic Music:
Rock 'n' Roll, Steppenwolf's 'Born to be Wild', later Country Joe

Iconic Movies and Movie Stars:
The Wild One (1953) – Marlon Brando
Easy Rider (1969) – Peter Fonda

Popular Cultural Media Representation:
Motorcyclist groups as 'archetypal' **outlaw rebels**, a threat to dominant ideology of civilised society, 'wild men on machines'
Hollister riots, the chicken run, May Bank Holiday events – Margate

Subcultural codes cascading into wider popular culture = leather biker fashion, blue jeans, Rock 'n' Roll music

Residual and Dominant Communication Codes

(Codes remaining highly significant to the present day)

FREEDOM
Escape the **constraints** and conformity of everyday life and responsibilities
For construction of 'unique' self-identity, with meaningful self-direction
Motorcycle and motorcyclist signify **freedom**
Freedom and elements of **adventure** (**natural environment, uncertainty, excitement, flow**)

COMMUNITAS/BROTHERHOOD
Shared ideology - Chapters, brothers, clubs, groups, affiliations
Authentic role identity and acquisition
Narrative exchange and story telling
Shared group riding experience
The 'nod' - significant symbolic gesture of shared motorcyclist subcultural ideology

SCANTILY CLAD WOMEN
Signify motorcycle 'sex' appeal
Male/female mythic binary oppositions
Appearance in the media – motorcycle magazines and movies

BLACK LEATHER JACKET
Highly significant symbol of motorcyclist attitudes, values and ideology, past and present

MOTORCYCLIST HEROES
Leaders of 'outlaw' gangs
Movie **heroes** – Marlon Brando, Peter Fonda
Racetrack heroes – including Kevin Schwantz, Valentino Rossi, Carl Fogarty

RACING AND SPEED – MYTHS OF THE MOTORCYCLE RACER
Historic significance of motorcycle racing – ie. Iconic Isle of Man Tourist Trophy
Manufacturer/Marketer Action and The Modern Era:
Sponsorship, worldwide media coverage and the World Superbikes Championships
'Commodifying' the racetrack experience
Products/brands steeped in discourse of racetrack **racing and speed** and **heroic adventure racing performance**
The rise of the Bambi: Middle aged, forty something thrill seekers desiring **freedom, adventure** and a renewed youthful sense of self-identity
Bambi motorcycle/dress/behaviour codes: supersports race-replica motorcycle, one-piece colourful racing leathers with race-replica kit, speedy seasonal riding in rural countryside

ADVENTURE
Central myth of motorcycle experience (elements include – **novel, natural environment, excitement, adrenaline, skills** and **mastery, flow, spontaneity**)
Adventure and **uncertainty – danger v safety, life v death**
Motorcycle related **adventure** offers release for personal, meaningful self-identity development

Dominant Communication Codes

'The Modern Era' – 1970s - today

POSITIVE PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Increasingly positive popular cultural attitudes to motorcycling in UK
MCIA influence in effecting cultural change - positive events, campaigns and media discourse
Positive cultural shift reflected in celebrity ownership of motorcycles and popular film discourse – motorcyclists cast as **hero/heroine** of the piece

DIVERSITY
Manufacturers today producing 'something for everyone.' – fragmentation of UK motorcycle market
Wide range of market sectors, each representing subcultural ideological idiosyncrasies, i.e.:
Racing and Speed: Supersport motorcycle subculture
Nostalgia and Heritage: Greying motorcyclists interested in recapturing residual codes of their youth
Iconic motorcycles: Triumph Rocket 111, Harley Davidson FLSTCI Heritage Softail – nostalgia-tech blend of looks and performance
Scoots for Fashionable Youths: A recent scooter revival as a means of transport, mobility and congestion avoidance in urban areas. Affordable, cool fashion item for teenagers

Iconic Venues:
Biker cafes (Including reopening of The Ace) and pubs (pub meets) provide centres for **communitas** development
Retail outlets: Increasingly significant centres for **communitas** development. Homes of motorcyclist clubs, providing physical facilities (seating areas, coffee machines) and authentic/expert motorcyclist staff (role-models and opinion leaders) for 'authentic' role contamination

FREEDOM VERSUS CONSTRAINT
Freedom = motorcyclists, motorcycle bodies
Constraint = lawmakers, law enforcers, newspaper media ('obsession' with **safety**)
Mediator = Bikesafe
Popular Cultural Newspaper Media Representation:
Journalist obsession with residual **outlaw, bad boy** mythology. Sensationalist stories about the Bambi - employing 'warlike' language

MOTORCYCLIST SELF-IDENTITY
Magazines provide discourse of authentic motorcyclist lifestyle – outline codes of behaviour, language and looking for motorcyclist self-construction and subcultural role-development and authentication
Motorcycling and construction/achievement of the self-ideal

Emergent Communication Codes

TECHNOLOGICAL AGE
Manufacturer/consumer response to modern 'technological age'
Technological advances in the automotive industry reflected in intrinsic and extrinsic motorcycle, clothing and equipment design

HERITAGE AND NOSTALGIA
Increasing greying population = market increase in custom, naked/retro motorcycles
Increasing 'fashion' of naked style machines

CONGESTION CONSTRAINTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN
Predicted increase in scooter usage in urban areas as a means of avoiding congestion, congestion charging and concern for the environment

ADVENTURE-SPORTS MOTORCYCLING
Adventure-sports - fastest growing market sector
Further predicted market growth – becoming a dominant market player
Reflecting popular cultural trend towards high-risk **adventure** pursuits to escape **constraints** of modern life
For motorcyclists, an alternative means to **adventure** than purely seeking **speed** on asphalt roads
Manufacturers/suppliers 'commodifying' **adventure** – signifying a clear and apparent semiotic link between **adventure** and motorcycle ownership/experience
Intrinsic/extrinsic brand design built on codes of **freedom, travel, off-road style adventure** and **fantasy adventure lifestyles.**

Chapter 8

**The Motorcyclist Consumer Psyche:
Constructs of Self-Identity**

The Motorcyclist Consumer Psyche: Constructs of Self-Identity

8.1   Introduction

This chapter provides depth exploration of the motorcyclist consumer psyche, specifically focusing on consumer relationships with, and use of signifying props, spaces, and stories for the construction and signification of meaningful subcultural self-identity. 'Motorcyclist identity' was touched upon in the previous chapter, where the importance of 'aspirational' subcultural involvement for the achievement of desired-self was highlighted, as well as the role of magazines in providing a blueprint of codes of subcultural ideology. Motorcyclists, and their consumption behaviour, form the backbone of this meaningful consumption subculture, and an understanding of the consumer psyche, including the use of constellations of props, signifying spaces and stories to construct and support the 'motorcyclist' self-identity is paramount.

The chapter begins with results and discussion from the self-assembly collage exercise. Noted in the Methodology, this pioneering technique is based on the semiotic premise that analysis of stage settings and props provides codes from which it becomes possible to explore the human quest for meaning. The outcome of the self-assembly collage is eight scenes which, for the respondents in the study represent codes of current day motorcyclist identity. At a denotative level, respondents built up the scenes by placing what they believe to be relevant images, from those available, on each scene; in effect, from the paradigmatic options available to them, they built syntagms, and thus codes of motorcyclist identity. Respondent descriptions and narrative provide a discourse relative to each scene, and this along with depth discussion allows layers of meaningful motorcyclist subcultural identity to be identified and explored.

The chapter continues with analysis from depth consumer interviewing that focuses, at a very personal level, on respondents' perceptions of, and constructs of the 'motorcyclist' self. Specifically, key themes are drawn from their narrations regarding perceived motorcyclist role-identity and image, and their use of, and

relationship with motorcycle related props for subcultural engagement and to support the construction and signification of 'authentic' motorcyclist self-identity. Results of the narrative picturing technique provide an interesting insight into the key 'fantasy' myths that drive respondents' perception of the ideal, semiotic motorcyclist self. Also, analysis of stories spontaneously told during consumer interviews reveals a number of key events/epiphanies that motorcyclists use to support and signify their motorcyclist self-identity. This exercise highlights the value of stories as a communication tool for signification of 'authentic' self-identity.

8.2   Self-Assembly Collage

8.2.1 Scene One: Track Day

Respondents clearly identified scene one (illustrated in Figure 8.1*)* to be a racetrack*,* most of them claiming that this is a track day event:

Figure 8.1: Scene One

422. Jack

"Track day, it's obviously a racing track, Donnington Park…"

270. Rob

"It's a racetrack, so you would be doing track days, or a track day."

129. Dan

"Eh, track day, it says track day to me."

Track days are organised events in which motorcyclists are given the opportunity to take their motorcycles on the race track and drive to their performance limits with the presence of expert instructors to provide advice in developing their riding skills. Interesting that respondents perceived this to be a track day rather than a professional racing event, which is the primary purpose of the racetrack. Track days involve a high level of active participation and riding performance skill on behalf of the attendants.

From the paradigmatic options available to them, respondents built up a syntagm of products on this scene (illustrated in Figure 8.2), which clearly reflects the code of *racing and speed.* This syntagm includes the race replica supersports motorcycle with an added racing exhaust, one-piece leather racing suit, race-replica helmet, boots and gloves, knee-sliders and a copy of Performance Bikes Magazine.

At a denotative level, respondents were asked to describe the choices that they had made:

152. Bill

"… You'll find at racetracks most people arrive on sports bikes which is why I've put that on. Then they'll have full replica leathers, with knee-sliders, racing boots, racing type helmet… probably covered in logos of some sort, race can. He'll probably read high performance bike magazines… have some gloves to match as well."

Figure 8.2: Track Day - Product Code
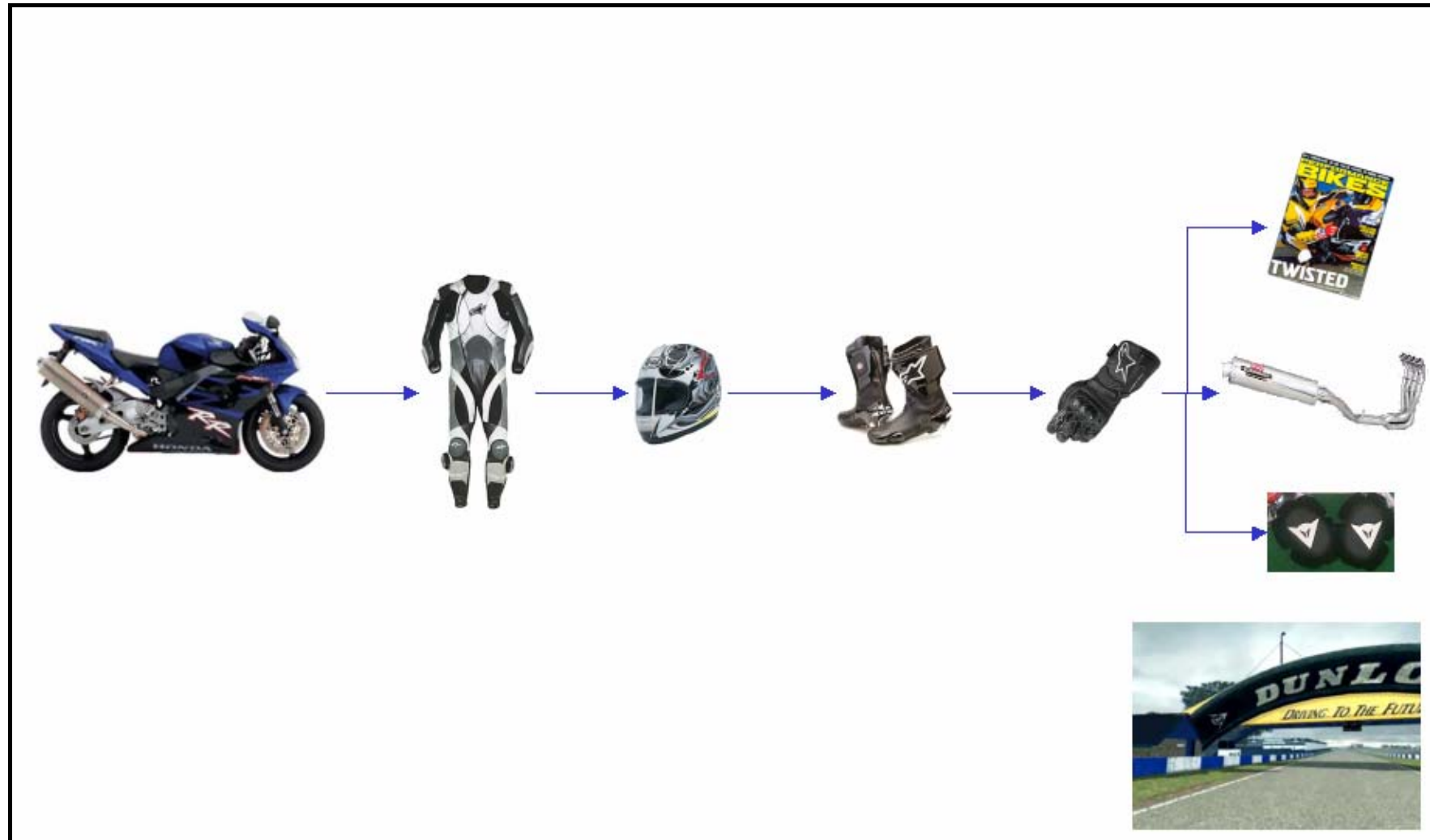
319. Tom

"He's got a good bike, which that is. He'll have all the kit because you have to, otherwise you can't do it. You find most people that are quite serious about track days have an Arai (helmet) or something like that. Usually they're (the bike) sooped up, they're very rarely standard, that's why the exhaust's on there. Again the boots are really good, knee sliders obviously, and most of them read Performance Bikes magazine."

Respondents were probed at a deeper, connotative level, to describe the identity and aspirations of the character they had built on the scene. Thus they interpreted the discourse which their combination of props and setting signifies. This depth probing allowed rich data to be elicited and a number of common themes were drawn from the data.

Respondents clearly noted that track day participants cannot easily be categorised by demographic factors such as age or profession, but disposable income is likely to be an influential factor as motorcycle, clothing, kit, insurance and track day costs can be quite substantial:

154. Bill

"… There's a wide range. You would expect to see people mainly, I would have thought, in their twenties and thirties but in reality you see people right up to their sixties don't you. And in lots of cases they're the only people that can afford the insurance on the big bikes… there's a lot of people in their forties, fifties and sixties that ride big powerful sports bikes and they've got all the gear to match…"

191. John

"… Could be anybody from being a twenty year old up to somebody who's a bit older… you've got all sorts of variety of ages, again there's no stereotype…"

278. Rob

"I don't think you can (categorise by profession), you can't do that really. It's because anybody from plumbers through to, I don't know, politicians do them, so no, I don't think you can."

133. Dan

"… A wide variety of people I think. People like myself that sit in an office all day, or somebody that sits on a forklift, anybody. Anybody that can afford it I should imagine."

Respondents believe that a key driver in track day participants' involvement in the experience, and forming a central part of their identity development is a quest for a number of elements of *adventure* (previously defined by Ullman, 1964; Ewert, 1987, 1989; Ewert and Hollenhorst, 1989). They grouped the participants according to their reasons for participation and aspirations for the activity rather than merely demographic factors. Adventure elements particularly recognised include a desire for skills development, a need to take risks which involves taking both themselves and their bikes to 'the limit', a desire for speed, adrenaline and excitement as well as a desire for freedom from a number of constraints which they normally encounter on the roads.

Skills development and associated mastery is gained from the deliberate confrontation of danger such as that provided on the racetrack. On the desire for *skills development,* respondents noted:

193 John

"…the vast majority are there to try and improve their riding skills."

357. Matt

"… if I was doing it, to improve my riding skills, because I've never done one… and I know guys that have and they said it makes them a lot safer on the road. When it comes to cornering and stuff like that…"

They noted that the improvement of riding skills involves pushing the boundaries of one's own performance skill level as well as those of the performance capability of the bike to their limit. Taking it to 'the edge' in this way is a concept common to adventurers, as noted by Lyng (1990). A number of respondents discussed this:

362. Steven

"To scare yourself I would say, you're gonna push yourself to the limit till you're scared and then back off."

370. Steven

"And each time, push it that bit further, I mean you know your limit."

141. Dan

"... I'd like to be able, if I took my bike, I'd just like to be able to ride it to its limits and push it to its limit..."

Rob noted the self-identity implications of pushing the performance limits of one's motorcycle on the racetrack:

272. Rob

"It would be someone that wants to take the bike to the limit, and enjoy a bit of Godness for a day."

Pushing the performance limits enables the actor to activate a phase of role transition in which personal rites of intensification occur. The outcome of this is the achievement of a sense of 'ideal self', or in Rob's words, a sense of *"Godness."*

As *excitement* and *adrenaline* are key elements of adventure experience, respondents noted the central importance of these factors in track day participants' motives for engagement in the experience:

88. Angela

"(They do track days) Because of the excitement of being able to ride your bike fast..."

273. Sam

"(They do it) Because they get a serious buzz out of it."

325. Adam

"The thrill of the speed, to see if they can push themselves a little bit further than last time, possibly to compete with their friends."

Respondents noted the core myth of *freedom* that is so central to motorcyclist values. They recognised that track day participants are free from sources of constraint that they normally encounter on the roads such as traffic, police legal enforcement, and roadside 'furniture' such as buildings and trees:

275. Sam

"… you know there's not a car coming the other way, you know what I mean, so you can go round a corner, you can use all the road, use all the corner as you would if you could, if you could see and you knew there wasn't a car coming round the corner."

321. Tom

"… you're on a track, you've got no police, no cars to worry about and you can learn to be a fast road rider in relative safety…"

By their very nature, motorcycle track day events are high-risk and adventurous, and motorcyclists expect to achieve successful adventure outcomes from participation. The importance of racetrack design, and the role of the track day supplier in configuring and controlling track day packages to facilitate safe and successful adventure outcomes should be highlighted. The man made track is designed with many *safety* issues taken into consideration; including physical elements such as road design, gravel traps, bales, tyre walls, crash barriers, control tower, signal flags and lighting signals. Track day suppliers put in place a human support structure that aims to provide '*safe – adventure'* outcomes. This includes well-experienced instructors and organisers, flag marshals, safety car drivers and medical staff working in both ambulances and the medical centre. Figure 8.3 illustrates some of these factors, with photographic evidence taken during track day observations. Further analysis of supplier configuration and communication of the motorcycle track day package is provided in Section 9.6.1.

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Figure 8.3: Safety, Control and the Track Day Package

For the respondents in the study, it is the controlled safety elements that they believe offer track day participants freedom and confidence to take risks and push their performance limits further than they would on public roads:

88. Angela

"... It's a lot safer on the track. You've got no oncoming traffic, if you fall off you've got like gravel traps and things to fall off into, so it's a safer environment for riding fast."

139. Dan

"... I think it's the only place you can go and truly test yourself, knowing you've got a little bit of back up there, should anything go wrong. Em... test yourself and your bike. Should anything go wrong at least you'd hopefully have some help there, rather than lying in a ditch for a couple of hours."

A central theme that became evident from the code built in scene one relates to motorcyclist construction of 'authentic' identity image. Respondents identified that owners who choose to regale themselves in this particular combination of props, and who are involved in track day events are likely to be quite highly image conscious. Ownership and symbolic display of constellations of fashionable, authentic props

plays an important role in signifying desired, authentic *racing* identity to oneself, through symbolic self-completion, and to others:

433. Helen
"He's a cool dude."

327. Tom
"… if someone is advertising football boots, and it's David Beckham, some people actually think that if they buy those boots it will make them a better footballer… Some people think that if they've got the bike and they've got all the gear, that it'll automatically make them fast… I suppose it comes down to maybe fashion, image and appearance…"

162. Katie
"…he's the sort of guy that's a bit of a racer wannabe, so he's got all the gear, he's got the quickest bike out there with, you know, all the tricked up bits on, he reads PB (Performance Bikes) to find out how to make his bike go faster…"

These results are supported by track day observations, where it was noted that, at the extreme, a number of participants arrived with their supersports motorcycles loaded in vans especially designed for the purpose. They occupied prime sites in the pit lane garages, and filled those garages with gadgets, equipment and props such as tyre warmers, to support their activity (as illustrated in Figure 8.4).

Leaving the pit lane garages resembling racing heroes, participants were commonly observed riding in the 'beginners' or 'intermediate' experience level groups rather than the 'advanced' level group (as illustrated in Figure 8.5). Such extensive, expensive and authentic constellations of racing props were clearly accumulated for the purpose of self-affirmation through symbolic self-completion.

Figure 8.4: Track Day – Pit Garage

Figure 8.5: Track Day Line Up – Intermediate Level Group

Respondents recognised that for the type of riders who fit into this motorcyclist identity code, being part of the social scene and *communitas* development are likely to be important factors in track day involvement. The racetrack, in effect, becomes a social stage offering an opportunity for public performance and ultimately social validation. Motorcyclists often attend with other members of their immediate social groups:

434. Jack

"… I think a lot of it is image, a lot of people do it with their friends as well, where there's a group of them, you know end up racing each other…"

It was noted from track day observations that social interaction and communitas quickly develop amongst members who are sharing this common experience. Bill smiled and spoke very enthusiastically when describing his personal feelings of communitas and track day involvement:

158. Bill

"… it is hearing the bikes, it's seeing the bikes, it's actually being there with loads of people on bikes."

Respondents reflected that motorcyclists who fit into this particular identity code are likely to value social involvement and communitas as a core part of their motorcycling experience in general. Looking 'the part' and being able to speak with authentic narrative, thus 'talk the talk' are essential ingredients in creating an authentic role identity within ones' subgroup:

180. Katie

"Yeah (he is a social rider), oh definitely yes. I think if anything, he likes the fact that, you know, his mates are all the same and they do the same sort of thing and they like comparing horsepower and stuff like that on their bike. Yeah, I think they're pretty social."

106. Tony

"… He's gotta have the fastest machine he can possibly afford, the leathers. Probably likes to hang around bike shops and go out to the pub… that's all part of what being a biker is, probably that sort of sense of 'oh well yeah, I've done this, I've done that'… Probably tells the equivalent of a fisherman's tale as well, 'I had it down there and I dropped it down a gear and I was doing two hundred and fifty (mph) on one wheel and I still managed to get it round the bend'."

Completion of a successful track day event provides participants with a basis from which to narrate exciting and colourful stories of their experience to their peers. Tony (above) notes how stories are likely to become exaggerated as participants enthusiastically attempt to reaffirm their renewed sense of self to others. Authenticity is gained through display of evidence of 'scars of engagement' such as worn tyres and knee sliders. Tangible proof is gathered and displayed that includes video recordings, photographs and certificates of successful event completion. During track day observations, a number of motorcyclists were observed strapping video cameras to their motorcycles in an attempt to gain evidence of their 'heroic' racetrack performance.

Recognising the importance of this tangible evidence to track day participants, organisers often place professional camera operators around the racetrack in an attempt to capture their 'heroism' on video and in still camera shots. Participants appeared to be particularly aroused by still camera shots featuring them in a knee down pose of skilled racing performance (as illustrated in Figure 8.6).

Figure 8.6: Track Day Official Photograph

Source: www.motorcyclefolly.co.uk/gallery

At one particular track day observed, the official photographer's display heavily featured track day participants in quite dramatic accidents, or 'spills' *(*illustrated in Figure 8.7*)*. Having an action shot of this spill and still living to tell the tale provides the subject of exciting post-experience narratives which participants can later share

with their peers. It also emphasises the dangerous and adventurous, nature of this activity in which they have chosen to be involved. Respondent use of accident narratives to support the 'adventurous' motorcyclist identity is considered in detail in *Section 8.3.3*.

Figure 8.7: Official Photographer's Display

8.2.2 Scene Two: Touring Europe

This scene (illustrated in Figure 8.8) met an immediate positive reaction from the respondents, whose facial expressions showed an obvious liking for what they saw. They used positive words such as 'nice, ideal, beautiful' and 'enjoyment' to describe what they recognised as a touring/cruising scene in the countryside, possibly a holiday in Europe:

94. Angela
"... somebody's gone on holiday on a nice tourey cruisey holiday."

143. Dan
"It says to me touring, Europe."

174. Katie
"... This one's taking his bike on a holiday to somewhere nice…"

266

Figure 8.8: Scene Two

Respondents particularly focused on and made positive comments about the road featured in the scene:

275. Brian
"That's a beautiful open road."

436. Jack
"Open road, you know, ideal biking really. Nice twisty roads, freedom…"

298. Rob
"It's a touring shot, running through a set of very nice twisted roads."

333. Tom
*"That road looks **fantastic**. I'd love to ride that road…"*

Both the interview discourse and wider subcultural discourse (for the semiotic audit – Section 7.2) analysed, revealed that road surfaces, condition, and in particular, twists and bends are frequently the focus of motorcyclists' attention.

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The denotative syntagm that respondents built on this scene (illustrated in Figure 8.9) represents a code of *diversity*. This supports the dominant myth of *diversity* in motorcycling today which was found in the semiotic audit (Section 7.2.3), and reflects current day market fragmentation. Respondents represented this diversity by placing numerous, and a wide range of motorcycles on the scene. These included the Honda Pan-European tourer, Honda Fireblade supersports bike, Harley Davidson V-Rod cruiser and the Suzuki Bandit naked/street bike. Respondents supported their choices with descriptions that included:

279. Sam

"Everybody's having a go out there… because it just looks like a nice road to… either cruise down, go really fast down, or you could go down there on a crosser."

333. Tom

"… That's the kind of road you can ride, either on a sports bike, or… you know, you could take that quite fast, if you do that road well, or you could take it on a tourer…"

436. Jack

"Any sort of bike there, I picked what I could get… I mean you could do it on a crosser, anything really."

The diverse range of motorcycles chosen reflects the diverse identity and aspirations of those who are involved in this kind of motorcycling. When asked about the type of person who they believe is involved in this kind of activity, respondents again reflected upon this diversity:

300. Rob

"… Again, it can be for everybody and anybody…"

387. Matt

"… I think they come from all walks of life."

Figure 8.9: Touring Europe - Product Code
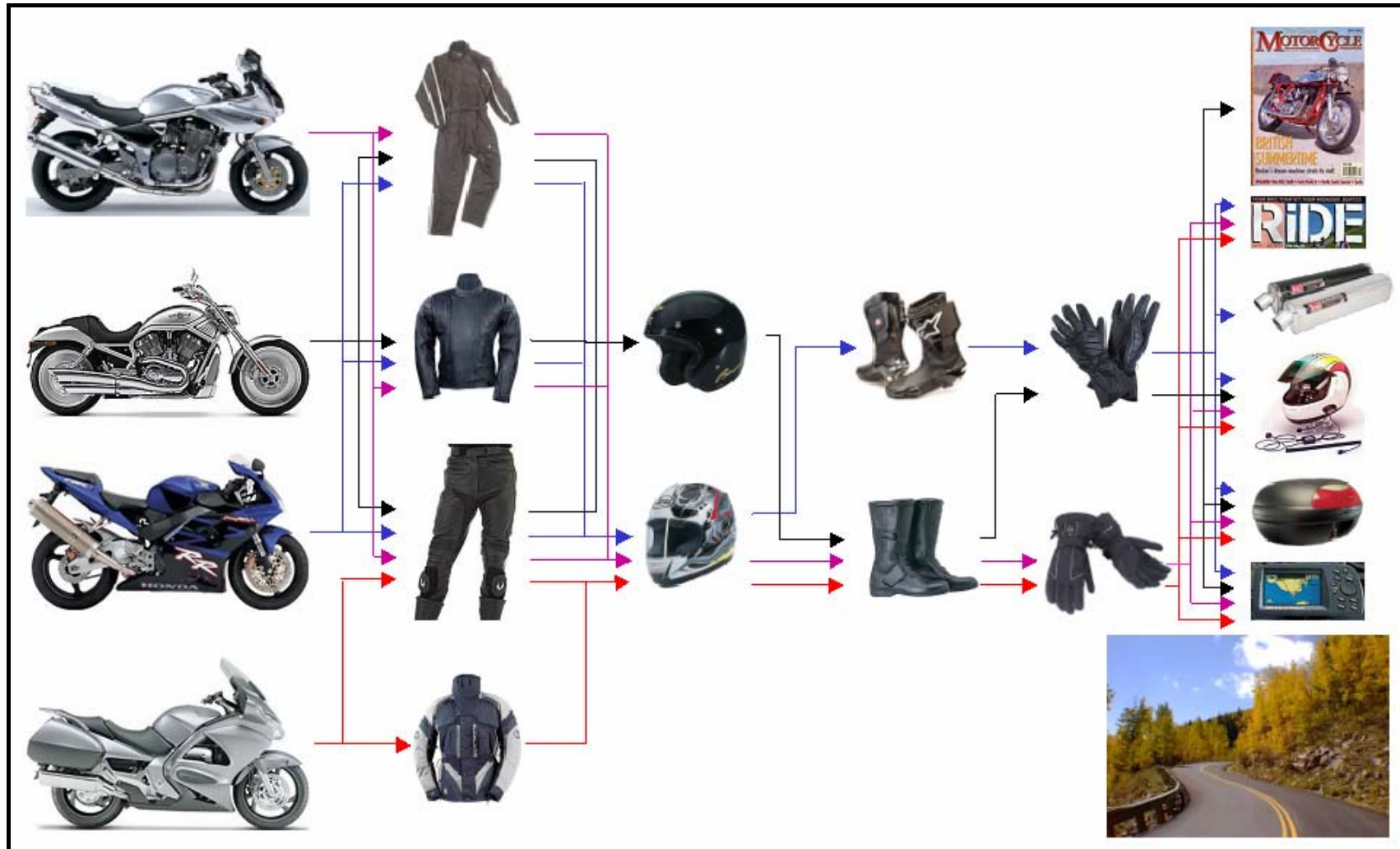
339. Tom

"Anybody, anybody. I mean I could ride that sports bike and enjoy myself down there or I could be on a tourer going off somewhere. It all depends what your perception of biking is… It's not all, you know, balls out, as fast as you can, you know, lets get there and get back and get us knee down. Sometimes we like to just slow down and just have a good look around."

The majority of respondents, who themselves represent a diverse range of motorcycle subgroups, reflected that they regularly enjoy riding on country roads such as this.

Figure 8.9 illustrates the syntagm of props that respondents built on the scene for each bike respectively, thus reflecting strands of motorcyclist identity. It is immediately apparent that there are a number of common consistencies in the choices of clothing and equipment made. The range of clothing and equipment chosen is more defined than the range of motorcycles placed on the scene, and this is because respondents were influenced by intrinsic, functional factors relating to this type of touring experience.

Two-piece clothing combinations were chosen rather than one-piece, even for the supersports motorcycle and the waterproof outfit was particularly prevalent here. The textile jacket was featured with the touring motorcycle and a combination of black leather jacket, trousers and waterproof outfit were placed with the other three motorcycles on the scene. Respondents noted the functional advantage of two-piece clothing for this type of activity:

160. Katie

"… I'd probably have a two-piece for my touring through the countryside, because, when you get to your destination you want to take your jacket off."

178. Bill

"And a two-piece rather than a one-piece, because they're just awful when the weather gets warm and you can't get rid of them…"

201. John

"… and having some nice comfortable leathers… When you actually get to where you want to get to, you can still actually be reasonably comfortable by… ok you're sweating your cogs off in your leather trousers but you can at least take your jacket off, and everything else and you've got a fair degree of protection…"

Respondents clearly noted that for this type of activity, the functional element of the clothing is more important than signification of a fashionable image, even for the supersports race-replica motorcycle riders:

177. Chris

"… the clothing is functional and not fancy, that's not about how you look, that's about getting out on the road and if I do come off I've got some protection…

94. Angela

"… more comfortable clothes than racey clothes, more practical clothes."

438. Jack

"I don't think image is too much of a problem there, because, there's people watching you there (scene one), you know, your friends are there. This is a personal thing to me, and it doesn't matter what you look like as long as you've got safe gear if something does happen. You know if there is a downpour round the next corner then you've got your waterproofs, you know…"

It should be noted that choices made for the supersports bike did however still include other sports accessories which are influenced by *racing* imagery such as the sports helmet, boots and the racing exhaust can. Also, the syntagm of products built around the Harley cruiser signifies a clearly defined identity image consistent with membership, and prescription to codes of cruise biker subcultural ideology. This is described in detail in scene five (Section 8.2.5).

Other props chosen that are common to touring included touring boots, satellite navigation system, tank top box, intercom and RIDE Magazine. Respondents described some of these choices:

298. Rob

"…we've got a waterproof jacket and leather jeans, because it's easier to take on and off, and a top box to strap all me gear in and a GPS system."

143. Dan

"… obviously waterproofs for touring, top box for your stuff, Sat Nav, so you know where you're going. Intercom, presumably you're going on a tour…"

380. Matt

"So, proper touring bike, satellite navigation, intercom, general leathers, protective, boots… waterproof stuff, because obviously you're out there if it rains…"

RIDE Magazine was featured in three out of the four product combinations. This is a general motorcycling magazine which covers a broad range of motorcycling areas and appeals to a diverse target audience such as that represented by the motorcycle touring market. Jack identifies this:

438. Jack

"… RIDE Magazine, it doesn't specialise in anything specific, it covers a broad image."

The intercom featured in all four product combinations, and respondents recognised the social nature of touring experience and the likelihood of one's partner sharing the experience with him:

331. Adam

"…the intercom for talking with the passenger, notice there are more people than there are bikes (ie. Pillions)."

380. Matt

"… with the intercom, cause my wife would be with me on the back as I said."

What respondents rated of value here is the *communitas* value of shared riding experience:

178. Katie

"I think he likes riding in a group. I think he's probably gone down there with either a pillion or a few mates or something like that and they're all riding together."

306. Rob

"… It's much more sociable than sports bike riding."

In describing touring motorcyclists' identity and aspirations, respondents noted that there is one significant core myth in particular, that binds this diverse range of motorcyclists together; that of *freedom*. Whatever form of motorcycle subcultural involvement and experience one aspires to, the binding factor that spans all the groups, as shown previously, is a passionate quest for freedom. Respondents note touring participants' desire for freedom of the open roads:

184. Bill

"… I think it's probably more people who want to enjoy the freedom of the open road really, and … enjoy getting out and seeing places…"

175. Chris

"That's somebody that likes wide open roads, doesn't really care where it is and where it's going."

They note the freedom that touring provides from the dullness, routine and constraints of everyday life:

340. Adam

"… a bit of a break from their normal routine, could be dull or whatever, and at the weekends they want to do something a bit different, with a bit more independence."

174. Katie

"… he likes going to places, seeing new scenes, picking out the best roads, nice quiet roads and, you know, and not the sort of hum drum and the cut and thrust of daily life…"

Finally they link freedom with *fun* and *excitement*, recognised factors of adventure experience:

147. Dan

"... (they do it) for the same reason we all do, for freedom and fun… for recreation."

126. Tony

"… Somebody that enjoys the freedom of motorcycling, a bit of fun, a bit of excitement… whether it be a Harley Sportster (cruiser) or a sports bike, you know, will go out and have some good fun."

8.2.3   Scene Three: Bike Meet

Respondents clearly identified this scene (illustrated in Figure 8.10) to be a bike meet, a social gathering of motorcyclists at a given location such as a public house or a bikers' café:

100. Angela
"Well that's a bike meet… in a pub or something."

442. Jack
"... a bike gathering."

160. Katie
"That is like a bike, pub meet sort of thing."

Figure 8.10: Scene Three

They clearly identified the accepted code of ritualistic behaviour at bike meets is to stand or walk around, admire and compare motorcycles and their modifications, exchange bike related narratives and stories, and develop relationships and camaraderie with other motorcyclists:

205. John

"Everyone just meets up and has a natter (laughing)… most of the time it's just to meet up and have a natter about bikes."

395. Matt

"… bike meeting, could be a pub anywhere, a load of bikers getting together, a few beers, have a look round the bikes, see what they've done to theirs, you know what you've done to yours, and then just head home at night you know."

186. Bill

"…Everybody stands around talking, and even just looking at the bikes. It's a good way to go and compare what one bike looks like against another one really when you're thinking of swapping a bike, to go to a meet where there's lots of bikes, and you can see the different colours and what people have done to them. Like again, you find people that have put race cans on their bikes..."

As with scene two, respondents placed a range of motorcycles on this scene (as illustrated in Figure 8.11). Specifically, they placed the Harley V-Rod cruiser, Honda VFR sports tourer and the Honda Fireblade supersports motorcycle. Again, this represents a *diversity* of motorcycles and motorcyclists who are likely to attend this kind of event. Respondents noted:

186. Bill

"...Again you can probably have all types of bikes there, barring a scooter. People will go to bike meetings on all bikes... again it's... you get a wide range of people..."

308. Rob

"...And again, it doesn't matter what you ride. I've selected the Fireblade and the V-Rod. And again, it's all sports bike outfit wearing if you're on the Blade, and you'd be a lot more casual if you were on the V-Rod, maybe leather jacket and jeans..."

310. Rob

"But again, anybody will turn up on those... anybody and everybody"

Figure 8.11 illustrates that the combination of props assembled for each of the three motorcycles represent quite specific, individual strands of motorcyclist identity. This is unlike the syntagms of scene two where the various motorcycles were bound by a common set of clothing and accessories, which form part of the 'touring' code.

Like scene two, and as shown in more detail in the analysis of scene five (Section 8.2.5), respondents combined the Harley cruiser with highly symbolic black leathers, open face helmet and plain black boots. They also combined the VFR sports tourer with a number of props similar to that of the Pan-European tourer illustrated in scene two; differences being that they combined what they believe to be textile trousers with the textile jacket and they added Alpine Stars sports gloves. The rationale they provided for this particular product syntagm is that this scene could recognisably be a European bike meet attended by touring holiday motorcyclists:

Figure 8.11: Bike Meet - Product Code
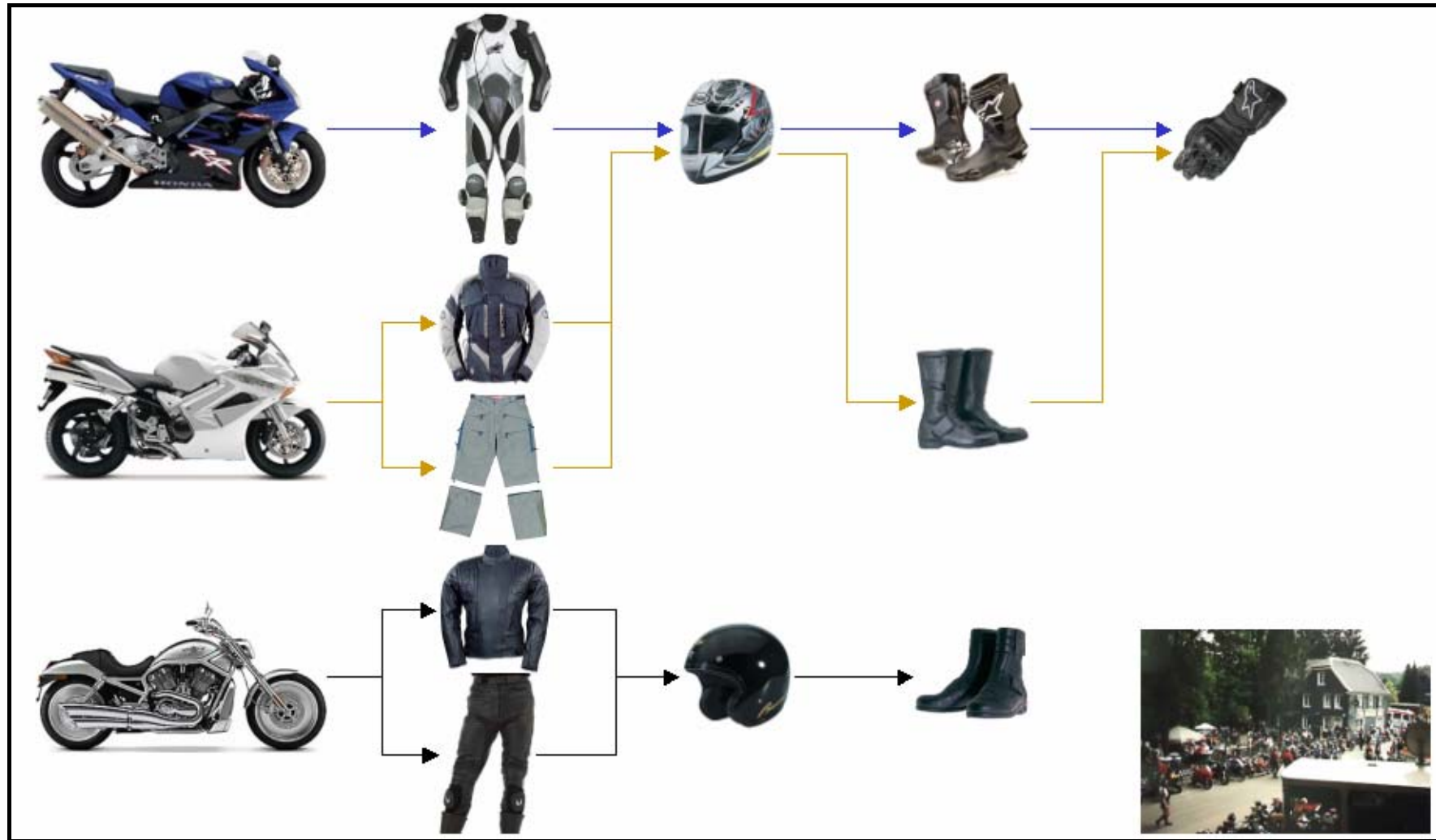
20. John

"...I think this would be out in Austria, Germany, wherever... To me that, those are quite linked (scenes two and three) because you look to be going for a touring holiday..."

308. Rob

"... so I've got the intercom system, the navigation system, the fully dressed bike so you can speak. Everything to continue your holiday. Em, sensible gear, waterproofs..."

When probed about the deeper levels of meaning and identity that their chosen product combinations signify, respondents tended to focus on the supersports bike syntagm, describing a discourse that can be categorised into the key themes of authentic *racing* identity and *communitas*. As in scene one, they provided the supersports motorcyclist with one-piece racing leathers, racing helmet, boots and gloves, and they noted the importance to the motorcyclist of generating an authentic role identity through the combination of props chosen. Donned in what they believe to be authentic racing props, these motorcyclists attend bike meets to gain role authenticity by parading and exhibiting themselves and their motorcycles in symbolic social display, or 'showing off' as respondents put it:

186. Bill

"...You get a lot of people going there to show off their new bikes."

100. Angela

"...And then you tend to get, depending on the pub, but the ones I go to you get all your posers really on the fast bikes that like to come and show off their bikes..."

181. Chris

"This is all about image... that's about showing what you've got when you get there. And as a consequence of that, in my head at least, this is somebody that has got the right pipes and has got the right gear, even if they don't do that they can pretend they do."

183. Chris

"That sort of scene to me is all about 'see and be seen' so, you've got the right gear and you wanna see that everybody else has got the right gear… This is more about clean bikes that it is about dirty ones, if that makes sense?"

Chris's recognition (above) that this is *"more about clean bikes than dirty ones"* has particular validity here. He recognised that bike meet participants aim to signify authentic racing role identity through symbolic social display of their combinations of props, and that actual motorcycle riding performance does not play a part.

Respondents noted that the sharing of social experience and communitas development are particularly strong motives for bike meet participants. Motorcycling plays a key role in the construction of their self-identity and as a means of gaining personal fulfilment in their lives. Meaningful self-direction is gained through membership, and prescription to the codes that represent the ideology of their chosen motorcycle subculture. Attendance at bike meets offers them the opportunity to interact with others from this subculture, to gain a sense of self-fulfilment from this interaction and to stamp their authentic role identity within the group. Respondents described this:

132. Tony

"(The type of people who go to bike meets) In general, people that are bike nutters, quite a large proportion of their life is around bikes and they probably, they're probably the sort of person that works to ride, if you know what I mean?"

134. Tony

"They're also probably people that… to a certain extent similar to these (pointing to scene one), to a certain extent similar to these in that there's a sense of the dressing up and being part of a clan…"

314. Rob

"(People go) To have a look at everybody else's bikes I suppose. To see what everybody else has done to them, to see what parts they've got on them, to meet up with friends. A lot of the forums will meet at places like that, so you can meet the people behind them, people you've been emailing for the last six months."

Bike meets also offer opportunities for narrative exchange and storytelling, and again this supports self-development and the construction/signification of authentic role identity:

207. John
"Yeah (stories are exchanged in the scene), a lot of 'oh I remember when I was going round this corner,' you know…"

160. Katie
"It's the same guy (as scene one), he's come from the track day, now he's gone to the pub to brag about his lap times you see, yeah."

Respondent interview narratives revealed that motorcyclists simply love talking motorcycles and they relish any opportunity they get to do this! This is likely to be driven by their passionate 'desire' for motorcycles and high levels of involvement with the associated social, and *adventure* experience that they provide.

8.2.4   Scene Four: Off-Road Adventure

Respondents recognised this scene (illustrated in Figure 8.12) to be an off-road scene for trails/enduro bike riding, also known as motocross riding and scrambling:

209. John
Number four; obviously it's an off-roading type of scene. It looks to me with woods and so on."

318. Rob
"It's an off-road section in the middle of the hills…"

399. Matt
"… A bit of, like, cross-country biking, you know what I mean."

Figure 8.12: Scene Four

In describing the nature of off-road motorcycling, they noted that this kind of activity is different from other forms of motorcycling in that it is much more physically demanding in nature:

209. John

"… it is quite physical, the motorcross type riding is quite phsycial, and trails riding is quite physical because you have to, sometimes your bike gets bogged down and you physically have to move it."

John goes on to note that professional motorcycle racetrack racers partake in this kind of riding out of the racing season to maintain their fitness levels:

213. John

"… Believe it or not, a lot of the motorbike riders, the racers, like… for instance, Steve Hislop, people like him. They do this in the winter because it keeps them fit…It's just a different type of riding, and obviously you need the right terrain for doing it."

Also in describing the nature of off-road motorcycling, respondents clearly identified that this is an adventurous activity, identifying a number of elements of adventure; namely *challenge, out of the ordinary, uncertainty* and *skill*:

446. Jack

"Oh global adventure… My dream (laughing)."

211. John

"…It's a different sort of challenge, or adventure, because it's different to what you've been doing as the norm…"

291. Sam

"Definitely (it is an adventure) because somewhere like that, it would be so big and so wide, you just wouldn't know what you're gonna come across next…"

349. Tom

"… it's just so much, it's another form of two-wheeled activity, it's different. There's quite a lot of skill involved."

Dan noted that this could be a packaged adventure holiday similar to those he has seen advertised in motorcycle magazines:

155. Dan

"Em, open country, scrambling… It says to me that it's the kind of thing you book as a package, abroad again, rather than this country. It looks like something, you see quite a lot of these advertised in magazines like Ride. Where they've booked three or four days, that kind of thing…"

At a denotative level, one motorcycle was placed on this scene by respondents with a clear syntagm of clothing and accessories which represents an off-road code (as illustrated in Figure 8.13). This included the Honda XR off-road motorcycle with off-road styled jacket and trousers, peaked off-road helmet, off-road boots, textile gloves and a copy of Trail Rider magazine.

282

Figure 8.13: Off-Road – Product Code
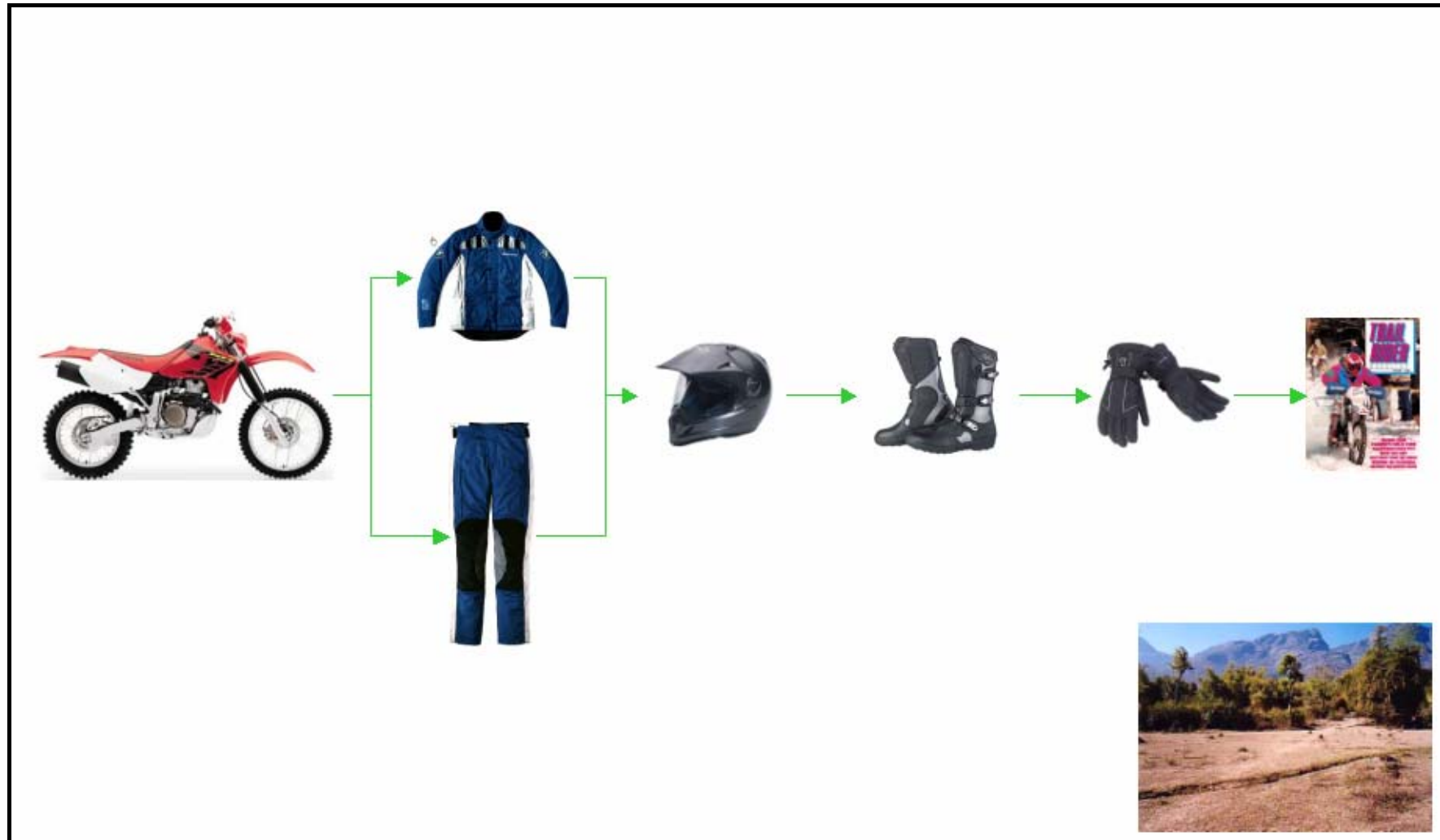
Respondents described their choices:

318. Rob

"...I picked the off-road machine, off-road lid (helmet), off-road boots. Separates in waterproof, padding, off-road gloves..."

446. Jack

"... that is something, a superb bike to do it on (Honda XR). You know, good gear, waterproof, cool in the summer, keeps you warm in the winter..."

345. Tom

"Well that looks great for off-road isn't it (Honda XR)... Yeah, if I was there that's the bike that I'd want. Obviously you want some decent safety kit on there as well, nothing too heavy because of the heat."

Respondents particularly identified the importance of protective, functional qualities of the off-road product combination, recognising that the image, 'pose' element is not significant here:

209. John

"... he's got the off-road boots, the proper motocross helmet. Again he would have gear on it, which is a different type to those, usually it's quite light but it's well padded, got proper protection in it..."

399. Matt

"... typical sort of bike, you know (Honda XR), em... off road sort of bikers helmet, the boots to go with it. You still need the protective equipment..."

142. Tony

Well, different terrain, therefore different type of bike needed. Eh, sensible kit, offering a lot of protection but not necessarily a pose element to it or... a stronger image element is these guys up here, number one..."

When probed on a deeper level about the identity and aspirations of the character built on the scene by this product syntagm, respondents noted that, unlike the groups described so far, this type of motorcyclist can be categorised by age. They noted due to the physical nature of off-road motorcycling activity it is likely to appeal to younger age groups:

203. Bill

"I personally think that would be a more younger person because… it's gonna be more bumpy so you do feel bumps on all your joints and obviously it takes more it's toll the older you are so… yeah I would definitely think that would appeal more to younger people personally."

194. Katie

"Possibly younger than the other guys, I mean some people start off riding as kids. So he's possibly younger… this guy could even be in his early twenties… You don't tend to find a lot of older, as in thirty five plus men because, I suppose it requires a bit more stamina…"

They also noted that, unlike the supersports motorcyclists of scenes one and three, the trails bike rider is not likely to be concerned with showing off, posing, and signifying a kind of 'authentic' identity image to others:

144. Tony

"Not necessarily somebody who's image conscious, not necessarily somebody that' a poser…"

195. Chris

"This is somebody who doesn't care about what other people think. This is all about self-centeredness. This isn't about 'what I look like,' this is about 'I want to be riding.' It's an internalised image perception rather than an externalised one. This is somebody that wants to be a trails rider and he's riding with what he's got, isn't that weird?"

Interestingly Chris went on to note that, in his opinion, the Honda XR trails bike featured here should be bright yellow in colour rather than silver:

197. Chris

"But yeah, I mean the one thing that's wrong with that is it's not a silver bike, that's got to be bright yellow (laughing)."... that's the image I get of the person in this scene is that the bike is yellow."

Evidence of extrinsic design of manufacturers' product ranges of trails/enduro motorcycles shows common use of bright colours such as red, yellow and orange on motorcycle fairings; the bright orange colour used on KTM machines is an iconic example of this (as illustrated in Figure 8.14). Through consistent use of bright colours in this context, manufacturers have succeeded in anchoring connotations of *off-road adventure* with the motorcycles. Manufacturer employment of these colours in the emerging adventure-sports sector to signify connotations of *off-road adventure* is considered in detail in Section 9.5.2.

Figure 8.14: KTM 300 EXC – Iconic Orange Colour

Source: www.ktm.co.uk

Not surprisingly, respondents note that the type of character represented by scene four is more likely to be an individual, or loner than those in the scenes described so far:

450. Jack

"Very much an individual person, very much a sole character I think, you know, to be out on your own… Just, you know, you're not relying on, definitely not image conscious, you know, but generally do things your own way."

The core mythic value which respondents focused on with regard to the identity and aspirations of off-road motorcyclists, and an overwhelming key theme of this scene, is that of *adventure*. They recognised the adventurous nature of the activity in their descriptions of the scene, and they also recognised that participants of this kind of activity, are themselves adventurers with a quest for adventure experience:

289. Sam

"Probably, somebody that'd go surfing… adrenaline junkies, somebody that might jump off a bridge…"

449. Helen

"Somebody with a sense of adventure and no ties I suppose…"

295. Brian

"This is someone who's challenge is to rip up the side of a mountain and down the other side… eh, in a way I suppose, a mountain biker who can't be bothered to pedal!"

142. Tony

"… I'd say it's people that want to sort of test different skills, and speed isn't necessarily why they buy a bike. Probably in terms of skills, probably in many respects a higher skill level than a lot of these would have (pointing at other scenes)… definitely a higher skill level to be able to ride that type of bike properly, and be able to cope and manage in that sort of terrain."

Katie summed up the character of the typical off-road rider in the following narrative:

190. Katie

"Number four, he's an adventure rider… he might not even have a road bike, he likes off-roading more than anything else, you know. Got all the gear for his trail bike riding and… He's probably less social than these lot (pointing at scenes one and three), because a lot of trail riding is kind of doing your own thing and going off out into the wilds and, you know, taking a leak behind a tree, and all that sort of thing. Although they do socialise, and they all like to get together and talk about these things, I think he's less social than these lot, and it's less about showing off as well. It's more about the elements and riding your bike on rough terrain, and you know, the adventures of it."

8.2.5   Scene Five: American Dream

Respondents recognised this scene (illustrated in Figure 8.15) to be a cruising/touring scene on a long, straight American road, possibly Route 66. They noted that it could be an adventure holiday:

Figure 8.15: Scene Five

148. Tony

"Number five, em… cruising, slightly different to number two in that it's more of a cruise adventure type. That's the image it gives me, cruise adventure type of thing where you sort of, do Route 66 and the rest of it. Em… Possibly a holiday type of thing…"

355. Tom

"… going on a trip somewhere or a journey, maybe you know, that could perhaps be America… Looks like a long straight road, doing a bit of touring…"

160. Katie

"…We're cruising across America…"

The single motorcycle that was placed on this scene is the Harley V-Rod cruiser (as illustrated in Figure 8.16). Respondents described their choice:

207. Chris

"Well that's your typical Route 66, you know, get on the Harley and drive, which I guess every biker at some point in their life wants to do."

124. Angela

"… It's just like what you see on the TV, it's just like, you see the American rider going through the desert, cruising on his Harley, so yeah, that's why the Harley's there."

326. Rob

"Top picture (referring to scene five), another V-Rod."

A single syntagm of props was placed with the Harley V-Rod which included the tasselled black leather jacket, either blue jeans or black leather trousers, open-face helmet, plain black boots, black gloves, goggles, tank-top box and satellite navigation system. Respondents described these denotative choices:

Figure 8.16: American Dream – Product Code

Dashed line (---) = this **or** this

160. Katie

"...Oh Mr Harley across the desert... yeah he'd probably have an Arai open-facer (helmet)... What does Harley boy wear?... He probably wears cowboy boots to be honest, but I think they're pretty close (black boots)... plain black gloves for Harley man... oh he wants some goggles..."

215. Chris

"And, if you were gonna get on a Harley you couldn't do it without... Well you'd need jeans on for a start, you'd need leather and you'd need an open-face helmet."

205. Tracey

"Oh this is going across America on a Harley, which would be nice and comfy. A jacket to wear and comfy sort of trousers and something to put your luggage in..."

The combination of props that respondents placed on this scene was driven by residual imagery associated with *outlaw* style, 'Easy Rider' type American cruiser motorcycling. The character built could easily be Easy Rider's Captain America, who along with his outlaw associates, went cruising on the open road in search of the 'romantic,' mythic value of *American freedom.* Katie described this:

198. Katie

"It's kind of that rock n roll image isn't it, you know, the tasselled jacket and the big cruiser bike. It's that sort of Easy Rider type of image, you know... He's a bit of a cowboy really but rather than riding a horse he rides a bike"

The Harley V-Rod with its core combination of props occurs in a number of the scenes (scenes two, three, five and six). The discourse that this syntagm signifies on each occasion remains the same, that representing the enduring residual and dominant motorcycle subcultural myth of *freedom of the open road.*

With regard to the deeper levels of meaning relating to the character built on this particular scene, respondents did note that this character could either be an authentic American outlaw Harley rider or it could be a 'wannabe' American Harley rider who

has chosen to don the props and play the role temporarily to experience the romantic subcultural *American dream:*

196. Katie

"Number five… Well, I've kind of said he's American but he might not be. He might be someone who's gone to America to live the American dream. The idea of blasting your Harley down a long straight road across the American plain. So he could just be, either an American Harley person or a wannabe American Harley person."

209. Chris

"He's one of two (types of people), he's either your classic American rebel who really doesn't care, or he's like me… He's a mid-life crisis, 'I think I aught to go and do this, because that's my lifestyle"… So it's somebody who's trying it out, pretending to be it, rather than living it."

The American cruising style of riding has such a significant, rich, historic cultural heritage and residual mythology embedded within it that reflects a romantic narrative relative to the meaningful 'Golden Age' of motorcyclist subcultural identity. It is not surprising that more than half of the respondents in the study, including supersports motorcycle riders, acknowledged that they themselves aspire to donning these props, taking on this role, and experiencing the American dream, even for a short period of time such as a holiday:

330. Rob

"… It's something that I'd like to do, I must admit, would be to ride from, down the South Pacific Ridge on a highway on a Harley…"

198. Katie

"…I know they do, they do offer trips over there and you can hire a Harley and you can do it yourself, which, you know, whilst it's probably not my idea of motorcycling I'd do it just for the sake of doing something different you know. So it could be someone like that, it could be someone like me that just wants to try something different, or you just could be like, you know, 'that's it, I want to ride my Harley across the American plain, the Wild West etc…'"

Discussing the 'aspirational' nature of the motorcyclist's involvement in this kind of motorcycle activity, and subcultural ideology, Chris highlighted the *adventurous, uncertain* nature of the experience:

215. Chris

"That's all about an image, that's a lifestyle that most people would aspire to. They know damn well they're not gonna get it but you might have a go at it while you're on holiday. So, I guess… I guess that's why the adventure comes out of it. It's the great adventure to travel across the States on Route 66 and not care about where you're gonna be next."

8.2.6   Scene Six: Ace Café

Respondents recognised this scene (illustrated in Figure 8.17) to be another bike meet, this time at the Ace Café, London. They recognised the social nature of the scene:

Figure 8.17*:* **Scene Six**

217. John

"…The Ace Café, bike meet…"

456. Helen

"Number six, the Ace Café, London."

309. Maggie

"… it's a very social scene…"

As noted in the semiotic audit (Section 7.2.1), the Ace Café originally formed a social centre of the British motorcycle scene in the 1950s and early 1960s, where Ton-Up Boys, and later Rockers used to hang out, socialise, and race to the jukebox rock 'n' roll music. Today it remains an iconic venue representing the residual myths relating to British motorcycle subcultural *heritage* and *freedom*. It is still perceived as a 'trendy' venue to attend and it appeals to a wide range of modern motorcycle styles and identities.

Respondents in the study recognised a *diversity* of the kind of motorcyclists who are likely to attend the Ace Café today:

358. Kirstie

"I think you'd probably get a mixture, I think you'd get the old, sort of the old timers but also, it's got a bit of a ring to it now hasn't it, so I think you'd probably get a good mixture of people in a place like that, I think it'd probably attract a varied group of people."

334. Rob

Yeah, I used to live, well toward the other end of London so it wasn't far away from us. Again big bike meet… I've stuck down the Blade (supersports motorcycle) and all the sports bike outfit because that's what I ride but I do know that you get, I mean you do see the plastic stuff as well. It is a complete cross-mixture, they're not biased at all. I guess it would be more classic led, because of what it is. It is still Ace Café, London…"

In particular, the respondents noted two specific types of motorcyclist who are likely to attend the Ace Café today, and this was reflected in the two distinctive product codes that they placed on the scene (as illustrated in Figure 8.18); that of the traditional, 1950s style and the modern supersports style.

With regard to the 1950s style product syntagm, respondents placed the Harley V-Rod cruiser on the scene, combined with jeans, the black tasselled leather jacket and open face helmet. Questioning about their choice of motorcycle revealed that in reality, they would have placed a traditional British 1950s style motorcycle on this scene such as a Norton or a Triumph (options which were not available to them). They reflected upon the authentic, *British* nature of the institution, the historic *nostalgia* element and the importance of creating a desired 1950s self-image and authentic role identity:

356. Kirstie

"That one again, I wanted to put like a classic bike, because I think of the Ace Café as sort of… quite an old institution, you know, I'd have probably turned up on a Norton or something. But because there wasn't one of those I didn't fancy going on a sporty bike, or a trail bike or a scooter, so I picked the sort of traditional looking bike..."

204. Katie

"… the Ace Café traditionally is a sort of Triumph hang out as well, you know the traditional old Triumphs, so it is, it's a complete image thing, you know, a proper cruiser…"

150. Tony

"… Ace Café… a bit of a cross between (scenes) one and three I suppose. A hip place to be, image is important… but maybe there's also something slightly different in Ace Café than there is in one of those two (scenes one and three), in that there's probably a historic element to it in terms of, you know, that's where people used to go and that was the thing to be done so maybe you've got… I mean if you'd had a classic Triumph or something like that I might have put that in there… and there's a sense of nostalgia about it as well…"

Figure 8.18: Ace Café – Product Code
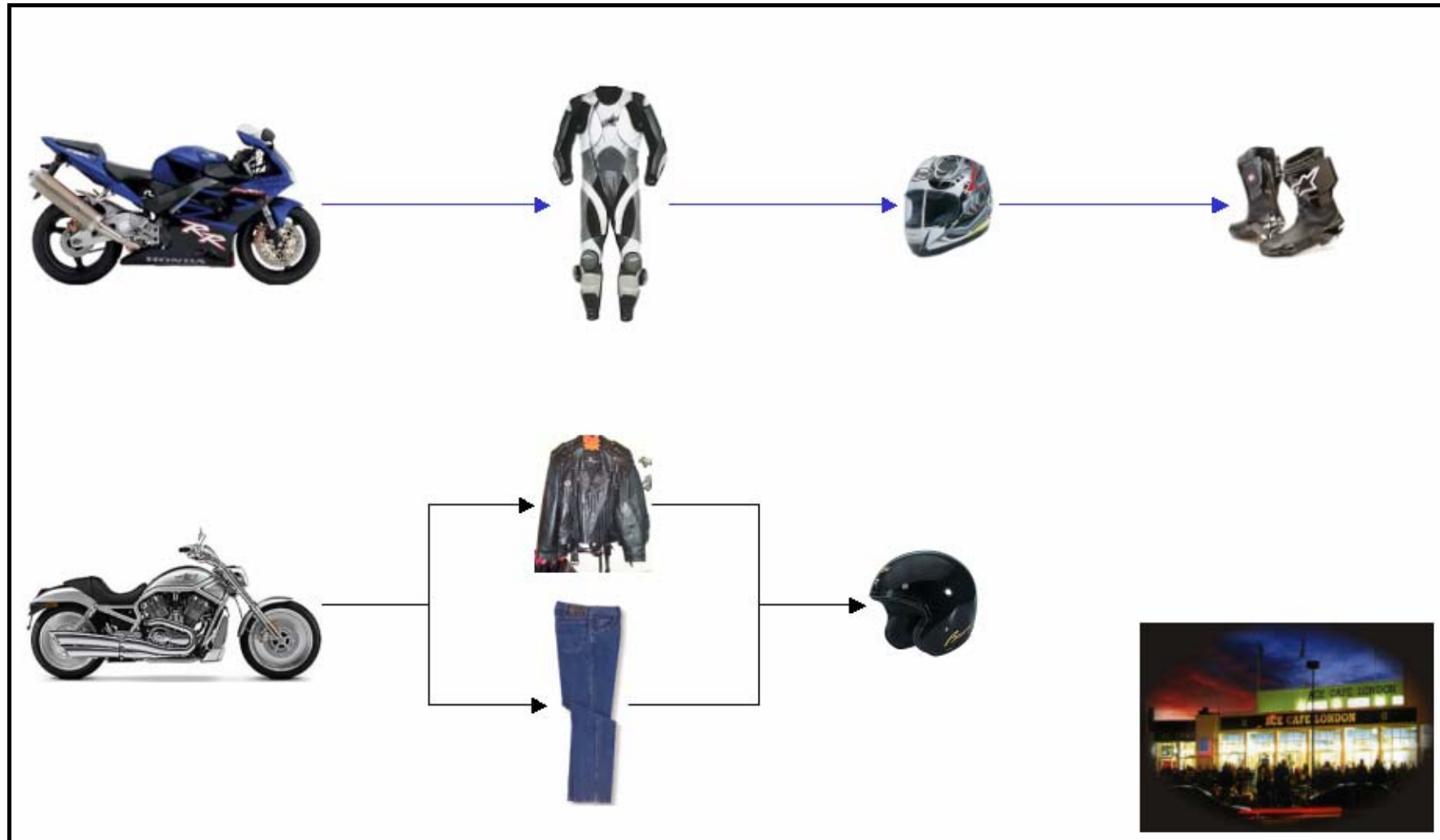
Clearly the type of people attending the Ace Café, riding 1950s style British motorcycles are concerned with donning constellations of props that signify a discourse of authentic 1950s British motorcyclist role identity. Respondents noted the importance of ownership and symbolic display of traditional British brands such as Belstaff in creating this desired identity:

311. Tom

"Ace Café... You get a lot of people wearing Belstaffs, I've been there."

359. Tom

"... Everybody wore Belstaffs, the old like British stuff, wax jackets and open face helmets and hot dogs, that's what I can remember. Burgers and stuff. Cups of tea."

160. Katie

"... You'd definitely have your jeans at the Ace Café..."

Respondents noted that 1950s style motorcyclists attending the Ace Café are likely to belong to 'older' age groups:

313. Tom

"... there's a lot of older bikes there..."

217. Chris

"... So potentially this could have been an older biker in here as well."

150. Tony

"... you're probably talking age wise, lets say.. the forty, forty five plus people..."

Tom recognised the current increasing popularity of older styled motorcycles and the growth of the British nostalgia motorcycle market. He recognised the associated increase in 'fashionableness' of the Ace Café:

363. Tom

"It is now (a trendy place), it is now. You see, older bikes again now are coming back in fashion... like 70s and mid 80s bikes, they're all coming back into fashion... You're getting more and more people going back into biking in that generation. You've got Triumph now that are back up and running with their old, although they're quite modern bikes they look old and a lot of people are buying those. I know when Triumph brought out their Thunderbird they took it there (Ace Café), to see what the reaction was and they hated it because it was too new."

The supersports product combination placed on this scene matches the supersports motorcyclist featured in the bike meet in scene three. Again respondents noted the significance of the creation/signification of a fashion consciousness image to this motorcyclist, who uses his combination of props to 'pose' and 'show off' an authentic *racing* identity.

132. Angela

"... I probably would have put the same as what I put on number three on there, because it looks pretty much like a meet again, so probably would have put the same things on there."

165. Dan

"Oh absolutely (there is a fashion element here), without a doubt, as I say these are, to me these are fashion statements."

163. Dan

"... the kind of chap that puts these on is the kind of chap that rides his R1(Yamaha supersports motorcycle) to bike shops at weekends, and hangs about in his five hundred pound leathers with his new helmet..."

As with the bike meet (featured in scene three), respondents regarded the social, *communitas* element to be a central value of all attendants' participation. It offers opportunities for the motorcyclist to share a common bond of subcultural identity and ideology with his/her peers, with associated implications for authentic role inauguration and development. They recognised that genuine, authentic motorcycle

knowledge is required for narrative exchange at a venue such as this. Tony, below noted the likelihood of storytelling in which members of the nostalgia market are likely to narrate their past youthful motorcycling experiences to one another:

204. Katie

"… and… it's a social event, like this (scene three) is a social event, but it's a social event where, you know, that's the sort of people you want to mix with."

361. Tom

"… A great atmosphere. You've gotta know your bikes to talk to people there. Em, I don't know too much about British bikes but my friend who I went with he had some quite nice chats with people."

150. Tony

"…There'd definitely be story telling going on, 'when I used to ride bikes when I was a lad,' element to it as well."

Although the majority of respondents described the openness and diversity of the Ace Café today, supersports motorcyclists Steven and Matt openly discriminated against cruiser motorcycle riders when asked to describe the cruiser motorcycle combination that they had placed on this scene:

429. Steven

"I wouldn't go to Ace Café, because it's just full of clowns like this (pulling a face, laughing). So I deliberately haven't put any gloves (on the scene), they're that macho they wouldn't wear them."

440. Matt

"… people that ride that (cruiser motorcycle) have, alright I've got a tattoo like, but, you know, the big ones all over, you know what I mean… that's what you'd get there (Ace Café)."

442. Matt

"They want to get a life, you know what I mean (laughing)."

299

They continued their descriptions using harsh words that included: *"Fat, aggressive, cr*p attitudes"* and *"d*ck heads."* Their attitudes pinpointed to a breakdown of communication between two motorcyclist subcultural groups, and thus a clash of subcultural ideologies. This is explored in more detail in Section 8.3.1.

8.2.7 Scene Seven: Adventure Track

Respondents recognised this scene (illustrated in Figure 8.19) to be an off-road, rugged dirt track, the kind of terrain associated with the Paris-Dakar rally:

Figure 8.19: Scene Seven

227. John

"… of course you've got rugged road, you can imagine it's off-road type of thing."

463. Steven

"That would be like a Dakar rally type thing… I would say the desert with what's going on there… Paris-Dakar rally sort of thing isn't it."

160. Katie

"…That is, like a sort of motocross track, the Dakar or something like that…"

A number of respondents made positive comments such as *"fun," " a laugh"* and *"very nice"* when describing the nature of motorcycling on this kind of terrain:

152. Tony

"… It doesn't look as though it's normal terrain which you could ride a normal road bike on sensibly, but you could definitely have some fun."

307. Sam

"That just looks awesome to me… that just looks like proper off-road fun with your mates and having a laugh."

466. Helen

"Number seven, dirt-tracking, off-roading, very nice"

The product syntagm that the majority of respondents placed on this scene exactly matched the syntagm placed on scene four, the off-road scene. This included the Honda XR trails bike with the off-road code of clothing, equipment and Trail Rider magazine (as illustrated in Figure 8.20).

134. Angela

"Again I've put the little traily bike…"

227. John

"… Trails bike, the same gear (as scene four) with the proper trousers, helmet and boots…"

They identified that the discourse from this compilation of props represents the same rider, with the same identity and aspirations as the one identified in scene four. They noted the likely youthful nature of this rider, who is physically fit and active, who is likely to be more of a loner and less social than motorcyclists from other groups, and who's primary motive is a quest for *adventure*:

Figure 8.20: Adventure Track – Product Code

227. Chris

"If anything, what sort of person, he's fifteen years younger than me, he's far more athletic than I am and he's a lot thinner than I am."

468. Helen

"Someone who's got a quest for adventure, someone who's not got any family ties particularly, looking for a bit of excitement, feels confident on a bike, wants to push their bike a little bit more maybe."

Also featuring on this scene, but with fewer responses, was the BMW GS Adventure motorcycle, combined with exactly the same combination of clothing and accessories mentioned above (as illustrated in Figure 8.20). Jack noted the motorcyclist could ride either the Honda XR or the BMW GS Adventure for this kind of activity, and both Rob and Katie described why they chose the BMW GS Adventure motorcycle:

466. Jack

"... Again, two good bikes to do it on (Honda XR and BMW GS Adventure), BMW, nice bike, done the Paris to Dakar on that, again the off-road trail bike…"

340. Rob

"It's a very muddy off-road track, probably sort of something that you'd get in a third world country I guess, that they'd classify as a road. That's why I picked the BMW, that would be the GS I think."

348. Rob

"Definitely (BMW GS is the right choice), definitely yeah, it'd be a big thing like touring round the world, without a shadow of a doubt, definitely."

160. Katie

"I'm tempted to use the Beamer, but I know that they're not really an off-road bike, they just look like it… but it's a bit long distance for an XR because you'd run out of petrol, so yeah, I'm gonna have the Beamer, even though they're not really that good at off-road… I'm thinking about the Paris-Dakar, yes an XR would be better at off-road but you'd run out of petrol because there's no petrol stations there."

303

Notably, the two-piece clothing combination featured in this product syntagm is the original BMW outfit designed by the manufacturers for wear with the GS Adventure motorcycle. Katie recognised this in her description of the associated props she had chosen:

160. Katie

"… and look we've got a proper BMW suit here, wheey… Beamer man probably wants a full facer again I would think and some proper off-road boots…"

Respondents identified the character of the BMW GS Adventure rider as slightly different from the Honda XR rider. They noted the BMW motorcyclist is likely to be older with significantly more disposable income to spend on his motorcycling interest. Like the Honda XR Rider, he is likely to be less social and more of a loner than other types of motorcyclist, and he is likely to be driven to participate in this kind of activity by a desire for *adventure* experience.

344. Rob

"Someone that wants a rush, somebody that really does want an adventure holiday. Again, it could be anything from twenty five to fifty five. You'd need money, need to be a fairly affluent person… this takes it to the next level… These guys, you don't know where you're going from one minute to the next…"

158. Tony

"… So that would be great fun, a bit of speed… the sort of person that would regularly be getting into that, if it's a BMW sort of person, it's probably someone with a significant disposable income, probably in the thirty five, forty age bracket that maybe was motocross or that sort of thing previously."

206. Katie

"Number seven, he's a bit of a Beamer man, but he's an off-road Beamer man so I suppose he's a Beamer man with a sense of excitement. You often say that Beamer men just, you know… because the police ride them don't they, but the problem is they're really really good bikes… but you've gotta be forty plus."

210. Katie

"... well on the whole they do tend to be forty plus because they're like, completely sensible bikes and I suppose as you get older your sensible head takes over doesn't it. But then this guy's an off-road Beamer rider, so you know, he's still got his exciting edge, you know, his adventure streak, and he's got all the proper gear. He's not afraid to spend a bit of money on himself and his bike, and make sure that it's pretty much top notch. But he's probably a bit more of a loner, a bit less social..."

Katie, above, touched upon a perception of BMW motorcycles and their owners as 'sensible' and 'boring'. A number of respondents recognised that although the BMW GS Adventure would be appropriate for this scene, they did not place it on because, in their opinion it is ugly, and because although reliable, they are generally owned by older people who are not likely to be involved in this kind of adventure activity:

154. Tony

"This, the Honda (XR) is probably a bit on the small side but that size bike (pointing to the BMW GS Adventure) would be sort of key on here but I just can't bring myself to get to terms with the BMW because they're ugly, they're so ugly. I'm not really image, sort of... heavily image, there's always a sense of aesthetics and everything else but they're so ugly that I couldn't come to terms with it..."

313. Sam

"Well, to be honest with you, I very very nearly put that on (BMW GS Adventure)... but, there's not that many people that actually have them that will take them off road, because generally people that ride BMWs... buy them because they start, they stop, they're reliable, and they're old plodders, you know what I mean... to be fair I bet they are really good, I mean, they are good bikes but they're just so bl**dy ugly."

Respondents in the study perceived BMW motorcycles to be reliable, and based on innovative technology, but unfortunately they also placed them in a penalty box marked by a discourse which communicated adjectives such as *old, dull, sensible* and *ugly.* They seemed concerned that ownership of a BMW motorcycle would, in turn, have associated connotations with their own self-identity image:

305

387. Jack

"I'd hate to think I was… I haven't got a problem with BMWs or anything like that, but when you see an old BMW there's an old chap on them, you know, 'you old git' (laughing)".

512. Helen

"(Referring to Jack) The reason you wouldn't buy one is because people would look at you and think 'look at that old fart'…"

493. Adam

"But I think all BMWs in this country are ridden by the kind of people who buy a BMW (laughing)… people who are almost bad… they're so dull it's untrue."

Since consumer interviewing for this study, BMW has implemented highly effective marketing, communications, and customer involvement programmes that have affected a change in cultural perceptions of the GS motorcycle brand, seeing its sales figures rocket and the company achieving prestigious manufacturers' awards. The phenomenal sales increase of GS motorcycles was significantly influenced by the release of 'The Long Way Round' (2004) documentary that featured Hollywood actors Ewan McGregor and Charlie Boorman riding BMW R1150 GS Adventure motorcycles on an epic round the world adventure trip. The construction, signification and influence of the BMW GS brand on the adventure-sports market sector, and on the construction of meaningful motorcyclist subcultural identity, is considered in detail in Section 9.5.2.

8.2.8   Scene Eight: Urban

Respondents clearly identified this image (illustrated in Figure 8.21) as an urban town/city scene:

222. Tracey

"That's in the town isn't it"

227. John

"… the city scene…"

169. Dan

"Just typical town, city scene..."

Figure 8.21: Scene Eight

A number of respondents, notably motorcycle rather than scooter owners, made negative comments when describing this image, using words such as *"boring," "hell"* and *"not pleasurable":*

321. Sam

"London traffic, lots of scooters flying around and lots of cars doing things they shouldn't do… That's not pleasurable biking…"

470. Helen

"Number eight, boring city scene."

317. Sam

"That just looks like hell."

Respondents placed the scooter on this scene, and combined it with a syntagm of clothing and accessories which included the Exero scooter range textile jacket together with the matching trousers, or jeans, plain grey flip-up helmet, either trainers or plain black boots, textile gloves and the top box (as illustrated in Figure 8.22). They described their choices:

367. Tom
"...Obviously there's a lot of traffic and the best thing to get through traffic is a moped, out of any bike."

483. Steven
"Scooter, waterproof jacket, waterproof trousers, flip-up lid... basic gear what they need really..."

227. John
"... Generally speaking scooter riders in my experience wear full face helmets, often wear a jacket, not always a proper one, usually will wear jeans, will not wear proper motorbike kit, because they don't go quick enough, and often wear trainers..."

Respondents noted the likelihood that city centre scooter riders could either be office workers who use them to commute to and from work, or despatch riders/couriers/deliverers who use them as a means of transport in carrying out their job:

366. Kirstie
"... maybe somebody who actually uses it on a day to day level, either to commute to work or, I suppose it could be somebody who rides a bike for their job couldn't it."

486. Steven
"Any commuter going to work, I would say office people, you know."

223. Bill
"A despatch rider"

Figure 8.22: Urban – Product Code

Dashed line (**---**) = this **or** this
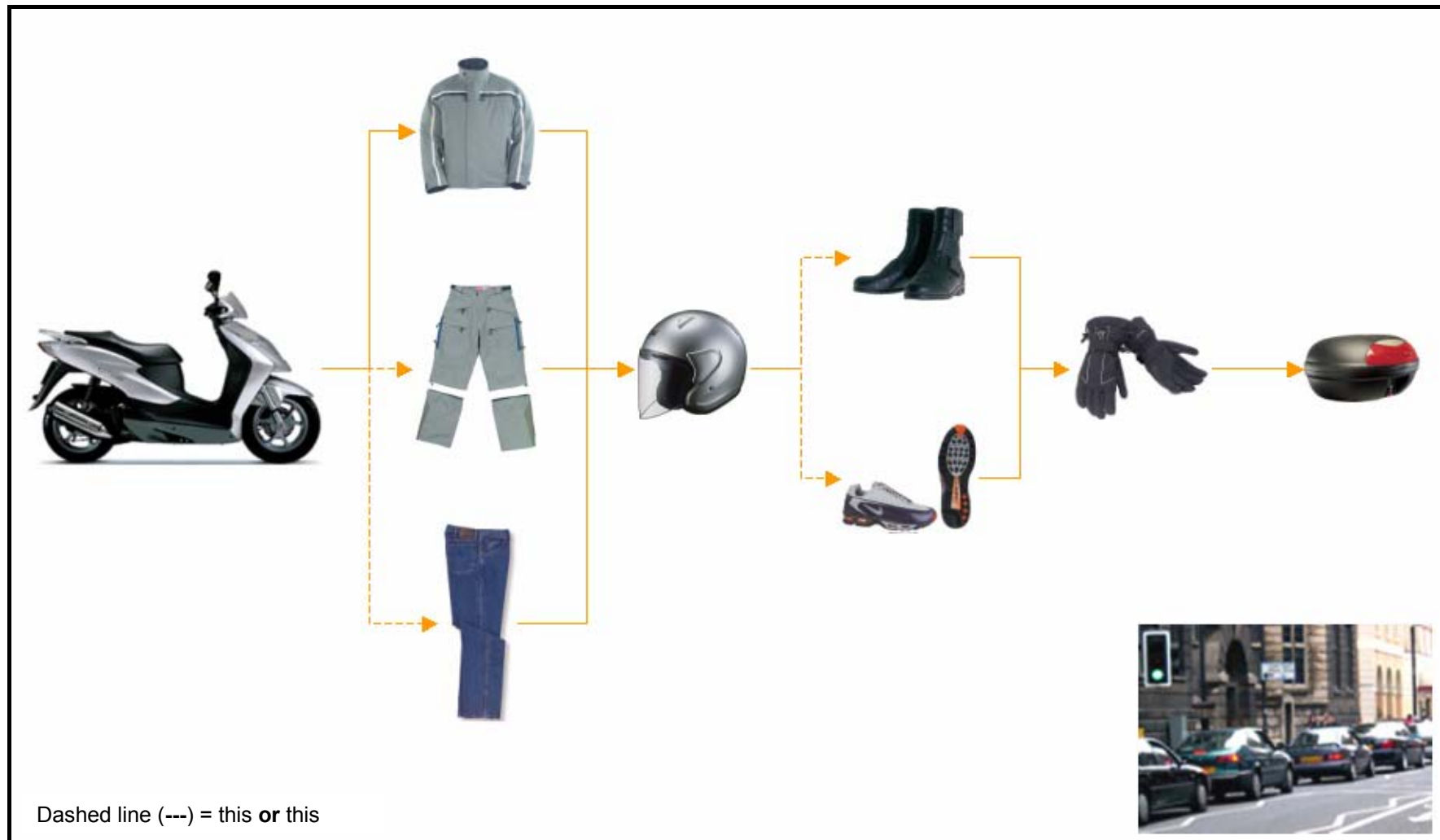
As was noted in the semiotic audit (Section 7.2.3), scooter use (increasingly) in the city centre provides a more economic, environmentally friendly, convenient and flexible means of transport, thus providing a relative *freedom* from city centre *constraints* such as traffic congestion and congestion charging. Bill and Matt identified the increases in scooter usage in London as people recognise that it frees them from congestion charges:

227. Bill

"That's probably more important in places like London where there's congestion charging. It's gonna increase people wanting bikes I would have thought"

488. Matt

"... more so in London now (scooter use increasing), with that congestion charge."

Both Chris and Katie identified the segment of the scooter market that consists of teenagers who not only purchase them as their first motorised means of transport, mobility and freedom, but also as a fashion item. They noted the importance to members of this segment of creating a *"trendy," "funky," "cool"* image from the discourse communicated through their choices of constellations of props:

243. Chris

"The clothing (for teenagers) therefore is a bit more fashion conscious and less about function."

160. Katie

"... we have trendy scooter rider with his trendy scooter gear, oh yes…"

210. Katie

"... (Scooter rider) Likes the fact that the scooters are a bit funky and a bit trendy and a bit fashionable, and you can buy all funky trendy fashionable gear with them. Plus the fact that they can beat any car away from the lights and they look kind of cool doing it, so. In a way it's a kind of, an image choice…"

Respondents identified that scooter riders, in general, are likely to fall into the younger age categories, and for the first time they noted that this type of motorcyclist could be either male or female. In scenes one to seven they had consistently used the pronoun 'he' to describe the characters they had built:

245. Chris
"Yeah that's a young person."

229. John
"Most of them are your sixteen, seventeen year olds…"

247. Chris
"Both (male and female)."

Relating to the negative comments made by respondents regarding the urban scene at the beginning of this section, it should be noted that when asked if there are any scenes from the eight total which they would not choose to be involved in, more than half of them stated the urban scene. Going back to the residual *freedom versus constraint* mythic battle, the city and its' congestion provides a source of constraint for motorcyclists. Helen and Maggie stressed that scooter riders are not authentic motorcyclists, thus they do not belong to the genuine motorcycle subculture or understand its ideology, and they do not have motorcycling aspirations:

235. John
… The only thing I wouldn't like to do is being in towns because that just takes the edge off it for me… it's much better being on the open road…"

472. Helen
"… someone who doesn't really, they're not really a biker to be honest. It's two wheels to get round the city which is easy. That's why I haven't disgraced it by putting any decent bikes on there."

336. Maggie
"Not that (scooter rider does not have any motorcycling aspirations), no (laughing)."

311

8.3 The 'Motorcyclist' Consumer Psyche – Constructs of Self-Identity

Data from depth interview narrative enabled a detailed perspective to be gained on the consumer motorcyclist psyche. Along with data generated from projective techniques, it was possible to explore meaningful layers of motorcyclist identity construction, and to gain an insight into respondents use of stories and props to construct and signify the desired 'motorcyclist' self. The critical role of the consumer in this adventure consumption subculture is explored.

8.3.1 Role Identity and Image

'Otherness', 'Uniqueness', and 'Sovereignty'

As noted in the core-values exercise (Section 7.3), respondents particularly enjoy involvement in motorcycling subculture and experience because it offers them an opportunity to do something different, to achieve as sense of 'otherness' that allows them to escape the constraints of modern society and the responsibilities of modern life. This was reflected in specific interview narrative:

243. Adam

"It's (motorcycling) something that is away from the normal hum drum, something that makes them (motorcyclists) feel like they're doing something special."

210. Tom

"… I do like to do things that are a bit different… you class that as different, if you say to somebody, 'oh you're a motorcyclist.'"

110. Katie

"… I like the fact that it's different…"

Involvement in what they perceive to be a 'different' sort of activity such as motorcycling has associated implications for respondents' role-identity development.

Being a motorcyclist allows them to *be* somebody different, and gives them a meaningful identity image to latch onto, which they believe is somehow unique and non-conforming to the rest of society:

123. Dan

"… I don't want to conform, I desire to be somebody different, I want to do my own thing…"

197. Rob

"I hate being stereotyped as the same as everybody else. Which is one reason why I got into the motorcycling thing in the first place."

246. Kirstie

"I was thinking what's special about it, there's lot's of people doing it, but you always feel very unique though…"

It is this transgression from social interdictions that Bataille ([1949] 1967) recognises raises the human being above the general collectivity, providing him/her with a sense of personal uniqueness and sovereignty; this is achieved through transgressive consumptive activities such as motorcycling.

Consistent with Goffman's (1959) pioneering work on presentation of the self, a number of respondents recognised how donning motorcycle related props such as the clothing and helmet, is effectively, wearing a mask. This mask provides them with anonymity, covering both their own and other peoples' preconceived ideas of their actual self. Famously, Prince William (illustrated previously in Figure 7.28) wears a tinted helmet visor to hide his actual self-identity. The symbolic discourse provided by respondents chosen combination of props subsequently frees them, and provides them with a sense of 'otherness' that allows them to perform and activate a phase of self-transition in which they can strive towards their desired role-identity and self-image:

211. Kirstie

"... although, that's one thing I like about biking, you've got a helmet on and nobody knows who you are…"

371. Jack

"... I mean we all like to put on a bit of a mask don't we."

373. Helen

"That's, I mean when I'm in mine I feel tough…"

Jack, in particular, noted how being kitted out in his motorcycle gear, with his motorcycle, offers him an escape from other people's perception of his self-image. He identifies the subsequent feelings of personal fulfilment that he gains from this:

361. Jack

"Anonymity… You're all in black, black visor, I hate people seeing me. When you get to traffic lights, I have my visor down, I just don't like people looking at me…

365. Jack

"I've always been, I mean, I'm tall. You know, at school, got red hair, you know, big ears, big nose, six foot something or other, I'm bound to be different…"

374. Jack

"I do like to be somebody else when I'm on the bike… It makes you feel good about yourself at the end of the day…"

Motorcyclist Image in Wider Society

When probed about how they believe members of wider society perceive motorcyclists today, respondents generally did not discuss the positive public attitudes described in Section 7.2.3, but they referred to the residual outlaw, bad-boy, rebel mythology associated with groups such as the Hell's Angels; perceived as villains and a threat to social hegemony:

84. Bill

"I think a lot of people the image is, sort of not good really because, I think a lot of the older films probably, the Hell's Angel type things and the Mods and Rockers and that sort of thing, going back to those days, it never portrayed bikers as being particularly good…"

247. Sam

"A lot of them do (members of society), a lot of them just presume you're nasty, rotten, evil, scum of the earth."

30. Matt

"… I would say the typical perception of a biker is a long-haired, greasy, head banging yob, with tattoos up their arms and, piercings through their nose and, you know what I mean."

It became evident from the cruiser motorcycle riders in the study that they, in fact, respect and aspire to some elements of this residual imagery. The cruiser motorcyclists interviewed were themselves very polite, well spoken, professional and welcoming people; perhaps not, on the surface, resembling the outlaw rebel type so much documented in the media. However, they did admit to respecting aspects of the ideology subscribed to by what they class as 'authentic bikers', and they appeared to gain satisfaction from constructing and signifying a self-image consistent with this:

46. Helen
"I think they think we're rebels, don't you?"

48. Helen
"… I mean I'm not a goody two-shoes… I do push the limits of things and people say, 'Oh Helen,' you know… I think that's part of the reason why I like biking…"

247. Adam
"… Some bikers do sort of stand out from a crowd. Hell's Angels for instance. They command attention, they command respect, they're very self-contained."

A number of respondents noted how they believe that there is a lack of understanding of the motorcyclist mentality in wider society:

88. Bill

"… I think there's people who just perceive bikers as just odd really… you know, why on earth would you want to ride a motorbike when you can sit in a nice comfortable car…"

577. Matt

"I find, and I think, we've often said, it's like you might as well be a Martian with two heads…it's 'what are these people?' you know what I mean."

It is this perceived lack of understanding of the motorcyclist ideology in wider society that, in a semiotic sense, differentiates motorcyclists from wider society, and gives them the sense of subcultural, unique and 'sovereign' identity that they so much desire; this marginalisation is what makes the subculture authentic. As respondents themselves noted, it is a desire to *do* something different and to *be* somebody different which is a key motivator for their involvement in the subculture/activity. Respondents did seem genuinely disappointed though at their marginalisation and exclusion from certain establishments on the basis of the negative connotations signified by the constellations of props that they wear:

251. Tom

"I have been in pubs before where I've not been treated well. I've been asked to leave a couple…"

207. Brian

"… you get certain establishments that say 'no leathers.' I mean, you look at some of the people who go in and the helmets cost more than what they're wearing and you think, they're excluding a category of people just because they've got their leathers on."

316

174. Rob

"You do get excluded, I mean I've been asked to leave pubs before now because I've been in leathers and you get, 'you've got to sit over there.'"

On a more positive note, respondents did identify the highly positive societal attitudes to motorcyclists and motorcycling that exist in Europe, and the somewhat 'romantic' narrative connotations that are associated with it there:

34. Bill

"Oh I couldn't believe driving across France this year, how people move over for you. I mean it's a bit different, you drive on the roads here and people will move out so you can't get past. In France they're all waving you by, I mean buses, lorries, everybody just letting you through, police even…"

98. Tracey

"… (the Europeans) treat you really nice… some of them came over and spoke to us didn't they and said, 'oh where have you been?' They think it's an adventure and… whereas here, if I say to somebody, they say, 'oh where are you going for your holidays?' and I say 'oh, I'm going through France,' and then you tell them you're going on a motorbike they look at you like you're not right (laughing)."

39. Matt

"… when we were in France, you know the French people over there were fantastic towards bikers. The attitude they have towards English bikers is absolutely fantastic. They were coming out in the streets waving and they couldn't do enough for you, you know what I mean…"

Going back to British motorcycling, a number of respondents recognised the current day dominance of supersports motorcycles and motorcyclists who choose their props and codes of 'riding behaviour' to connote an identity consistent with the myth of *racing* and *speed*. They described negative public perception of this kind of motorcyclist, who in their opinions are widely perceived as a 'social nuisance':

156. Angela

"I think there's a minority that don't like bikers because they just see them as a nuisance. A lot of people, especially the bikes with the loud cans and things, they see them as a nuisance."

52. Adam

"I think you get a lot more… I would say motorcyclists… people that are into fashions that wear the colour coordinated leathers, that take out their bikes on sunny weekends… and they've definitely changed perceptions."

108. Rob

It used to be the hairy, tattooed, greasy haired Hell's Angels, come to town, eat children and leave. Now I think we've probably been branded a bit more of a social nuisance for the reasons I've just said to you, the people that can't ride the things properly, they have accidents, go belting through villages at a thousand miles an hour with race pipes on… and the people cut them up in traffic..."

It is hardly surprising that the respondents believe supersports style motorcyclists are perceived in this way when one considers the negative popular newspaper media portrayal which surrounds them, as documented in the semiotic audit (Section 7.2.4).

It was only the female respondents in the study who identified the reality of the increasingly dominant communication code of *positive public attitudes* towards motorcycling in British society today:

156. Angela

"I suppose generally a lot of people have got a lot of time for bikers, the people I know are all for it. I mean, people that I know from work and that aren't bikers themselves, they're all quite excited about the fact that I've got a bike, they think it's really good and really exciting."

116. Katie

"… I think a lot of people look at it and just think, 'oh it looks ever so exciting but I wouldn't have the nerve to have a go.'… I think to be honest now it's a more

commonly held viewpoint that people kind of look at you and think, 'oh it looks kind of fun, but I couldn't do it, I'm married with four kids.'"

Communitas/Brotherhood

The dominant code of *communitas/brotherhood,* which appeared so strongly in the results of objective one (Chapter 7) and the self-assembly collage exercise (Section 8.2), was supported in respondent interview narrative. They recognised that although motorcycling in itself is a very individualistic activity, enabling an escape from the confines of society and the building of a desired unique self-identity, there is a great deal of fulfilment to be gained from conformity to the ideology of specific motorcycling subgroups:

62. Rob
" It's an individualistic thing, I mean no one's ever gonna tell you what to ride… that's my choice."

148. Brian
"Individually conforming (laughing)… In a way it's not, because that's why I think there are some things about conformist and non-conformist, and in a way you do conform, because like I say we don't like sports bikes, we're cruiser type people and I've no doubt that we'll join a V Twin club."

213. Brian
"… I think, when we're kitted out in our leathers we tend to go somewhere like a bike meet, where you conform, you're conforming. That's why your conformist, non-conformist question is very interesting, because in a way you do conform."

Brian, above, identified a conformity versus non-conformity argument, reflecting on how, on the one hand, motorcyclists do not conform to wider society, but on the other hand they enjoy and gain satisfaction from conformity to the ideology of their chosen motorcycle subculture. For the respondents in the study, involvement in this subculture is a lifestyle choice, which gives them a reference point with which to determine and build meaning in their lives:

66. Angela

"… It's kind of like, it's a way of life, it's not just a hobby. A lot of the people I know are bikers, they're into bikes and they just do biking, especially in the summer, so it's a way of life."

110. Chris

"I guess there's like a weird sort of brotherhood about bikers. You've got a point of reference in your life, if you know somebody else is a biker, there's always someone…"

49. Bill

"… it's just a topic of conversation, when you start a job and you find someone else who's got a bike and you've got a topic there, and invariably you bump into these people at the local places. I know quite a lot of people that are bikers, so yeah, you know, from a social point of view it's good."

Determination of self-meaning in one's life is made easier for motorcyclists as they prescribe to existing codes on which the ideology of their chosen subculture is based. These include codes of 'behaviour', both on and off the motorcycle, as well as 'product', 'dress' and 'language' codes. All members who adhere to a specific motorcycling ideology follow the same codes and as such share a common bond of understanding. Supporting the work of Belk et al (2003), respondents 'desire' codes of motorcycle related consumption products. They hope that ownership and symbolic display of these 'identity codes' will help facilitate social relations, join them with idealised others, and direct their social destiny.

Respondents highlighted the social nature of motorcycling and the ease with which a natural bond, or brotherhood, forms between themselves and other members of their subculture:

16. Rob

"Yeah it's a very social activity. Most of the guys I know I've met through riding…"

48. Tom

"Yeah that's quite good actually, you can go anywhere, you can be on your bike in your leathers and there's somebody else and you can start up a conversation with them straight away, never met them before in your life, and you've got something in common…"

193. Tracey

"You don't go out looking for people, it's just… natural."

The easy and natural development of friendships and common bond of understanding described here fulfils a basic human need for belongingness, which is becoming more and more difficult to achieve in today's increasingly fragmented postmodern society. The desire for communitas development represented here is consistent with other high-risk adventure pursuits, which were noted in the Literature Review (Section 5.3) and support the work of Turner (1969, 1974), Arnould and Price (1993), Celsi et al (1993) and Varley and Crowther (1997).

Matt described his and his wife's role integration into the motorcycle subculture after purchasing their motorcycle. Beginning as 'outsiders' they gradually became more integrated into their chosen group to the extent that now, in his opinion, they form key, authentic members of the group. Matt appeared to be very proud of his fully-fledged status of group membership and was proud to describe the group branded clothing that they were in the process of assembling:

20. Matt

"Oh we've met a fantastic group of people through the bike. When we first bought the bike there was obviously just me and my wife. Then we joined the local bike club, and then we got to go on holiday with them and, you know, we've sort of become a key member of this group now and… the social side of it is brilliant…"

22. Matt

"We meet up once a month… The thing we're talking about at the minute is, we're having all branded clothing now, which is branded 'Biker's Rider's Club.'"

Subsequently the range of Biker's Rider's Club clothing was completed and can be found displayed on their group website (as illustrated in Figure 8.23). Wearing the group branded clothing, which is meant for use off the motorcycle, is a highly symbolic display of social group affiliation and identity.

Figure 8.23: Biker's Rider's Club Clothing

Source: www.planetbikers.org

Shared Group Riding Experience

Respondents noted the feelings of satisfaction that are to be gained from the sociality of shared group riding experience:

54. John
"There's about twelve or thirteen (people) that I know that I can just go out for a ride with…"

327. Sam
"It's nice because you get a really good buzz off the buzz that they're having… I mean when I used to ride about with forty or fifty bikes, I used to ride about with a bike club and most of them were Harleys and the buzz you used to get out of that. I mean

adrenaline, just the sound and the fact that you were there with them were absolutely brilliant…"

When riding out together, as some refer to it, 'as a pack,' motorcyclists share a heightened, ecstatic state of emotion and shared-flow, which ultimately strengthens the bond within the group. Respondents did, however, admit to a degree of *machismo* that exists when groups of male motorcyclists ride out together:

249. Tom
"… when there's a few of you out, then you do want to push yourself… You try to keep up, you don't want to get left behind, so you might have to take a few more chances to get by them or whatever… Some of the guys will go out on their own and they're very safe and quite reserved in the way they ride their bike, but when there's a few of you out there you change. Even the most mildest person I think becomes a little bit more hot headed and takes a few more chances, me included, in the past I've done that."

130. Rob
"Oh it's testosterone overload…"

208. Angela
"If there's a group of guys then they do have to be the hero…"

By performing on such a public stage, motorcyclists open themselves up to an amount of psychological risk, which occurs from the social validation they are likely to receive from their peers. Respondents admittedly feel a pressure to push their performance limits to, and sometimes beyond, the edge during group riding. The perceived successful outcome of taking such a psychological risk is increased personal self-esteem as well as increased respect and authentic role integration within the group.

Bike Meets, Retail Outlets and Lots of Bike Talk

Supporting previous findings (Sections 7.2.2 and 8.2.3), respondents recognised the significance of bike meets and retail outlets for subcultural social integration and *communitas* development:

174. Bill

"There's a lot of friendliness in meetings really… it's a different atmosphere at a bike meeting, it's a friendly atmosphere…"

691. Matt

"There's times I've come down here (retail outlet) and I'm not interested in buying anything, you know what I mean, you'll have a laugh and a chat and probably talk about what you've just done or if you've been on a ride out… they (the staff) have a laugh with us, we have a laugh with them, and they're a good bunch of lads."

393. Rob

"Totally (people attend retail outlet purely for social/communitas purposes), totally and utterly, because it is, I mean this place (retail outlet) has got a reputation for being rather social. There's a coffee machine there and it's always on. You can always pop in for a coffee and a quick chat if the guys aren't too busy."

Respondents were proud to gain role-authenticity by identifying their close relationship with retail outlet staff, who they perceive as expert, authentic role-models. Interestingly Katie, below, notes that this is taking the *"social stage"* a little further:

268. Katie

"… Again I think it's part of a lifestyle thing and, I know a lot of people come here on Saturday, they're not gonna buy anything, they just come here to talk to people, you know and it's a kind of social thing… We go out on the booze together (referring to the staff), we go on ride outs together, you know. So kind of taking the social stage a little further, you know…"

Also as identified previously (Section 8.2.3), personal fulfilment and role authenticity are gained through much indulgence in 'bike talk' with other motorcyclists. Respondents noted the ease with which conversations begin and narrative is exchanged between motorcyclists as well as the role of 'bike talk' within their social circles:

28. Tom

"... we'll ride somewhere (with his group), we'll stop, we'll talk about bikes, you know, 'I got that corner a bit wrong,' or 'I got my knee down on that one,' and then we'll come back and go to somebody's house and have a drink, and talk about bikes again..."

36. Tom

"...whenever you find, somewhere where there's bikes and bikers then there's automatically conversations... We have a good time wherever we go, but because there's so many of us you see, we all kind of tend to stick together. But, yeah, anyone who wants to talk about bikes then we love it, yeah it's great."

491. Jack

"... It's just that sometimes it's nice to go and meet other people and just talk bikes. They don't even talk about politics or religion or anything like that, they just talk about bikes, what you've done to it you know, and it's nice... You come away from something like that with a warm feeling."

Back to Biker Wars – Residual V's Dominant Mythology

From the data represented thus far on communitas/brotherhood, one would imagine that ownership of a motorcycle automatically infers inauguration into a huge, friendly, welcoming brotherhood. Several previous sections have hinted that this is not, in fact, the case. Specifically, the magazine analysis of the semiotic audit (Section 7.2.3) reported in consumer letters, a lack of nodding between motorcyclists from different motorcycle subgroups/market sectors and the consequent breakdown of communitas that results. After all, the motorcyclist 'nod' is perhaps the most significant, symbolic

gesture of shared subcultural ideology. Angela noted her lack of understanding of this communication breakdown:

210. Angela
"... They do tend to stay separate (cruiser and supersports bike riders), which is quite strange really because when I first got into biking one of the things I did like about it was, how everybody nods to each other you know, and how everybody's so friendly to each other and I loved it. But, the more I've been riding the more I've noticed that, like the cruisers don't tend to nod at the sports bike riders and vice versa, and it's like why not, we're all bikers the same, and they tend to not talk to each other so much, you know."

The openly discriminatory comments made by supersports motorcycle owners Steven and Matt, against cruiser motorcycle riders in scene six of the self-assembly collage exercise (Section 8.2.6) also reflects this communication breakdown. The clear division between cruiser motorcycle riders and supersports riders reflects a kind of 'tribalism' that has resulted from market fragmentation and changing motorcycle subcultural ideologies over time. The cruiser motorcyclists in the study are holding onto, and following myths related to residual mythology of the Golden Age, whereas supersports motorcyclists prescribe to codes that reflect dominant *racing* and *speed* mythology of the current day. Specific differences between these ideologies appear to have split cruiser and supersports motorcyclists into two quite distinct groups.

The cruiser motorcyclists perceive themselves as genuine 'bikers,' and for them, role-authenticity is gained from following codes of residual cruiser-motorcycle ideology of the past. They own cruiser style motorcycles and wear black leathers and jeans, which anchor an image associated with 1950s Rockers. They believe they truly live the 'biker' lifestyle, with dedication to motorcycling throughout the year. They have detailed technical knowledge of motorcycles which is reflected in authentic narrative:

133. Sam
"... A biker, I would say is a Harley or Chop or custom bike, em… walks round in his leathers all the time, rides the bike pretty much as his only form of transport… I

would say a bike is something that lives here twenty four hours a day and not just Sunday afternoon…"

57. Adam

"If you trace the ancestry back to the Rockers and so on, rather than the weekend attraction… I think of myself as a biker. The bike's gotta be unfaired, and I do like black leather jackets and jeans. And I do like the whole bike scene rather than just riding, I like to talk to bikers and go in biker pubs."

178. Tom

"… If you talk to people that have been into bikes all their life. You know I can tell you every bike that I've had, the reg., what I've done to it… you speak to a lot of bikers, 'oh yeah I have the same bike, did you do this mod on yours?' and then people that aren't into bikes or claim to be into bikes, you start talking about things and they've not got a clue."

A number of cruiser motorcycle riders in the study refused to refer to sports bike riders as 'bikers,' claiming that there is a difference between 'biker' and 'motorcyclist.' They do not perceive 'motorcyclists' to be authentic bikers, but rather they are 'slaves to fashion,' occasional riders with only surface knowledge of motorcycling. They do not understand 'biking etiquette' and as for their props, they ride 'plastic rockets' and wear 'disco leathers':

176. Tom

"There is a difference, yeah, there is a difference. I think, if somebody tells you they're a biker and they've got a bike and they never use it then they're not really a biker. Unfortunately, like we said earlier it's become fashionable, bikes are fashionable… I like to think I'm not a slave to fashion, pop, which unfortunately a lot of people what I class as motorcyclists are."

53. Kirstie

"…But you do find now… because it's fashionable and, there are less bikers around and more motorcyclists that there's less, it's like they don't know the rules, biking etiquette. But… a lot of people nowadays, pass us on our bike and they won't sort of

look at you because, you don't fit in with the fashionable people… people on new bikes say all sorts of things don't they."

160. Katie

"… My ex-husband, because he's really into classic bikes, so he thinks that all these people with one-piece leathers and sports bikes are Power Rangers, and so he calls them Power Rangers…"

One can understand the source of the communication breakdown between the two groups of motorcyclists when considering the differences in their 'aspired to' ideologies. However, one would have thought the overarching desire for the myths of *freedom* and *adventure,* which run through the veins of all kinds of motorcyclist, would have some impact in bridging this gap.

8.3.2 Narrative Picturing Technique: Fantasies and the Ideal/Semiotic Self

The narrative picturing exercise, in which respondents pictured and narrated images of their fantasy ideal motorcycling moments and thus their ideal/semiotic motorcyclist self identity, revealed two key themes, namely *freedom* and *adventure;* specifically, *performance skill, mastery* and *flow* associated with adventure. These themes reflect the core overarching myths of motorcycle subcultural involvement/experience identified previously in the core-values exercise (Section 7.3).

Freedom

The exercise revealed a result that was initially quite surprising. Even though they represented a diverse range of motorcycling styles, when asked to imagine the picture of their ideal motorcycle fantasy, respondents consistently described the *American Dream,* similar to that described previously in scene five of the self-assembly collage exercise. More than half of the respondents in the study described a picture that included themselves riding in America, possibly on Route 66, on a Harley Davidson cruiser:

367. Brian

"...I'd love a Fat Boy bike, in America, cruising down Route 66, I mean that's what I always dreamed about when I first got on a bike wasn't it, I've always wanted to go to America and cruise down Route 66 on a Harley, I'd like to do that, that would be great..."

183. Dan

"Very similar to the Harley touring America... Not the type of bike that I've got now, which is, you know it thrives on revs, you have to drive it fast. Something like a Harley that'll plod along, like Route 66, just doing something like that..."

526. Helen

"Yeah, I'd like to own a Harley Davidson. Not one that could have a pillion, it's got to be a single seater, just for me.... I'd like it to be maroon, a maroon Harley Davidson Sportster or something like that, that I could put a couple of bags over the back and get myself togged up, and feel really confident and just, go..."

Brian and Maggie described the clothing combination that they are wearing in their ideal fantasy images. This is consistent with the American cruising identity code:

375. Brian

"Definitely black leathers and, I would say probably the army type, which is a bit Hells Angel, the bearded look."

381. Maggie

"I think it's just, I know it's boring but he's just kind of said it all (Brian), only my leathers would have fringes on them."

The point noted by Helen above, that she fantasises about riding alone on a single seater Harley was also reflected by other respondents, who noted that in their fantasy ideal they would be either totally alone, or with their partner (their 'other half') only:

196.   Tony

"On my own actually."

379. Brian

"… It's your piece of road, your piece of the world, eh… and you're just enjoying it together."

389. Maggie

"…We like our own time, we like our own space."

This lonesome fantasy ideal is perhaps surprising when one considers the significant role of sociality, communitas/brotherhood in motorcycle subculture. However, it is the overarching quest for freedom, so much represented by the mythic American Dream, which forms the substance of the respondents' ideal fantasy images. Involvement in the American dream fantasy implies the ultimate freedom from all kinds of constraint. Respondents noted *freedom* of space, from traffic congestion, from other people and responsibilities as well as and freedom for *adventure:*

533. Jack

"I think a lot of people get fed up with ties, you know, you tend to be tied down with a mortgage and you know, kids. I think it's nice to have a fantasy just to like go off into the sunset… and stop…"

536. Helen

"Freedom, yeah, yeah."

537. Jack

"(Referring to freedom) So you're going for your own adventure, I think."

Jack above, reflected on a fantasy that involves a romantic narrative of riding the bike off into the sunset. This is a typical western cultural romantic narrative, and a number of other respondents also described the hot, sunny weather in their imagined ideal pictures:

377. Brian

"Oh gorgeous, the sun is beating down (Brian smiling), the sky's blue, gorgeous."

198.   Tony

"Beautiful, nice and sunny."

254. Tracey

"(Laughing) Beautiful, sunny and warm and… It'd just all be lovely."

When probed about how they are feeling in their ideal fantasy picture, respondents openly began to smile and laugh, and used positive words, which again significantly included *freedom* and *adventure*:

272. Tracey

"Oh, nice and just freed, you can do what you want and the weather's nice and everything. Just like, the open road and (laughing)…"

391. Maggie

"Free, away from everybody."

191.   Dan

"Pretty much like a lot of the words in your list (core-values exercise list – APPENDIX E) which is freedom, happy, adventurous, all them type of things."

Even Matt, who had previously (Section 8.2.6) made such derogatory comments about cruising motorcyclists and their style, eagerly narrated an ideal fantasy that has connotations with the 'American Dream'. He noted that in the fantasy that sends a shiver down his spine, he is cruising in America or Canada, on a Honda Gold Wing luxury touring bike, wearing cruising style clothing and kit:

525. Matt

"Eh… me ultimate fantasy right, would be to ride an old man's bike, right which is a Honda Gold Wing, yeah, and if I was going around America or Canada for two or

three months, you know what I mean. Just chill out, money isn't an object, you know, I've won the lottery, I've bought the bike and you just go out there and just do it"

533. Matt

"... I'm gonna break the rules I've just said in there, you know, it'd be like an open-face helmet, obviously in America, probably, dare I say it, trainers on and jeans, you're not hurrying like, you know what I mean... Just a normal leather jacket like, and just, sixty, seventy mile an hour, you're just going on these roads, you don't see anybody for hours and hours and hours."

535. Matt

"Sometimes it sends a shiver down my spine... It's a fantasy, you know, that one day I might be able to achieve without winning the lottery I don't know, but, it's a long way off for me I must admit."

Rob and Steven both narrated ideal fantasy narratives that related to touring in Europe, thus more consistent with scene two of the self-assembly collage (Section 8.2.2). Like the American dream narratives noted above, their core desire is again for freedom and associated elements of adventure and fun.

Adventure: Performance Skill, Mastery and Flow

For three respondents in the study, their fantasy picture involves moments of intense *flow experience* and *mastery*. This result is not surprising when one considers that skills development and mastery are gained from the deliberate confrontation of danger in high-risk adventure activities such as motorcycling. Tom and Chris described snapshots of *flow experience*, in which there is a total merging of action and awareness, as defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1975):

570. Tom

"... It's that perfect road that you're always looking for... Some days you can go and the weather's perfect, the roads are perfect, your bike's perfect and you feel perfect, and everything is just great really, it's just, everything coming together at the same time, making a really good day..."

263.   Chris

"I'm nailing a bend… It would be on the roads that I know… and I would be just taking the bend, at a forty five degree angle, swoop round it and scrape the toe pegs, that's it, and stand up."

271.   Chris

"(Feeling) Warm… There's a certain satisfaction in knowing that you're going round… I guess that's part of the reason I wouldn't want to be with anybody else, because I don't want to follow anybody else's line… It doesn't have to be a big thing, it doesn't have to be a whole barrel of experiences all at once, just that one moment that… And it wouldn't matter if the rest of the day I b*llocksed everything up, got everything wrong, over-braked, under-braked, you know, ended up stopping so I could… That one moment would be enough for the day, it's that one bend you turn every time you take the bike out that's right, and that's the ideal moment."

Angela reflected upon an ideal/semiotic self in a fantasy in which she imagines her self as the 'heroine' of the racetrack

220.   Angela

"My ideal fantasy is to ride like one of the racers on a racetrack, just to be able to ride like them would be so fantastic, to go so fast would just be so exciting, I'd love it. That's my fantasy."

226.   Angela

"Well, I'm on my own at the front of the pack with my knee down riding round my favourite track the Laguna Seca in America, and it's got part of the track that's called the Cork Screw. What it is it comes up over… you come up to this corner and it's a sudden drop like that (gesturing with arm), and it just bends to the right, bends to the left, bends to the right. Fantastic bit of track, I can just see myself going down it."

232.   Angela

"I'm wearing all my race leathers."

238.   Angela

"(Feeling) Oh fantastic, yeah."

Perhaps surprisingly, Angela was the only supersports motorcycle owner in the study who narrated an ideal fantasy of performance mastery on the racetrack. The other supersports motorcyclists in the study reflected on ideal moments related to the core myth of freedom as noted above.

8.3.3   Stories as Signifiers of 'Motorcyclist' Self-Identity

Analysis of the short stories that consumers spontaneously broke into during their interviews, revealed a number of key motorcycle related events, or epiphanies that have rich personal and subcultural meanings. A high proportion of the moral tales that respondents narrated were based around a few core subject areas, or key events in their motorcycling lives. Narration of these tales provided discourse, and thus signification, of both individual and subcultural motorcyclist self-identity.

Teenage Years –Personal Meaning and Motorcyclist Self-Identity

The first epiphany that respondents repeatedly narrated, involved romantic moral tales about their early experiences of motorcycling and first motorcycle purchases. Respondents focused on their teenage years and the life-changing period of self-transition and development of personal meaning that ownership of a motorcycle provided them with. At a time when they were exploring their own multiplicity of possible role identities, becoming a motorcyclist provided them with a clear self-direction that eased the transition from childhood to adulthood. Tom's story reflected upon his childhood fantasy of motorcycles, which became a reality when he managed to purchase his first motorcycle at the age of sixteen after struggling to work out of school hours on a local market to save up money:

2. Tom

"Em, since I was six… yeah, my cousins were about ten years older than me, they all had bikes. There was a big park just across the road, with my mates, just hanging

around there. That was in the times when everyone had bikes when they were sixteen, it was innocent it wasn't like joy riding. They let me ride up and down and we used to push bike to Mallory Park which is about twelve miles away, when we were kids and it just went from there. Got the papers, motorcycling when I was younger and just kept reading them. Got my push bike, got to sixteen, got a motorbike and just took it from there."

204. Tom

"...I've always loved bikes from a young age, they've always been a real passion, anything to do with bikes. You know, I started saving up at thirteen for my first bike, working on the market in Leicester, in the morning before school then after school. I think when I left school I had about a hundred and ten quid, you know, to get a bike, I just spent everything just to get a bike so yeah."

For Tom, ownership of his first motorcycle marked his personal role transition from the confines of childhood to the *mobility* and *freedom* of adulthood:

86. Tom

"... I mean it's like, when you're a child and you get your first push bike and your mum don't let you go any further than the corner, then it's round the block and then it gradually gets further and further, and then all of a sudden you get to a point where you can get a motorbike and you can go anywhere and it's really exciting, the fact that you can go off to London, so I went to London and it was great. You know, I just rode there and rode back, that's all it was but it was like 'London,' I was star struck..."

A number of respondents narrated romantic stories about the adversity that they had to overcome from their parents opposition to their involvement in motorcycling before they could purchase their own motorcycle and make the self-defining transition to adulthood:

6. Chris

"And then I sat and looked at the bikes in a shop once, and my mum was there, and then we went to my grandmas, and my grandma said to my mother, 'why won't you let

335

him have a bike?' 'I don't trust them, I don't trust them,' and my grandma actually said to me, 'if she gave you the money what would you do with it,' I said 'I'd go and buy a bike' Just because of this conversation my mum relented and said 'ok you can buy a bike, but the only way you can do it is the day you get it you go on a training course.'"

22. John

"... The funny thing was my mum, she said I couldn't have a bike, so I wanted to go to a motorcycle race at Mallory Park, so I was gonna go in the car by myself and my mum says 'oh I wouldn't mind coming,' I said 'yeah you can do if you like,' my dad says 'yeah I'll come as well,' and, we were sitting in the traffic and all these bikes were going, you know, past. You can just imagine the scene, we were stuck in this traffic for the best part of an hour and all these bikes were going by, she says 'I can understand your fascination with motorbikes John,' she says 'yes you can have one' and she actually helped me out getting one."

Sam's story, below, described the difficulties and adversity of his teenage years, when his parents separated and he was left in a confused situation renting a bedsit that he hated. He found meaning and consistency in his life by developing a passion for motorcycles which was ignited by an older, and influential motorcyclist friend:

207. Sam

"... When I were sixteen my parents split up, I moved into a bed sit in Doncaster because I didn't want to go with either of them, sort of thing. And I hated it that much. I don't honestly think I spent one night, even though I paid for this place, I don't think I spent a night in there. I'd just go and crash on my mates' floors and stuff. And in the end I moved in with this biker, Fred Carter was his name, for a good couple of years, and he used to ride an old Triumph Bonneville."

209. Sam

"He had a big passion for old bikes... and I just used to be in the garage with him day and night."

Adam told the romantic tale about how motorcycles play a central role in his very existence:

196. Adam

"… My mum, for instance, she would really like me to stop. She actually really got to the stage where she just thought he's always gonna have a bike so I might as well tell him now. When she first met my dad, he was riding bikes and he was with someone else, and it was the someone else, he'd actually come over (from Germany) to visit. My dad rode off into the sunset and my mum grabbed him… So if it wasn't for motorcycles I wouldn't have been here."

Tragic Motorcycling Accidents

A high proportion of the moral epiphanies that respondents narrated during their interviews related to tragic motorcycling accidents in which motorcyclists had been killed. *Death*, and its mythic opposition *life*, were identified by respondents in the core-values exercise (Section 7.3) as core myths relating to the uncertainty of adventurous motorcycle experience; supported in a story told by Matt and Steven about a tragic fatality that occurred during one of their group ride outs. Moral tales of death were commonly told throughout the consumer interviews:

98. Tom

"…The guy who I bought my bike off, em, it was a year old and he was letting it go for silly money and I said 'why?' and he goes 'oh my friend's just been killed and I never want to look at one again…'"

46. Sam

"… One of my mates got killed last year by some little pr*t with no insurance, no tax, no licence, in his uncle's transit van, pulled out in front of him, killed him and ran off and left him."

84. Katie

"… I've known people that've died, but not being with me at the time, there's been three people in the last year that I knew that have died, not that I knew particularly well, but I knew, you know…"

One would consider, on such a serious subject, why would respondents appear so enthusiastic to narrate stories of tragic accidents? Perhaps narrating such a story within one's subculture and within wider society provides a discourse that reflects the *risky* nature of motorcycling activity, and signifies the adventurous, risk-taking self-image that the motorcyclist desires. The moral of the story and the message is thus, motorcycling is an adventurous, high-risk activity and requires a certain kind of 'thrill-seeker' for involvement within it and within the associated subculture. If this is the case, these kind of tragic stories aid in authentic role construction and signification. As noted in the core-values exercise, respondents are aware of their own mortality, but their passion for the experience and the attendant self-identity implications drive their motivation for the activity. This was reflected in Rob's narrative:

72.   Rob

"… you think about it and yeah, you've all lost friends through biking, but then again it's not a crime to die doing what you love is it."

74.   Rob

"It's not is it?"

Surviving Motorcycling Accidents

Respondents were also particularly enthusiastic to narrate dramatic, romantic and sometimes humorous stories about instances of adventure breakdown, where they had personally been involved in motorcycling accidents and often sustained injuries and breaks to their bodies as a result, and often terminal injuries to their motorcycles:

82. Tony

"I suppose I could have killed myself a couple of times. One was my own fault, one wasn't. Em… once I was a passenger, and a guy, Z1000 Kawasaki thousand took me for a spin… You probably don't know Coventry but… Came round a roundabout near where I used to live, and then sort of opened it up and, he just opened it up and changed up a gear and…"

86. Tony

"My head hit the floor and then I thought, I best let go here. So after tumbling a while, a fair distance I sort of got propped up against a tree. I got took to the hospital, I'd fractured my ankle and have various, broke my arm… sorry no, fractured my ankle on that occasion, em… bruises and grazes and that. And then the other time, almost twenty years ago I was coming up here into this road here (pointing to a road beside his house) and I just turned in and I hit some gravel and the bike just sort of went away from me, and I sort of spun into the road and then a car coming the other way, luckily it had slowed down, hit me so I fractured some ribs, and broke my arm, and cuts and bruises."

92. Matt

"Yeah, the thing is people say, I did a charity event last year through Asda, and I was telling you about Bruntingthorpe, and I was taking it down the strip and I was doing two hundred miles per hour out of the bike, you know, it was fantastic, we had a great day, packed up at the end of the night, on the bike, coming home, first corner I come to, thirty five miles per hour, I was straight off, you know what I mean, five grand's worth of damage to the bike, put me in hospital for two days…"

John, who (as noted in the core-values exercise) had suffered a serious motorcycling accident just three weeks prior to his interview, narrated a very detailed story about the series of events that surrounded the accident. He clearly, and somewhat proudly, described the injuries that he had sustained:

96. John

"…I've got a fracture, just in my wrist here, they've sort of put plate to run it together, and I've got one about four or five inches above my knee, and one in my hip,

and what they've done is the hip part of it, they've actually joined, all the way through it, joined the two together and they've put some various bolts and plates on it. Em, there's about a thousand pounds worth of titanium in me... So, I'm holding on."

He became particularly emotional however, and tears welled up in his eyes when he described the terminal injuries that his Aprilia supersports motorcycle had sustained. This points to an extremely strong bond and relationship that existed between John and his motorcycle:

18. John
"It's in two, literally."

20. John
"The action of the tyre, the front wheel of the tyre hit the car, has chopped the bike in two halves."

During their stories of accidents and adversity, a number of respondents stressed the importance of continued commitment to the motorcycling ethos, of not giving up. They compared getting back on a motorcycle to getting back inside a car:

92. Matt
"... and people were saying 'oh why don't you get rid of it (the motorcycle)?' but if you have a car crash, you just get back in your car don't you, people don't say, 'oh, you're never gonna drive your car again,' but because it's a bike, they think... you know what I mean."

36. John
"...I took my documents in to the police station and the girl behind the counter says 'are you gonna give up now?' and I says, 'well, if you had an accident in a car would you stop driving a car?' she says, no, I says, 'no, well what do you think?'"

Such stories told within motorcycling subcultural circles provide a moral message of acceptance of the real *danger* and *risks* associated with motorcycle activity. This does not stop 'authentic' motorcyclists from pursuing the activity. Rather, accident stories

and associated injury scars are added to their accolade of motorcycling narratives, which ultimately add to their discourse of authentic motorcyclist identity.

A number of respondents clearly stressed that the motorcycling accident that they had been involved in was not, in fact, their personal fault or the fault of the motorcycle. They pointed the finger at other motorists, in particular car drivers:

28. Brian
"The first time I rode since the accident was driving that back from the garage on Saturday… But I still felt confident in riding because it wasn't a fault of the bike that caused the accident, it was another motorist."

70. Rob
"There is a guy that worked here, or he still does work here (retail outlet). I think you've met him, Richard, he had a fairly hefty smash in March, and the guy is still in and out of hospital now… Richard is a really good mate, and I know the guy could ride a bike but it wasn't his fault."

The narrative provided in this sort of moral message only acts to further fuel the mythic *freedom versus constraint* battle where motorcycles represent freedom and cars represent constraint.

Perhaps ironically, a number of respondents, Tom and Sam in particular, made light of this very serious subject and told humorous stories of their past motorcycling accidents:

66. Tom
"… It's just when I was younger you try to impress girls and I saw these two girls standing outside a chip shop so I did a wheelie near the chip shop, quite a good one actually then I stopped and then I flicked my side stand down and let the bike go and it was over a drain and it fell down this drain and I broke my ankle."

255. Sam

"...we went to Silverstone and I went on the back of my mate with a Bonneville, riding along, and I'd got an open face matt black helmet and he'd got an open face matt black helmet, leather jacket and jeans, big boots… and he saw some of his mates at the side of the road parked up outside this shop… well he knocked it down a gear and pulled a wheelie… well the last thing, because we were just tootling along on this big old Bonneville. I'd got my arms behind my back on the back rest, and the next thing I knew the front wheel was five foot off the floor and my head was scraping on the tarmac."

He continued:

257. Sam

"My feet were hooked underneath his armpits (laughing), I'd fallen off and… I were just like 'I don't know what to do here.' I couldn't physically do owt, because me feet were hooked underneath his armpits, me boots, up here (gesturing)…"

Ultimately, ritualistic display of accident scars appears to be a normal behaviour in motorcyclist circles where they form tangible evidence, supporting stories of adventure engagement. As became clearly evident during participant observations, motorcyclists appear to enjoy a great deal of story telling, and admit that the tales often get taller, thus the stories exaggerated as the storyteller strives for social acceptance and admiration of his peers. This was supported by Tom:

38. Tom

"...Everybody's got a tale to tell. I mean my friend who's just come out of hospital, he's just had a big accident, and he'll have his scars out, telling you how he did it. You know, he'll be saying he went round a corner at a hundred and sixty and fell off, when he was only really doing about forty."

42. Tom

"Yeah and we all have stories, em… I mean one time my friend did a wheelie and his wife came off the back, you know, that kind of thing. But yeah, you must have heard lots of tales."

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Tragedy of Stolen Motorcycles

A key event that particularly affected a number of motorcyclists in the study and which they told a number of stories about was the tragedy of having their motorcycle stolen. Described in more detail in the next section, an extremely strong emotive and 'desire' relationship and bond exists between the motorcyclist and his motorcycle and having one's motorcycle stolen leads to intense feelings of sadness, rage and anger:

158. Tom
"When I was eighteen, I didn't have a lot of money because I was an apprentice at the time, I got my bike, and I literally restored it, stripped everything down and it took me about a year to do, and it had been finished about two weeks and it got stolen."

He continued:

160. Tom
"... for weeks I just tore around this whole estate looking for it... I just left it outside (the house) and come out and it's gone. These kids had it on the other side of the park... and I chased them across *** (name) Park... they'd got to the top of the alley and just started hitting it with bricks and... Oh I was absolutely nuts and I was trying to find them for weeks and... yeah that was the only bike that I've ever had stolen. It is, it's terrible. It was all of a sudden not having a bike... it was, horrible..."

126. Brian
"I mean... I do love bikes and... the first bike was nicked and I was absolutely livid... I was out the back with a baseball bat, the back alley trying to see if I could find them. I wasn't gonna let them get away with running off with my bike."

Motorcycling Holidays

Respondents enthusiastically narrated stories of their past motorcycling holidays. Holidays in general provide fuel for storytelling, and people commonly take many photographs and hours of video film with which to entertain, or sometimes bore, their

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relatives and close friends. Respondents in the study regularly broke into holiday narratives, discussing places they had visited and adventurous experiences they had encountered whilst away. Motorcycling holidays offer opportunities for intense, even 'extraordinary' flow experience that may instigate personal rites of intensification, allowing for self-transition and a renewal of motorcyclist self-identity. Respondent post-holiday narratives often supported this renewed identity. Katie told a romantic story of her 'epic' two thousand mile adventure to the South of France, and the feelings of excitement, elation and moments of ideal experience as she endeavoured to ride dangerous mountain passes. Clearly, her story communicates a message of her 'exciting', 'adventurous' self to those around her:

46. Katie

*"… South of France last year was a **hell** of a journey, I think I did two thousand miles in about a week."*

224. Katie

"… In a way my perfect time on my bike was when we went to the South of France last year and I loved every minute of it, and whenever I'm riding my bike, even somewhere in Britain, especially caught up in town or something like that, I just think 'well I could be on the Route Napoleon now,' you know."

228. Katie

"… I mean the South of France the roads are just superb and you just have this complete feeling of elation as you like, you know, one corner leads into another corner and you're just, left, right, left. I mean it's, parts of the riding in the South of France were scary, because there were some roads where you got up into the mountains, and you had a sheer drop on one side and a cliff on the other, and you just think 'if I get this corner wrong it's a, I'm off, you know, it's certain death, there's no two ways about it' but then, that's kind of, possibly that spurs you on, excitementwise."

Rob narrated an epiphany about how he lonesomely took to his motorcycle for a period of soul searching and adventure during a key turning point in his life when his long-term partner left him:

96. Rob

"… Well, to cut a long story short, my partner left me after seven years. I disappeared, with a rucksack of my back, for about four days, I disappeared into Wales… I hadn't a clue where I was going, just enjoyed it. Went to Europe as well, in the same week. Got back from Wales, got on the ferry, b*ggered off into northern France… by myself… and it was an adventure."

98. Rob

"I had no idea where I was going, no idea what I wanted to do…"

100. Rob

"I just had enough that I could carry, and a passport, and just went for it."

Tom and Jack were both members of a group of eleven motorcyclists who had ridden to Holland earlier that year to watch the motorcycle racing at Assen racetrack. This experience had clearly made a large impact in providing personal meaning in their lives and in contributing to their constructs of self-identity, as they both consistently referred to the story throughout their interviews. Particularly, they noted their feelings of *excitement*, comparable to childhood excitement, prior to the experience, and their feelings of depression on return from the holiday:

287. Tom

"… I mean the number of people that went to Assen that couldn't sleep the week before, we were just like big kids. When I used to go on holiday when I was a kid… I couldn't sleep I was so excited. Then you'd come home and it's dead like miserable and… we were the same when we went to Holland, we were all up to it, sending each other texts, emails, it was crazy, it really was… and then coming back we were on the ferry and we were all just dead flat and 'what do we do now?'"

574. Tom

"We all said that we all felt like big kids again. It was almost like, like what we said earlier about, you know, going on holiday, a few days before, you can't sleep and… It sounds pathetic, grown men getting like that, but that's part of… the whole thing was

all planned out, where we were gonna meet, stop and have breakfast, have a chat, have a laugh, you know, all excited and get on the ferry and going through France, through Belgium and all that…"

109. Jack

"… I was really looking forward to going to Assen, for a few days in advance we were all really excited about it and afterwards we were all, it was like major depression."

Tom recognised the role of stories in their post-trip narratives:

46. Tom

"… Everybody likes to hear what other people have been up to… But yeah, we come back from Holland and we all had stories to tell and, it was good, it was enjoyable, I enjoyed it."

Communitas/Brotherhood

Respondents told a number of stories which focused on *communitas/brotherhood* and the importance of sharing a bond of subcultural understanding with other motorcyclists. The fulfilment gained from conformity to a common bond of shared subcultural ideology was illustrated in Tom and Jack's Assen trip narratives above. As noted in Section 8.3.1, shared consumption of motorcycle related products and experiences provides a lifestyle choice that facilitates the easy development of friendships and fulfils a desire for sociality that provides the motorcyclist with a sense of meaningful belonging. Respondents told a number of short stories to reflect this point:

48. John

"… A couple of years ago I was up in Northumberland and there was a couple of lads who'd just gone for a Sunday ride and I just started nattering to them and, they knew that obviously I was a biker from what I told them and, you know, it was like we'd known each other for years."

492. Helen

"We went to Matlock didn't we a few weeks ago and we met this couple and he says 'oh what sort of bike have you got?' 'A Bandit' 'oh I'm looking to buy a Bandit, which one's yours and…' and you get talking and 'oh we're going away next week' and blah, blah, blah, then we saw them later 'oh you still here then?' and you know, it sort of develops into this friendship…"

65. Brian

"… And we stop at a particular pub for a drink (as part of a charity ride), which is a big part of it for us. There's all sorts of bikers, sports bikers, cruisers, and they've all bought a present and wrapped a present to take to give at the entrance in… and we have a ride out, and that's a really good atmosphere…"

8.3.4 Props to Support Motorcyclist Self-Identity Construction

Continuing the theme of the self-assembly collage exercise, respondents were probed on a more personal level about their ownership of props to support their motorcycling activity. Through very deep and personal discussion, they were able to open themselves up to describe very personal relationships between their motorcycle related products and themselves. It soon became apparent that respondents form deep emotional, 'desire' relationships with certain motorcycle related products, and these products have profound significance in facilitating their involvement in this kind of adventure activity, and symbolically for the construction and signification of desired self-identity.

The Motorcycle

Undoubtedly, the most important and significant prop for the respondents is their motorcycle. Not only does it have important symbolic significance, but owners reported on an extremely strong bond that exists between themselves and their motorcycle. Certainly, this is entering the realm of symbolic self-completion theory, supporting the work of Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982). Respondents recognised

that the strength of this relationship is so intense that the motorcycle has become part of their 'existence.' This supports Belk's extensive work on the extended self:

124. Adam

"Yeah, you do have a one to one relationship with the bike."

82. Rob

"It's mine (the bike)… Other people feel the same way about religion, their wives, kids are sacred to them. That bike is mine, as part of my existence, it will never ever go… it can't."

165. Sam

"In a slightly perverse sort of way I suppose you do, yeah (have a relationship with the bike). Because it's your little baby and it does make you so happy when you go out on it. Em, I mean I can sit and find myself talking to it when I'm polishing it, you know what I mean (laughing) so yes."

Sam, above, described his bike as a *"little baby,"* and noted how he talks to it, like talking to a person. This phenomenon was very common amongst the respondents, who recognised that their motorcycles have a life of their own, with individual personalities:

144. Rob

"…(Describing his motorcycle) I saw it arrive on its crate, I saw it get built and I've known it ever since it was born effectively…"

240. Jack

"It's just got a life of its own. I get off after having a ride and I lock it up and make sure, you know, it's clean. I'll probably wash it when I come back. I'll put it away and just give it a tap tap on the tank and… you know."

124. Brian

"I think that they do have personality, yeah. I talk to them…"

Specifically, when describing their motorcycle's personality, a number of respondents, the males in particular, identified that they believe their motorcycle is, in fact, female:

175. Sam

"It's definitely got it's own little personality… definitely female."

108. Brian

"Black Betty (his last bike) was female, definitely. It's like that bike (his new one), it's a girl…"

356. Angela

"… I know all the blokes call their bikes 'she.'"

What appears to be at play here are mythic *male/female* oppositions which, in the semiotic audit (Section 7.2.2) were noted to occur at opposite extremes of the binary opposition scale, but which complement each other so well. In describing the female nature of their motorcycles, both Sam and Brian referred to female beauty and sex appeal, connotations consistent with *feminine* mythology:

179. Sam

"… Well it's because you get so much pleasure from it."

108. Brian

"… it's a girl… it's too beautiful."

Connotations that anchored motorcycles with feminine beauty and sex appeal were certainly found in the magazine analysis of the semiotic audit (Section 7.2.3), where imagery of scantily clad women posing alongside motorcycles was widely seen. Adam and Kirstie identified the more temperamental nature of women, claiming that their motorcycle's personality is like that of a temperamental woman:

101. Kirstie

"… That bike, if it was a woman, would be one of the most temperamental women I've met in my life. It does sulk."

103. Adam

"Oh yeah, absolutely… she works better if you clean her."

104. Kirstie

"It's really hard work that bike."

Staying on a mythic level, Jack noted feeling a sense of confusion as to whether his motorcycle is actually male or female due to the associated connotations that this carries. He identified that males are, in fact, the stronger and more powerful sex, and this more closely identifies with the nature of his motorcycle:

208. Jack

"I haven't decided whether my bike's a he or a she."

228. Jack

"I mean, generally, I'm not sure if I can say this to you, but generally, females are sort of weaker than males, and that bike is so powerful and so strong. I mean there's not many things which'll give you that sort of power."

As a powerful, strong male, these connotations of the motorcycle are consistent with the image of *masculinity* and *machismo* reported on during male group riding experience. Also the residual *outlaw, bad boy* image is very hard and masculine in nature. One would have considered that for the male motorcyclist, ownership of a masculine motorcycle would ease the transition with which the motorcycle forms part of his extended self. However, the beautiful, sexy, *feminine* nature of the motorcycle reported on above cannot be forgotten.

Female motorcyclist Katie noted that her motorcycle is, in fact, the man in her life. For her, the motorcycle completes the mythic, binary *male/female* bond:

142. Katie

"… He's my man, I don't have a man you see so the bike's my man."

With regards to motorcycle personality, a number of respondents identified that they have given their motorcycles names:

98. Adam
"Foxy, short for Red Fox."

102. Brian
"Black Betty, Whiskey, Scarlet, Kessy."

605. Matt
"I'll be honest with you, the colour of me bike is green… When I bought it, me daughters named it Shrek. We all have a name, you know what I mean."

Like people, the motorcyclists give their motorcycles a name as a symbol of their identity and personality. As Matt above noted, *"we all have a name."* Steven and Matt went on to explain how Matt had his motorcycle's name 'Shrek' put onto a number plate attached to the motorcycle, and also he had the name put onto his Biker's Rider's Club clothing. This is clearly a symbolic label, identifying his motorcycle's personality as part of his own extended self:

607. Steven
"It (Matt's motorcycle) had a little number plate with Shrek on it, at the bottom."

610. Matt
"… It's like the branded clothing (Biker's Rider's Club) I was on about. I've had the extra logo Shrek in green here (pointing to his chest)…"

On the subject of the extended self, a number of respondents noted the importance of personalising their motorcycles. They spend much psychic energy such as effort, time and attention, making modifications to their motorcycles. The aim of this it to make the motorcycle individual, with a unique character inspired by its owner:

214. Tom

"… it's important from the bike point of view that it's different to everybody else's. I suppose, it's individual, it's like clothes isn't it, you know, you may wear one thing, I might wear another. It's important if a bike looks a little bit different… You like to make the bike as individual as you can because they are mass produced, if you've seen one you've seen em all, and it's nice when someone says 'oh,' you know, 'your bike looks really good.'"

220. Tom

"… and that's why I've had it for so long I think, rather than keep chopping and changing it, because I've got to the point where I love it and I don't feel that need anymore."

54. Tony

"… the advertisement that Harley put together in terms of, what is it, 'A bike in a million, a million bikes in one,' and the sort of culture of customising them… the fact that you can adapt it to your individual taste does have an element of appeal…"

Ultimately, the motorcyclist's aim is to modify his motorcycle to reflect what Bataille ([1949] 1967) termed the 'unique, sovereign' self. This evidence also supports the work of Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) who, to recap, noted that when so much psychic energy is invested in a product, that product is likely to be regarded as part of the self because it has grown or emerged from the self.

Respondents noted a range of very strong feelings that they experience, associated with their motorcycles. These feelings range from love, passion and desire, to feelings of guilt and sadness when selling the motorcycle, and feelings of anger and rage at the thought of the motorcycle being stolen. The kind of 'embodied passion' that the motorcyclist holds for his motorcycle and the kind of 'otherworldly' experience that it provides was outlined in the core values exercise. During depth interview narrative, respondents were very enthusiastic to describe feelings of love and passion that they hold specifically for their motorcycles:

271. John

"You want to look after it and want to treat it well. That's what I'm saying, it's that love, that passion…."

204. Tom

"Oh man, I love my bike… I've always loved bikes from a young age, they've always been a real passion, anything to do with bikes…"

358. Angela

"… I am attached to it and I do love it to bits…"

A number of respondents recognised such a feeling of emotional attachment to their motorcycle that it is like part of their family, to the extent that it has actually lived inside their house:

142. Katie

"About my bike, I love it. It's like part of my family in a way, it's got a name and everything…I'm worse with my bike that anything I mean, you know, I'm very fond of my car and my house and my cat and all these sort of things, but the bike for some reason just occupies a different space in my heart to everything else."

160. Kirstie

"… She lived in our back room there for a long time."

18. Brian

"… when we had the first big bike, we used to keep it in the house, we had a terraced house and we used to put it in the hall."

They also noted very strong feelings of guilt and sadness when selling their motorcycles:

582. Tom

"I mean, I sold one of my bikes once and I sobbed. I was like twenty six and I was seeing it like going off and I was like crying (making a crying sound), her, her… And I thought, oh it's awful, it's awful…"

538. Angela

"… next year, because I'm thinking of selling it and buying a different one, I feel guilty, as if it's got feelings and it feels rejected. I know it's really really stupid, but it's really bizarre because I'm so attached to it and I do love it to bits…"

144. Katie

"… It's horrid when you buy a new bike, selling your old one… I always feel really guilty…"

Katie narrated a story, stressing her feelings of sadness and guilt when she purchased a new motorcycle and her old one was still in the garage:

"… when I came home (after buying her new bike) and put it in the garage, and my old bike was sat there, chained up to the ground anchor with the cover on it. And I took the cover off, and I moved the old one into the corner of the garage and chained the new one up and put the cover on the new one and I just thought 'that's really symbolic isn't it,' and I saw my poor old bike sitting in the corner and I was like 'but you've gotta go' (making a crying sound)."

As noted in the previous section, and supporting the work of Rudmin (1987) respondents reflected on intense feelings of sadness, anger and rage that they would feel if their motorcycle was stolen. They particularly used the expression that they would be *"gutted"* if this was to happen:

144. Rob
"Gutted, absolutely gutted…"

144. Katie

"... I think the worst thing is if someone stole it, cause I would be absolutely gutted. I think if I crashed it, then obviously I would be gutted but it's not quite the same as having it stolen. I suppose if I crashed it's my own fault, I've only got myself to blame. If some b*stard stole it then it's like, no, you know, I'd hate that."

For a number of motorcyclists in the study, feelings for their motorcycle are so intense that they have, in fact, attained a 'sacred' position in their mind. To recap on Rob's previously quoted statement:

82. Rob

"It's mine (the bike)… Other people feel the same way about religion, their wives, kids are sacred to them. That bike is mine, as part of my existence, it will never ever go… it can't."

Other respondents stated:

163. Sam

"Well my bike's sacred to me."

126. Tom

"Sacred, they are… Yeah, biking is like a religion don't you think."

128. Tom

"And people do worship their… My bike, I mean when we go on holiday, I have to have my bike locked away, and give my keys to somebody because I don't care if the house gets broken into. The bike, if that was to go… I've had a bike stolen before and it's heart breaking, it really is."

Respondents compared motorcycling experience to religion, and even noted reverential acts such as the worshipping of their motorcycle. One can compare motorcycling experience to that of the performance of pilgrimage noted by Coon (1958). Like pilgrims, during riding experience, motorcyclists disengage from their ordinary lives and enter a transitional phase during which they engage in performance

rituals, possibly shared with other pilgrims with a common mythohistorical orientation. As noted by Moore (1980), they return with a reaffirmed and renewed sense of self-identity. For motorcyclists, the motorcycle is a sacred object, or personality, that plays a central role in facilitating this 'otherworldly' experience.

As a sacred object, respondents reported on ritualistic behaviour that the motorcycle commands. This particularly includes cleaning and admiration rituals. With regards to cleaning, they noted:

140. Tom

"That's another thing, religiously cleaning and looking after your bike…"

172. Tom

"… there's a guy came on this Assen trip (group trip)… he'd just spent ten grand on a bike, and he's used it before Assen, Assen and once since, so three times, and the rest of the time he's cleaning it and looking at it…"

242. Jack

"… It's not something I do deliberately (clean the bike), it's just like subconscious. It's like, I've cleaned it tonight, it wasn't particularly dirty but… I haven't been on it all week…"

And with regard to admiration rituals, they stated:

435. Brian

"My favourite biking possession is the bike. Even, to some extent, this sounds stupid, but I've ridden it once. It's not the riding it's what have we been doing Maggie since Saturday? You open the door and you look at it. I've sat on it on numerous occasions without riding it."

146. Tom

"I put my chair there and I got my bike out and just looked at it. That's terribly sad I know. But, I've got photos in my wallet, you know."

152. Tom

"… I mean, yeah I will go out and I'll start it up just to check to see that it'll start, you know, I've not started it up for a few days or… Really, I know it will start, I just want to hear it going, you know…"

Motorcycle Related Photographs and Paintings

On the subject of photographs mentioned by Tom above, it was evident that photographs and pictures of motorcycles and motorcycle related experience are highly significant props for respondents in the study. The significance of track day performance photographs as tangible proof of one's engagement with adventure, of one's heroism on the racetrack, or the overcoming of adversity, was outlined in scene one of the self-assembly collage results (Section 8.2.1). The iconic, highly motivated nature of photographs and paintings means that they do not require a great deal of arbitrary convention for common understanding. They clearly capture the essence of the discourse that they aim to reveal. As such, photographs and pictures have a unique ability to easily provoke emotive memories, thoughts and feelings.

A number of respondents noted the importance of displaying their favourite motorcycling photographs and paintings in their houses, that sacred place which represents an extension of one's self-space (identified previously in Section 4.3.3). Helen and Jack drew attention to the walls of their house, which are covered with a variety of images of adventure experience, including motorcycling. Helen identified the signifying role of these images and described the associated *adventure* connotations that she perceives anchor the images with their own self-identities:

164. Helen

"… when we got married we said 'right, our house is gonna be a home, it's gonna express what we like,' and I mean, if you go in there you'll see motorbikes on the wall…"

168. Helen

"We are adventurous. People don't look at us as boring I suppose, I mean we are always up to something aren't we (laughing)."

357

Steven described some photographs; focusing on a motorcycle related oil painting that is displayed in his house. This, Steven believes, is a particularly strong signifier of authentic motorcyclist identity as it is signed by the champion racer featured in the painting. Steven and Matt described the extent to which Steven is attached to this possession:

612. Steven

"... I've got some nice pictures in the house. I've got a few bike racing pictures, three of them are copies, they was expensive copies though, and I've got an oil painting, signed by the speed road rider world champion, that's my favourite (motorcycling possession)."

614. Steven

"Yeah, I mean if I left the Mrs I'd make sure I've got them."

617. Matt

"Yeah, 'you can have the house but I want the pictures (laughing)."

Steven and Matt went on to proudly discuss the hundreds of photographs that are posted on their group website. These photographs feature group members with their motorcycles as well as shots taken during group riding events and holidays. These photographs act as iconic signifiers of authentic group identity.

During the period of the study, the researcher attended the wedding of two motorcyclist friends, who are proud Harley Davidson owners. Their sacred motorcycle was observed as forming the centrepiece in the majority of their wedding photographs (as illustrated in Figure 8.24). Ceremoniously, following the marriage, the bride and groom were found mounting the Harley and riding the grounds of the hotel in which the wedding was held. The Harley took a central role in the wedding day events!

Figure 8.24: A 'Real' Harley Wedding

Motorcycle Clothing and Equipment

Relating to the sacred nature of motorcycle experience, another ritualistic behaviour that was identified from respondents was the ritual donning of clothing and equipment in preparation for riding. A number of them noted the set order with which they put on the items, and the feelings of excitement and anticipation that this gives:

291. Tom

"Yeah (putting the kit on is a ritual)… I always put my socks on first, then I put my trousers on, then I put my t-shirt on, then my leathers, helmet, then gloves."

162. Brian

"... I mean I get excited about just putting the leathers on, you know (laughing)."

164. Brian

"To drive you just put your shoes on and get in the car and you're off. To get on the bike there's a certain amount of preparation. You've gotta dress correctly… That takes a certain amount of time, so it's the anticipation while you get ready…"

Clothing and equipment were identified by respondents as important possessions relating to their motorcycling activity. They form an essential part of the

constellations of props required to partake in motorcycle activity, and to construct and signify the motorcyclist self-identity. Respondents did not attribute clothing and equipment products with a 'unique' personality like they had their motorcycles, but this is likely to be because clothing, in particular, moulds directly to the body, effectively forming another layer of skin, and an embodiment with the self; reflecting a discourse consistent with the motorcyclist's desired self-identity image.

As recognised in the self-assembly collage results, clothing and equipment products/brands have both a practical (intrinsic) and a symbolic (extrinsic) value for the motorcyclists in the study. This supports the work of Lannon and Cooper (1983) who separated brand attitude and choice into both practical, rationally overt decisions and symbolic, emotionally covert decisions. In identifying *safety* as a core-value of motorcycling today (Section 7.3), respondents previously discussed the importance of ownership of safe, well-armoured clothing and equipment to provide protection during this high-risk adventure activity; i.e. to provide *'safe – adventure'*. Ultimately they are aware of their own mortality, and safety gained from clothing and equipment plays a role in the valuing of their life.

During interview narrative, respondents reflected upon the importance of functionality and the intrinsic value of motorcycle clothing and equipment. Again, they discussed the issue of *safety* and *protection* gained from ownership of the appropriate combination of these props:

229. Rob
"… safe… If I'm gonna ride, there's no point spending stupid amounts of money on a bike and then getting on it in a pair of shorts and a t-shirt. What's the point, you spend the money, you might as well look after yourself."

138. Katie
"… And I think that's a safety thing, and the great majority of riders in this country do wear leathers, proper helmets, proper boots, proper gear and that…"

574. Steven
"It makes you feel safer, it makes you ride faster…"

Interestingly Steven (above) noted how clothing and equipment makes a motorcyclist feel safer and thus push the performance limits further towards 'the edge'. Also, with regards to product functionality, a number of respondents identified the importance of *protection* along with *value for money,* and *comfort of fit:*

28. Tony

"I wanted something that was reasonably priced… but would give me the sort of protection that I needed… just something that was, basically practical but would be comfortable and reasonably priced…"

38. Dan

"Mine's a… it was a toss up between price and safety really… price came into it a lot really, but at the same time checking that it's got the armour where it should be and things like that…"

184. Angela

"Hein Gericke was the only ones that I managed to find to fit me, because they'd got like a ladies cut and they're lovely. Those Dainese ones that are really expensive, I tried them , they just didn't fit right, the cut was all wrong…"

When discussing the importance of protection gained from their clothing and equipment products, the mood became notably more serious as respondents identified instances of past adventure breakdown, where effectively their clothing and equipment had saved their lives during motorcycling accidents:

277. Tom

"… I have had accidents in the past and when you're flying through the air and you're about to hit the ground, the fact that you've got decent gear on… when you're about to hit the floor you think 'oh, it's not that I've not got the full gear on, it's the fact that this gear will probably save me'…"

2. John

"...Both the police and ambulance said that if I hadn't been wearing my leathers I'd be dead."

589. Matt

"... when I came off the bike, I paid nearly four hundred quid for my Shoei helmet which was a lot when I first bought it, but it was a very good helmet. And when I see what damage my helmet received when I came off, I thought, 'if I'd have bought a cheaper one, I wouldn't be here now,' you know what I mean."

Having trust in one's clothing and equipment was regarded as an important factor. This trust provides the motorcyclists with self-confidence to explore their performance capabilities and limits. A number of respondents noted their psychological trust in leather as opposed to other textile garments, which logically they know can provide as much protection as leather:

221. Rob

"It's all Wolf, which again is stupidly expensive, but… I know the product, I trust the product, I've seen people come off in it, I've come off in it, and I know that it'll do the job, and the outfit fits me like a glove."

156. John

"I prefer the leathers because I feel safer in them, although the cordura is just as safe, it's just the feel for it…"

418. Brian

"Yeah, saying that, you can get denim garments armoured stuff. Em… I have to be convinced that they're as safe as leather."

Motorcyclists' fixation with leather is more than just for functional, protective purposes. As noted in the semiotic audit (Section 7.2.2), leather, and in particular the black leather jacket, arguably remains the most symbolic representation of motorcyclist identity, values and attitudes to the present day.

With regard to the symbolic (extrinsic) value of motorcycle clothing and equipment, respondents certainly recognised the role of careful selection of constellations of products/brands to represent their personal desired self-image. They noted the importance of motorcycle fashion and appearance; identified earlier in the self-assembly collage results (Section 8.2):

585. Matt

"... I think presentation's got to be a big point of it as well."

204. Adam

"And what you wear projects the image that you want to get at."

237. Brian

"Well, it's not kind of high street fashion but biker fashion. There is certainly a biking fashion and you can see that..."

Symbolic display of 'authentic' clothing and equipment in combination with one's motorcycle, creates a total identity image which the motorcyclists perceive provides them with role authenticity, and conformity to the ideals of their chosen motorcycle subgroup. This appeared to be particularly the case for supersports motorcyclists and to an extent, cruiser riders, for whom image is an important part of subcultural involvement. The discourse represented by their chosen constellations of props thus aids in the process of symbolic self-completion. Respondents noted the importance of owning 'appropriate' props for group integration and social validation:

134. Tony

"... there's a sense of dressing up and being part of a clan..."

36. Dan

"... some people, as I say , they have to have... I mean there's a friend of mine... that rides, he's got an R1 (supersports motorcycle), and he changes his helmet every year, becaue he gets the latest colour, whoever's riding at that time for the British biking. He pays four hundred pound a time for a helmet, each year just to have that colour.

And, it's quite important to him to have that and when he turns up at these meets it's 'oh you've got the latest colour' and all this."

116. Tony

"... I think the person that would definitely be into that (supersports motorcycling) would be very image conscious and... getting dressed up for the occasion. I mean my wife takes the p*ss out of me, because before I got the bike I got the leathers and everything else and she said 'you'll be wearing those in the bleeding living room.' But they've got to step out with the right image. That's all part of being part of the biker scene."

Chris, below, discussed the importance of looking right on the motorcycle and was not concerned about his image whilst off it. Also, Angela described her perception of the unspoken snobbery that exists between motorcyclists and how the discourse represented by the incorrect constellation of props does not go unnoticed:

134. Chris

"... Whereas before I wanted a blue leather jacket and I thought blue was cool, now I want to look right on the bike, so black and red to go on a black and red bike..."

138. Chris

"... I guess it's less about when you're off the bike, when I'm off the bike it doesn't matter, but when I'm on the bike I think I'd like to look right on the bike, does that sound weird?... getting the right leathers now is to do with when I'm on the thing..."

196. Angela

"They (other motorcyclists) don't tend to talk about the kit no. I think people tend to notice, which is really quite snobby, like they notice if you're wearing something cheap, and... yeah, it's a bit, snobbery in there really."

Explored in detail in Section 9.5.2, within the emerging and increasingly significant adventure-sports motorcycle market sector, manufacturers are picking up on consumer 'fantasy' desire to signify authentic adventure identities, and this is reflected in extrinsic development and signification of adventure-sports products.

It was evident from consumer respondent narrative that there is a degree of psychological risk involved in purchasing and symbolically displaying props to support motorcyclist subcultural identity. A number of respondents appeared to be quite highly self-conscious with regard to their motorcycle props and the related imagery that they signify. They noted the desire to fit in, and thus conform, and seemed to be quite concerned about not looking ridiculous, or as Tony put it, *"a plonker!"*

283. Tom

"... I don't like to be the centre of attention. I'd hate to have a race rep with the matching leathers and that, I'd feel really quite uncomfortable walking in a pub or anywhere like that..."

320. Tracey

"... more just fit in than stand out more. To be seen, wear something to be seen but not to be, I mean I think, men Bill's age and older that are wearing these bright clothing and all that, I just think that they look ridiculous."

120. Tony

"...For me it's not looking a plonker, which probably I don't achieve but (laughing) that's another story."

Matt noted the self-satisfaction that the motorcyclist experiences when perceiving that they got it right, and truly 'look the part':

583. Matt

"Joy, it's good, it gives you a buzz, you know what I mean, a real buzz, you know. Because you look the part as well, you know, and I think that's important..."

When discussing the imagery associated with motorcyclist clothing and equipment, respondents particularly focused on colour, and its associated connotations. Supersports motorcyclists in particular noted the importance of colour coordination between the rider, pillion if there is one, and the motorcycle:

365

148. John

"... you've got to have a bit of colour coordination with it, for it to look the part."

286. Bill

"Colour (of his leathers)... colour matched to the bike that I've got now... yeah I like to be colour cued."

593. Matt

"... I'm colour coordinated, you know, well most bikers are at the end of the day. I mean my helmet, the one I've got now is just slightly different to the one my wife's got, because they'd stopped doing that one, so I had to have the next nearest possible one to it. So, otherwise I'd have bought me wife another one, even though she didn't need one. Just to say we're both the same, you know."

They even identified the extent to which some riders go to insure total colour coordination between the motorcycle and rider:

144. John

"... Some people will actually go to the extreme of changing their leathers when they change their bike to get it all colour coordinated..."

176. Angela

"I actually kind of bought them (her leathers) to match the bike which is really bad I know."

Through total colour coordination, the rider/s and motorcycle gel into one, signifying a single, consistent, unique and 'authentic' motorcyclist identity (as illustrated in Figure 8.25). The constellation of products surrounding the rider/s blend to form part of the extended self, with the ultimate desire of signifying a discourse marked by the racetrack heroes*:*

188. Angela

"… Because a lot of people on racey type bikes, sports bikes, they wear the colourful leathers, and sports bike racers, they wear the colourful leathers as well…"

Figure 8.25: Colour Coordinated Supersports Identity

Source: http://totalmotorcycle.com

For the cruiser motorcyclists, authentic 'biker' identity is gained through donning the highly symbolic cruiser code that includes black leather (as illustrated in Figure 8.26).

Figure 8.26: Black Leather and the Cruiser Identity Code

Source: http:motorcyclesabout.com

Sam described the importance of black leather relative to his own, authentic 'biker' identity image:

201. Sam

"Yeah, black leathers is my thing… if it's not black, it's not worth having."

211. Sam

"I always have (worn black clothes and leathers)… But again, all what I would class, proper bikers, rather than all the plastic rockets, if you look generally that's all anybody everywhere wears… I've got a black helmet, black boots, black gloves, black jacket, black jeans."

When questioned about the connotations associated with the colour black, the residual *outlaw, bad boy* mythology was once again established. Helen, below, identified the consistent identity established by combining Jack's 'mean' looking muscle bike with black clothing and equipment:

70. Dan

"… I think it can be quite intimidating for some people, especially if you're dressed in all black leather and a helmet with a tinted visor. I think it's quite intimidating…"

358. Helen

"(Referring to Jack) Because of the kind of bike that you've got, I mean because it's like a muscle street bike that he's got, coloured leathers would look absolutely stupid, whereas black, black looks kind of mean, the bike looks mean, it's all kind of an image."

A recent addition to the motorcycle ensemble, and most probably a fad, are the furry ears that some motorcyclists choose to wear attached to their helmets (as illustrated in Figure 8.27). A highly significant prop, they are ironic in the sense that they totally dissipate the residual outlaw, bad boy imagery associated with motorcycling. Rob and Sam, owners of furry ears, identified the light hearted and fun nature with which they don the ears, and they believe this softens the residual image of motorcycling in wider popular culture.

185. Rob

"It's something, you can have a laugh and a giggle with your friends and stuff when you're out and about. You've seen these sticky on ears and these stick on horns haven't ya?… Just try and soften the image a bit. I mean people have got such a bad perception of us. Why not try and make a bit of a giggle?"

227. Sam

"(Producing his helmet, black with black and white furry ears attached) "And everyone takes the p*ss, and I really couldn't give a monkeys… because… the amount of people that I see pointing and laughing, kids in cars, women in cars, blokes in cars, laughing their heads off at these ears waggling away."

233. Sam

"… I suppose deep down inside, all in black and all the rest of it you're thinking, you're looking menacing, but then on the other hand, you don't want people to think you're menacing because people have got the assumption that you are menacing…"

Figure 8.27: Furry Helmet Ears

Source: www.timberwoof.com

The symbolism intended by the wearers of furry ears is consistent with today's dominant code of *positive public attitudes* towards motorcycling. However, both Tom

and Tony reportedly did not appreciate the irony involved with furry ears, and stated in strong language that they would not themselves own, or wear them:

381. Tom

"Yeah you can get rabbit, pig, dog, cat… I can't think what else but no, I wouldn't be seen dead in those… I just think they're cr*p really."

387. Tom

"I mean in some respects I probably sound a bit serious… I hate anything that takes the p*ss out of motorcycling."

140. Tony

"What gets me is the people that wear them think, 'yeah I'm cool and I'm a funny guy,' but actually most people think 'you're very un-cool and you're a pr*t.'"

8.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided depth exploration of the motorcyclist consumer psyche, specifically focusing on consumer relationships with, and use of signifying props, spaces and stories for the construction and signification of meaningful subcultural self-identity. It was found that consumer respondents in the study desire engagement with this kind of adventure activity, and its associated subculture, because it offers them self-enriching, performance opportunities that frees them from the constraints of modern life, providing them with a unique sense of 'otherness' or 'sovereignty' that escapes the mundane constraints of the everyday.

Whilst respondents desire to be unique from perceived wider cultural hegemony, they also desire to achieve a sense of self-meaning and personal belonging through prescription to ideological codes that represent authentic, marginalized motorcycle subgroups. Subcultural membership and the sharing of common ideologies allows for easy development of social relationships that fulfils the need for belonging associated with sociality (communitas/brotherhood).   Motorcyclists seek subcultural role-integration through prescription to 'authentic' codes of 'behaviour', 'dress', 'product'

and 'language'. Codes of 'behaviour' are enacted whilst on and off the motorcycle and include shared riding performance, that leads to social validation, self-satisfaction, and includes an amount of male machismo. 'Behaviour' codes enacted whilst off the motorcycle include attendance at retail outlets and bike meets, where the motorcyclist self is authenticated through use of stories and symbolic display of constellations of props.

The use and importance of stories as signifiers of the motorcyclist self was explored, and it was found that through motorcycle related stories/epiphanies, respondents commonly narrate key meaningful life changing events; i.e. through narratives of teenage years and motorcyclist role acquisition, life-changing motorcycle adventure holidays, tragic motorcyclist deaths, the overcoming of adversity, and self-meaning gained from shared subcultural communitas/brotherhood. Spontaneous respondent story analysis revealed the importance of motorcycle activity and subcultural involvement for constructs of the motorcyclist self, but also the important signifying role of stories in communicating the authentic adventurous, thrill-seeking, risk-taking self.

The story based, narrative picturing technique allowed respondents to enter a daydream like state to picture, and narrate their imagined ideal, fantasy motorcycle moments. Interestingly, the key fantasy myths that were found to drive respondents' perception of the ideal motorcyclist self relate to the highly significant, overarching subcultural myths of freedom, and performance skill, mastery and flow associated with engagement with adventure.

Results from depth consumer interview data revealed an intensely strong relationship that exists between motorcyclists and the constellations of props that they own; specifically motorcycles, motorcycle related photographs and paintings, and clothing and equipment products. Arguably, the most significant prop respondents reported having an intense personal bond and emotional relationship with is the motorcycle. An 'embodied passion' develops for this piece of equipment that facilitates 'otherworldly' adventure experience. More than just a piece of equipment, respondents attributed the motorcycle with a personality of its own that includes a male/female gender identity, personal name and temperament. In a bid for symbolic-

self completion, the consumer integrates the motorcycle as part of his own extended self, sometimes modifying manufacturers' brands to construct/signify an identity consistent with the desired self-ideal. Respondents reported such intense feelings of love, passion and desire for their motorcycles that they treat them as part of the family, housing them in their own homes. They feel guilt and sadness when selling their motorcycles and extremely sad, enraged and angry in 'tragic' events of bike theft (as reflected in the story analysis). Motorcycles are attributed a status of 'sacred', and command reverential acts and ritualistic behaviours that include worshipping, cleaning and admiration.

It was found that iconic, highly motivated and emotive photographs are used by respondents as signifiers of authentic motorcyclist self-identity; track day photographs, for example, serve as tangible evidence of one's engagement with adventure, and heroic performance skill of the racetrack. Authentic photographs and paintings are hung on house walls, circulated at social gatherings, emailed and posted on group websites to communicate this kind of desired self-image.

Consumers differentiate between motorcycle clothing and equipment products and brands on the value of both intrinsic and extrinsic brand attributes. Trust in a brand's intrinsic safety/protection features allows the motorcyclist to perceive a kind of *'safe – adventure'* that enables him to ride confidently, sometimes pushing his and his motorcycle's performance envelopes to, or beyond, the edge. Extrinsic attributes are significant if the motorcyclist is to construct and signify an authentic code of 'looking', consistent with the ideals of his chosen motorcycle subgroup. It was recognised that, for consumer respondents in the study, an amount of psychological risk exists as motorcyclists make self-conscious decisions regarding the symbolic imagery surrounding their product/brand choices. The discourse represented by the incorrect constellation of props does not go unnoticed by other motorcyclists.

A summary of the key findings obtained during depth consumer interviews, relating to the motorcyclist consumer psyche, and constructs of the 'motorcyclist' self is provided in Figure 8.28.

The self-assembly collage exercise proved to be an extremely effective, pioneering semiotic technique that demonstrated consumer purchase and use of constellations of products to construct codes of motorcyclist self-identity. The exercise enabled consumer respondents in the study to build, explore and describe levels of meaningful motorcyclist subcultural identity, through the construction of syntagms of signifying props and spaces. The outcome of the exercise was eight scenes, which for respondents in the study represent codes of current day motorcyclist identity. A summary of the key findings for each scene is provided in Figure 8.29.

Results of the self-assembly collage exercise demonstrated that motorcycle subculture as a whole is made up of a number of quite specific subgroups; each representing diverse and distinctive strands of subcultural identity, prescribed to through ideological codes of looking, behaviour and language. However, deeper analysis revealed that on a mythic level, motorcyclists across the range of subgroups ultimately seek personal meaning and self-fulfilment in their lives through engagement with freedom and adventure associated with motorcycle activity and subcultural involvement/experience. The accumulation of constellations of props not only provides intrinsic benefits (*'safe –adventure'*) for those motorcyclists wishing to seek freedom and adventure associated with real riding performance/experience, but it also provides important extrinsic/symbolic benefits for those wishing to construct and signify authentic motorcyclist identities.

It was found that motorcyclists are great scrutineers of codes of looking, and that ownership, use and symbolic display of appropriate products/brands plays an important part in authentic role development. Whether the ideal image is one of a black, leather clad, Brando style cruising outlaw, or a colourful 'disco' leather clad, Rossi style 'plastic rocket' racer, product/brand discrimination is paramount in creating and symbolising this image. Noting the central theme of communitas/brotherhood that transpired in this chapter, and supporting the work of Belk et al (2003) it was found that respondents in the study 'desire' codes of motorcycle related consumption products. They hope that ownership, use and symbolic display of these 'identity codes' will help facilitate social relations, join them with idealised others, and direct their social destiny. Interesting are Belk et al's (2003) comments that objects that transfix people are hoped to be conduits to love,

recognition, status, security, escape or attractiveness; the social relations one consciously or subconsciously desires, behind the objects one finds so compelling.

Figure 8.28: The 'Motorcyclist' Consumer Psyche – Constructs of Self-Identity

Red Text = Communication Codes/Myths

Role Identity and Image

'Otherness', 'Uniqueness' and 'Sovereignty':
To 'do' something different and 'be' somebody different
Development of unique identity image, non-conforming to wider society
Props as a mask, offering escape from actual self and a discourse supporting desired ideal/semiotic self-image

Perceptions of Motorcyclist Image in Wider Society:
Residual outlaw, bad boy, rebel imagery: Motorcyclists as villains and a threat to social hegemony
Cruiser motorcyclists gaining satisfaction from prescription to identity codes consistent with residual ideology, 'self-contained groups commanding attention and respect,' 'authentic bikers'
Lack of understanding of motorcyclist ideology in UK wider society
Motorcyclist marginalization – makes meaningful subgroups authentic
 - Non-entry to establishments due to residual outlaw connotations associated with constellations of props
European positive attitudes
Rise of the Bambi – a social nuisance

Communitas/Brotherhood:
Self-meaning and personal fulfilment:
Gained from conformity to ideals of chosen motorcycle subgroups
Motorcycling a lifestyle choice, providing reference point to build meaning in one's life
Provides mechanism for easy development of relationships, fulfilling basic human need for sociality and belongingness
Prescription to subcultural codes – codes of behaviour, product and dress codes, language codes
Desire motorcycle related consumption products – provide identity codes that facilitate social relations
Shared group riding experience:
Riding as 'a pack' leading to heightened buzz, sensation, personal esteem, satisfaction and group affiliation
Male machismo – pressure for social validation. Increased psychological risk leading to increased physical risk taking - pushing physical performance levels closer to 'the edge'
Bike meets, retail outlets and lots of bike talk:
Venues for social interaction and communitas development
Importance of narrative exchange for authentic role construction and signification
Retail outlet staff – opinion leaders and authentic role-models (providing authentic role contamination)
Back to biker wars:
Clash of subcultural ideologies
Cruiser 'bikers' = residual mythology of the golden age
Supersports motorcyclists = dominant mythology of racing and speed

**Narrative Picturing Technique:
Fantasies and the Ideal/Semiotic Self**

Freedom:
The American dream - The ultimate freedom: Freedom of space, from traffic congestion, from other people and responsibilities, freedom for adventure
Touring Europe – Freedom, adventure and fun
Romantic sunshine freedom narratives
Adventure:
Performance Skill, Mastery and Flow:
Snapshots of flow experience: A total merging of action and awareness where the self and the motorcycle become one
Heroine of the racetrack: Moments of sheer mastery whilst winning the race

Stories (Epiphanies) as Signifiers of 'Motorcyclist' Self-Identity

Teenage Years - Taking on the Motorcyclist Self-Identity:
Romantic moral tales of early experiences of motorcycling and first motorcycle purchases
Aiding in self-identity construction, development of self-meaning, easing the transition from confines of childhood to mobility and freedom of adulthood

Tragic Motorcycling Accidents:
Reinforcing the risky nature of motorcycling adventure activity
Communicating the adventurous, thrill-seeking, risk-taking self

Survival of Motorcycling Accidents:
Subcultural acceptance of real dangers posed by involvement in motorcycling activity
Authentic adventure role identity - supported by associated narratives (often exaggerated), and ritualistic display of accident scars (of adventure engagement) within subcultural circles
Evidence of commitment to the motorcycling ethos
Humour narratives – ironic humour made of serious and dangerous accidents

Tragedy of Stolen Motorcycles:
Strong emotive relationship and bond between the owner and motorcycle where motorcycle regarded as part of the 'extended self'
Intense feelings of sadness, anger and rage

Motorcycling Holidays:
Opportunities for intense, adventurous motorcycle experience – the 'ideal'
Associated opportunities for self-exploration and identity development – engagement in rites of intensification facilitating a period of self-transition with a resultant renewed sense of self-identity

Communitas/Brotherhood:
Stories to reflect common bond of shared subcultural ideology
Emphasis on the ease with which new friendships and relationships develop

Props to Support 'Motorcyclist' Self-Identity Construction

The Motorcycle:
Most important and significant prop for motorcyclists in the study
Strong, emotional relationship - Part of the 'extended self'
Motorcycle personality – male/female, name (as a symbol of personal identity), temperament, unique modifications inspired by owner to give motorcycle personality, motorcycle as 'part of the family,' living in the house
Intense feelings for motorcycle – love, 'embodied passion', desire. Guilt and sadness when selling the motorcycle, sadness anger and rage in tragic event of bike theft
Motorcycles attributed 'sacred' status – provides 'otherworldly' (pilgrimage) experience - commands reverential acts and ritualistic behaviours such as worshipping, cleaning and admiration

Motorcycle Related Photographs and Paintings:
Iconic, highly motivated and emotive – used as signifiers of authentic motorcyclist self-identity
Social display – house walls, circulated at social gatherings, emailed and posted on group web pages.

Motorcycle Clothing and Equipment:
Ritualistic behaviour – donning clothing and kit in preparation and anticipation of riding experience
Intrinsic functional value (safety, protection and comfort): Donning a shield of armour for engagement in high-risk activity (safe – adventure). Giving self-confidence to push ones performance capabilities and limits
Extrinsic symbolic value: Syntagm of props carefully selected for signification of desired motorcyclist self-image
Appropriate clothing and equipment + motorcycle = total identity-image for role authenticity and desired subcultural acceptance
Psychological risks involved in getting the look right – self-conscious decisions taken
Props for possible symbolic self-completion
Self-satisfaction from 'getting it right'
Colour:
Supersports motorcyclists – Importance of colour coordination. Total colour blend between motorcycle and motorcyclist/s creating single identity-image, emulating racetrack heroes, for role-authentication
Cruiser bikers – Authentic biker identity through wearing cruiser biker uniform and 'colours'. Connotations with residual outlaw imagery
Furry Ears: 'Having a laugh or taking the mick?'
Dominant code of positive public attitudes to motorcycling, lightening the image
or
Not taking motorcycling seriously

Figure 8.29: Self-Assembly Collage Summary - Codes of Motorcyclist Identity

Red Text = Communication Codes/Myths

Scene 1: Track Day

The Racing Hero

Personal Quest for Adventure:
Skills development and **mastery**
Risk-taking (the 'edge')
Speed, adrenaline and **excitement**
Freedom
Achievement of the desired self-ideal

Communitas:
Racetrack becomes stage for public performance and social validation
Fitting in/subcultural conformity – importance of 'looking the part' and 'talking the talk'

Authentic Role-Identity:
Fashion/image consciousness – fashionable, authentic race-replica props donned to signify authentic **racing** identity (to oneself and to others)
Narrative – Heroic stories of track day experiences and successful completion supported by tangible evidence of engagement for authentic role development and authenticity

Scene 2: Touring Europe

Diversity of Motorcyclist Styles/Identities

Personal Quest for Freedom:
Overwhelming desire for **freedom** of the open roads binds motorcyclists from diverse groups
Freedom from dullness, routine and **constraints** of everyday life
Freedom for **fun** and **excitement** (elements of **adventure**)

Function over Image:
Intrinsic functional (**protection, comfort, safety**) elements of clothing and equipment selection more important than extrinsic signification of 'fashionable' image

Communitas:
Sociality of shared riding experience

Scene 3: Bike Meet

Diversity of Motorcyclist Styles/Identities

Diverse but Distinctive Strands of Motorcyclist Identity:
Supersports style: As scene 1 - The **racing hero**. Marked by desire for authentic **racing** identity image and **communitas** – role authenticity gained through parading and exhibiting one's race-replica adorned self and motorcycle in ritualistic, symbolic social display or 'showing off'. 'More about clean bikes than dirty bikes'
Touring style: As scene 2 - Bike meet a stopping place on the longer journey.
American cruiser style: As scene 5

Communitas:
Overwhelming desire for **communitas** spanning all groups
Opportunities for social conformity and ritualistic display of accepted ideological subcultural behaviours – leading to role authenticity and personal fulfilment
Importance of narrative exchange – 'love bike talk'

Scene 4: Off-Road

Adventure for the Adventurous

Adventure:
Primary motive a personal quest for **adventure**
'**Adrenaline** junkies'
'Up for a **challenge**'
Skills development and **mastery**
Real **risks** with **uncertain** outcomes
Something **out of the ordinary**
Natural environment
Packaged **adventure** holiday

A Loner:
Enjoys the lonesome challenge of riding motorcycle through rough, natural terrain. Less interested in social, communitas element

Function over Image:
Intrinsic functional (**protection, comfort, safety**) elements of clothing and equipment selection more important than extrinsic signification of 'fashionable' image

Scene 5: American Dream

Easy Rider's Captain America

In search of mythic American Freedom:
Cruising **adventure** on long straight American road – Route 66
In search of **freedom** of the open road and **freedom** from the dominant cultural hegemony
'A cowboy but rather than riding a horse he rides a bike'
A genuine/authentic American Harley rider
or
A wannabe on an **adventure** holiday – aspiring/pretending to live the **American dream**

American Dream – Residual Mythology:
Residual outlaw, 'Easy Rider' style imagery reflecting romantic narrative relative to 'Golden Age' of motorcyclist self-identity
Rich American motorcyclist subcultural heritage – search for romantic myth of **American Freedom**

Scene 6: Ace Café

Iconic Venue for Iconic Riders

Ace Café - Back in Fashion

2 Distinctive Strands of Motorcyclist Identity:
1950s British nostalgia: Older riders resembling café racers in search of residual **British cultural motorcycling heritage** and its associated **freedom**
Dominant supersports style: As scenes 1 and 3 - The **racing** hero

Communitas:
Overwhelming desire for **communitas** spanning all groups
Opportunities for social conformity and ritualistic display of accepted ideological subcultural behaviours – leading to role authenticity and personal fulfilment
Genuine, authentic bike related knowledge necessary for authentic role signification at such an **iconic venue**

Scene 7: Adventure Track

Adventure for the Adventurous and/or the Adventurous at Heart

Trails Bike rider: As scene 4

The BMW GS Adventurer:
As scene 4 but owners likely to be from older age groups with significantly high disposable income
BMW Irony - 'perceptions' or 'misconceptions':
BMW motorcycles = reliable, based on innovative technology
but
Sensible, boring, dull (the police) and ugly
Riders 'almost bad'
'But this guy's an off-road Beamer rider so he's still got his exciting edge, his adventure streak'

Note: since interviewing – influence of 'The Long Way Round' - celebrity opinion leaders, authentic off-road adventure along with BMWs effective marketing communications and customer involvement programmes – affecting cultural change of perception.

Scene 8: Urban

Transport, Mobility and Teenage Cool Dudes

Scooters for Functional City Centre Mobility:
Used by commuters, despatch riders, couriers and deliverers as a flexible means of city centre transportation
Freedom from city centre congestion and congestion charging
Freedom for the environment – reduces environmental pollution
Cost-effective method of transportation

Scoots for Trendy Teenagers:
Affordable means of transport and mobility
Trendy, funky, cool constellation of props to support developing and increasingly mobile teenage identities

Unauthentic Motorcyclists:
Perceived as not 'belonging' to authentic motorcycle subgroups. Do not represent genuine motorcycle **freedom**
Do not have authentic motorcycle related aspirations

Chapter 9

Signification and Manufacturer/Supplier Construction of Motorcycle Related Brand Personality

Signification and Manufacturer/Supplier Construction of Motorcycle Related Brand Personality

9.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the role/significance of motorcycle related manufacturers/service suppliers/marketers in contributing to the cultural world of motorcycling consumption; specifically in constructing and signifying brands that purvey cultural messages and construct categories of motorcycling subculture (Objective 3). Through interview and observation material, and semiotic analysis of data, the key myths/communication codes that influence and drive product/service design, development, and the signification of brand identity relative to a number of specific motorcycle market sectors/subgroups is explored; namely the supersports, touring and emergent adventure-sports sector. Investigation across the full range of motorcycle market sectors would be endless and beyond the scope of this study, therefore these three specific and diverse market sectors have been selected.

The chapter explores the movement of meaning that reflects the interrelatedness between brands, brand communications, culture and the consumer (identified by Alexander, 1999) relative to motorcycle adventure subcultures, and highlights the role and significance of the marketer in constructing and purveying subcultural messages, which are ultimately picked up and used by the consumer for the construction of 'motorcyclist' self-identity. Particularly, the role of manufacturers and packaged adventure motorcycle experience suppliers in picking up myths/communication codes from motorcycle subcultures, from other sports subcultures and from wider popular culture and incorporating them into the intrinsic and extrinsic design of brand personality is investigated. In addition, increasing manufacturer/supplier development of interactive lifestyle programmes for active consumer participation in motorcycle adventure 'brand communities' is explored.

Extrinsic brand communications discourse is analysed from a range of marketing communications tools; specifically, company brochures, web page discourse, television and motorcycle newspaper/magazine advertisements. Finally, the

significance of the motorcycle retail outlet as a venue where elements of mass marketing can be orchestrated to leverage brand values and signify identity is explored.

9.2   The Significance of Motorcycle Related Brands

It was evident, from Chapter 8, that prescription to given codes of looking along with codes of language and behaviour, such as communitas development and riding behaviour, provide motorcyclists with passports for social integration into the ideology of their chosen motorcycle adventure subcultural groups. Purchase and consumption of motorcycle related brands is essential for any level of participation within this activity and its associated subgroups. Motorcyclists become attached to motorcycle related brands and the symbiosis that is created when functional, intrinsic brand attributes are combined with symbolic, extrinsic characteristics to give brands, and ultimately consumers their own, unique 'motorcyclist' personality. This supports the work of Cooper (1979). The use of brands to support motorcycling activity, and as 'language' to construct and signify consumers' desired motorcyclist self-identity, was supported by manufacturers/marketers interviewed from the industry:

146. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director:

"... you quite often find people who are perhaps bankers or solicitors or something like that who have quite a restricted job, like to sort of throw on their biking clothes and all of a sudden become this completely different person, this hidden side of their personality, and go out and ride a bike and have a biking experience, and I think it's quite an interesting persona… when they put their clothes on they become a different person almost, it's a uniform, stating what they are as a person. And so, the brands that they buy, the bike that they ride, is part of it, that's part of that perception of what I really am."

172. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director:

"... they (motorcyclists) definitely talk, and they talk about products to each other, and if they go out as a group of bikers or maybe they meet up at a bike meet or something like that, they will look at what other people are wearing, and they'll

definitely clock on if they think 'well that guy's a bit sort of trendy maybe I should look at that', and then it does have a follow through…"

20. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager
"You can tell there's definitely a fashion element, there's definitely a bit of label snobbery, all the bikers know what, they're quite an educated bunch, they know what they're buying, they know what they're looking at, and certainly can tell the quality they're looking for you know…"

In a highly competitive marketplace worth at the end of 2005, £667 million in retail sales, companies use brand attributes to create a differential and competitive advantage. Like most fashion related products, motorcycle codes of 'looking' change with time and this represents an opportunity for manufacturers to develop and market brands that encourage customers to partake in discriminatory behaviour, placing value on brand attributes and communications messages for the short term rather than the long term. Manufacturers make continuous modifications to their motorcycle product ranges, often introducing new models annually that include innovative brand attributes. Clothing and equipment, according to Triumph's Clothing and Merchandise Manager has a shelf life, and has, he claims a turnaround time of around three years:

62. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"… in terms of fashion and a trend, my background was fashion and the sort of products that we would introduce would have a shelf life, within a store, for no more than six months, you'd be changing every season… most of our (Triumph) products will have a shelf life of about three years… there is a feeling about different materials being used, of different colours that come through… I'd say a three year product life-cycle, yeah."

9.3   Supersports Brands

As noted in the semiotic audit, the arrival of 'The Modern Era' was instigated initially by Japanese motorcycle manufacturers who, identifying an opportunity in the market, began to mass produce sports styled motorcycles; before this, individual consumers had modified their own motorcycles to accomplish a sports look. By the 1980s the sports motorcycle sector had truly taken off, with the increasing fitment of fairings to motorcycles and the influence of technological developments that made the motorcycles strong but light.

The introduction of the World Superbikes Championships in the late 1980s represented significant commercial potential for motorcycle, clothing and equipment manufacturers. Motorcycles used on the racetrack were directly derived from road going machines, and manufacturers invested heavily in sponsoring racing teams and championship racers to ride their superbikes, and wear their clothing and kit. With media coverage of the World Superbikes Championships on a worldwide scale, came a significant increase in consumer ownership of sports motorcycle related products and brands. Supersports motorcycles remain the highest selling motorcycles in the UK today, accounting for 23% of total motorcycle sales in 2005 (see MCIA figures – APPENDIX J).

Through the combinations of race-replica brands that manufacturers design, develop, and give personality to, they have succeeded in 'commodifying' the racetrack experience. Consumers who pick up these combinations of props do not need to be 'real' racers; they do not even need to be highly skilled motorcycle riders. Mere ownership and symbolic display of these props provides them with a code of self-discourse that aims to say 'I'm an authentic racer.' This was evident in the results of scene three of the self-assembly collage exercise, Section 8.2.3. Racing style riders attend bike meets, gaining role-authenticity by parading and exhibiting themselves and their motorcycles in ritualistic social display, or showing off. It is 'more about clean bikes than dirty bikes.'

9.3.1 Motorcycles - Intrinsic Development

Perhaps the key communication code that drives intrinsic brand development across all motorcycle sectors is *technological innovation*. Since their introduction in the 1970s, supersports motorcycles have been designed and developed using cutting edge, innovative technology of the time. Technological innovation in the early supersports motorcycles focused on increases in horsepower. Later, significant developments were made to improve the motorcycles' handling and performance; factors included improvements in brake and chassis technology. As supersports motorcycles became more powerful, they became more controllable and lighter due to the use of aluminium chassis components, improved suspension and new motorcycle design and layout. In today's technological age, supersports motorcycles represent the cutting edge of innovation technology, and manufacturers battle hard to gain competitive advantage based on this as a communication code.

Manufacturer discourse, represented on company web pages, commonly makes great claims about the *technological innovation* and *performance* capabilities of their supersports motorcycles. Suzuki makes great claims about its Hayabusa model (featured in Figure 9.1):

www.suzukicycles.com

"As they say, it ain't bragging if it's true. So when we claim that the Suzuki Hayabusa GSX1300R is the fastest production bike on the planet, we're merely stating the facts. It is, pure and simple, an engineering masterpiece that turns advanced technology and aerodynamic design into unmatched performance."

Similar claims are made by Aprilia on its website:

www.aprilia.com

"The impossible? Aprilia has done it! Aprilia has broken through the furthest frontiers of technology and performance to set previously inconceivable standards with this uniquely sensational motorcycle (RSV 1000R Factory)…"

Figure 9.1 Suzuki Hayabusa

Source: www.suzukicycles.com

Words and phrases such as *"engineering masterpiece," "pulsating power," "control," "responsiveness," "aerodynamic performance," "precision," "innovation,"* and *"quality"* commonly appear in manufacturer web page narrative and reflect the dominance of technological innovation as a central communication code influencing the design, development and communications of supersport motorcycle brands.

To find the source of the technological innovation that drives today's supersports motorcycle product/brand development, one needs to focus on the professional motorcycle racing scene. Originally it was the road going sports motorcycles aimed at the consumer market that heavily influenced the design and development of World Superbikes Championship machines, but today this trend has been reversed. It is the professional racing superbikes that inspire the design, development and communications messages surrounding road going supersports motorcycles aimed at the consumer market. Heavy manufacturer investment over the last twenty years in sponsorship of racing teams and championship racers has enabled those teams and racers to develop a high level of technical expertise. A great deal has been learnt from professional competitive racing, where the motorcycles are pushed to, and beyond, their performance limits on the racetracks that host the World Superbikes and Moto GP championships. Today's long, narrow profile, sleek, aerodynamic, technologically advanced supersports motorcycles are directly derived from those used on the racetrack. Company web page narrative widely supports this point:

www.ducati.com

"... Ducati's experience gained over years of successful racing at the highest levels is evident in the design and technical characteristics of the 999S..."

www.aprilia.com

"The RSV1000's design is being constantly refined technically and stylistically by ideas from Aprilia's world championship team and dedicated racing division..."

www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/

"A lot of the technical knowledge materialised in the new R1 came from Yamaha Moto GP machines... There has never been a bike running off Yamaha's production line that had more influence from GP and World Superbike than the third generation R1."

Technological innovation pioneered on the racetrack and included in supersport motorcycle design has cascaded into, and has heavily influenced technological design and development within the other motorcycle market sectors. This is a point noted by Yamaha Motorcycles in narrative posted on its online design café:

www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/

"No doubt, supersport is leading motorcycle developments and there is a lot of spin off to other bike categories, which benefit from supersport technology."

Illustrating this point, one can see that Ducati uses technological innovation as a communication code that informs discourse relative to its contemporary motorcycle range:

www.ducati.com

"For 2005 Ducati presents an entire line up of exciting new state-of-the-art technological advances that once again raises the art of motorcycle production to new heights."

On a wider European cultural level, one can see a movement in the design of products in general, particularly in car design, towards the development of dynamically shaped products and brands that give a sporty image of aerodynamic speed and movement. This kind of design strategy is consistent with that employed in supersports motorcycles, and reflects a wider cultural move towards sports and leisure, including high-risk adventure pursuits. An influential designer of the Yamaha R1 supersports motorcycle makes this point when questioned about cultural trends in the design field:

Product Designer – Yamaha R1 Supersports motorcycle (www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/)
"In Europe, especially in car design, there is more attention to the dynamic proportions and the surfaces to give an image of movement. This is actually more close to motorcycle design. In general we see that everything is becoming more sporty, more dynamic."

In the supersports motorcycle sector where manufacturers battle hard for competitive advantage based on a number of core consistent factors, namely technological innovation and links with professional Superbike and Moto GP racing, the importance of creating a unique differential advantage is paramount. Yamaha Motorcycles has done this successfully with its best selling R Series range (including the YZF-R1 and the YZF-R6 – illustrated in Figure 9.2). A Yamaha R1 product designer notes the importance of creating a 'unique' and 'original' brand identity:

Product Designer – Yamaha R1 Supersports motorcycle (www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/)
"In motorcycles we see the influence from MotoGP, but still we try to be unique and give each motorcycle its own originality. Every manufacturer is attacking the same categories, so we want to stand out with our own Yamaha originality in each of those categories."

Figure 9.2: Yamaha's YZF-R1 and YZF-R6 Supersports Motorcycles

Source: www.yamaha-motor.co.uk

Yamaha attempts to build 'uniqueness' and 'originality' into its motoring product range by constructing brand personality that, it claims, is intrinsically built on an 'emotional' approach. This is certainly extrinsically visible if one considers Yamaha Motor's brand logo that includes the linguistic syntagm *"Yamaha – Touching Your Heart"* (illustrated in Figure 9.3)

Figure 9.3: Yamaha Motor's Brand Logo

Source: www.yamaha-motor.co.uk

Focusing on Yamaha Motorcycles' R Series brand, the design team certainly claims that it is this 'emotional' approach that drives the R Series intrinsic design philosophy, and that differentiates Yamaha motorcycles from other Japanese manufacturer's brands. One R1 product designer states:

Yamaha R1 Product Designer (www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/)
"We design from an emotional approach. Other Japanese brands have more priority on technical, functional things. But at Yamaha, the exciting feeling has priority, even if it costs more to design and produce!"

Yamaha motorcycles appears to have successfully tapped into the highly emotive nature of motorcycle riding experience, and the highly emotive relationship that exists between motorcycle and rider, as the motorcycle offers the rider opportunities for otherworldly adventure experience, and self-fulfilment through construction of a 'unique', 'sovereign' self. Describing in more detail the 'emotional' approach on which the R Series brand is built, the project leader describes the *excitement* associated with supersports *adventure* experience, and particularly focuses on the self-satisfaction that is gained as the rider and motorcycle blend into one:

Project Leader – Yamaha R Series (www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/)
"When we developed both bikes (R1 and R6), our target was excitement. Of course there are many variations of excitement for motorcycle riders. For supersport this certainly means hard riding and exploration of the bike's potential. The rider should be able to feel... It is not about absolute speed, but more about the feeling for this interactive response between the bike and the rider. It should be a good conversation from man to machine and vice versa. This gives excitement and satisfaction…"

It is the all-important emotional bond (highlighted in Section 8.3.4) between rider and machine, and the opportunities for adventure performance flow, that ultimate state where action merges with awareness creating a sense of heightened emotion and transcendental experience (identified by Csikzentmihalyi, 1975), that Yamaha R Series designers claim lies at the heart of brand's design philosophy. The R1 motorcycle is, in fact, nicknamed 'the one' by its designers, who state that its design is based on a traditional Japanese expression (illustrated in Figure 9.4) that means 'man and horse is one.'

Figure 9.4: Yamaha R1 - Man and Horse is One

人馬一体

Source: www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe

The 'oneness' associated with design and development of the Yamaha R1 is reflected by the President of G.K Dynamics, the company that designs motorcycles for Yamaha, and the R1 Design Manager:

President GK dynamics (www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/)
"You need to treat the human plus the machine as one body."

Yamaha R1 Design Manager (www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/)
"When we design a motorcycle, we never forget the rider's mind, the emotional thing, the feeling you should get from sitting on the bike and riding it, feeling one with it… We always apply a combination of a human approach and a mechanical approach…"

Yamaha R Series designers have coined the term 'humachine technology' to combine the communication codes of *human emotion* and *technological innovation* that drive intrinsic development of the R Series brand. Through this approach, they claim they have created a motorcycle that facilitates the adventure experience that supersports motorcyclists so much desire. Whatever the rider's skill level, the R Series motorcycle aims to provide it's owner, at one with the machine, with self-confidence to perform and experience intense feelings of *excitement, thrill* and *flow* associated with *adventure:*

Yamaha R1 Design Manager (www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/)
"The phrase is an abbreviation of human and machine and stands for a holistic approach which will make the rider feel excited and, at the same time, confident on such a high performance machine regardless of skill and speed…This bike (R1) does exactly what the rider wants. Both experts and average riders can experience this behaviour and thrill. And that is what makes the new R1 so exciting!"

The oneness between rider and motorcycle that is so central to the R1 design philosophy is clearly signified in the R1 advertisement illustrated in Figure 9.5. Semiotic analysis of this ad reveals the use of a combination of iconic, linguistic and graphic signs. At a denotative level, the iconic image of the silver and black R1 motorcycle is positioned at one side of the ad, facing outwards towards the reader and towards the iconic image of the motorcyclist, who is positioned at the other side of the

ad. The motorcyclist is facing the motorcycle and is kitted out in colour coordinated, silver and black helmet and jacket. The jacket is clearly identifiable as Yamaha branded by the linguistic and graphic Yamaha logos located on the back. The jacket's style reflects a continuation of the style of the Yamaha R1 motorcycle featured. The linguistic syntagms positioned between the two iconic images identify the name of the motorcycle, the *"YZF-R1"* and state *"fusion of man – machine."* The total ad reflects a colour coordination of black, silver and white.

Figure 9.5: Yamaha YZF-R1 Web Page Advertisement

Source: www.yamaha-motor.co.uk

The anchorage between the various signs and syntagms of signs employed in this ad reveals a connotative discourse that signifies the oneness between motorcyclist and motorcycle central to the R1 design philosophy. The single role identity that is signified by the helmeted motorcyclist is that of Yamaha R1 supersports motorcyclist; all other role identities have been masked by the use of the helmet. As the rider looks towards the R1 motorcycle, what is left is for the ad's reader to mentally place the rider astride the motorcycle, completing the picture that represents a fused, consistent, single identity image. The text *"fusion of man – machine"* encourages the reader to do this.

At an ideological level, this advertisement taps into a number of subcultural myths that support the dominant ideology of the supersports motorcyclist subgroup. By using the helmet to cover all possible role identities apart from Yamaha R1 supersports motorcyclist, an indexical relationship is encouraged that allows the ad's reader to easily project himself into the picture, taking on the role of R1 supersports

motorcyclist himself. Through purchase and symbolic display of the constellation of products featured in the ad, this becomes possible.

The consistently styled, modern, colour coordinated constellation of products featured provides a fashion conscious uniform of authentic role-identity central to membership of the supersports motorcycle subculture and subscription to its ideological values. Prescription to this identity code gives the motorcyclist opportunities for symbolic self-completion, through the construction and signification of what they believe to be a 'unique', 'sovereign' sense of personal meaning, different from that pertained to by members of wider society. It offers freedom for 'otherworldly' experience that provides opportunities to escape the constraints of everyday role identities and responsibilities, allowing the motorcyclist to *do* something different, and to *be* somebody different (explored in detail in Section 8.3.1). This advertisement clearly draws on the strength of the relationship that exists between motorcyclist and motorcycle, and the sense of oneness that is formed as the motorcycle's image and personality fuses with the rider, to become part of his extended-self.

At one with the motorcycle, with a total fusion between man and machine, the rider is offered performance opportunities that truly leave the realms of everyday experience and move towards the transcendental state of heightened emotions and sensations associated with flow experience. The rider is given the opportunity to test the performance envelopes of himself and his machine, improving his levels of skill and mastery, and experiencing the thrills, excitement, adrenaline rush and satisfaction associated with adventure; elements noted by the R1 designers above as central to the R1 design philosophy.

The Yamaha R1 advertisement illustrated in Figure 9.6 was shown to respondents during depth consumer interviewing. At a denotative level, semiotic analysis of this ad reveals a combination of iconic, linguistic and graphic signs. Located across a double page spread of RIDE magazine, the advertising space is filled by an iconic photograph of a bendy, twisty mountainous road, on which there is a single, stylistically and colour coordinated R1 motorcyclist crouched forward in a pose of speedy cornering performance on his R1 supersports motorcycle.

Figure 9.6 Yamaha YZF-R1 Advertisement

Source: RIDE Magazine, July 2002, pp. 4-5

The silver and black colour combination that matches the motorcyclist with motorcycle continues through the whole scene, which reflects a blue/silvery tinge. A number of linguistic syntagms are located below and within the scene. The motorcycle's name, the "YZF-R1" along with the Yamaha brand logo are located below the scene, and a linguistic text is located just above the distant hills into which the winding road seems to disappear. This text states, *"Who cares how the crow flies."* Finally, a longer text is located in much smaller print in the sky at the top, right-hand side of the image. This text states:

"Straight line speed is all well and good, if you like trains. But fast, confident cornering, where bike and rider get to prove themselves, that's what it's really all about. And that's definitely what the all-new 2002 YZF-R1 is all about. Everything from the frame to the exhaust to the headlights has been revised, improved and lightened, creating a bike who's razor-sharp looks are perfectly matched with its razor-sharp ride. This isn't just a re-vamp. It's a re-invention. So get down to your authorised Yamaha dealer and book a test ride. Just pick your route carefully."

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At a connotative level, the combination of signs employed in this ad reveals a discourse of active, skilled, adventure motorcycling performance. The colour blend between motorcycle, motorcyclist and the surrounding scene illustrates a sense of oneness between man, machine and nature. The linguistic syntagm *"who cares how the crow flies"* provides a metaphor, indicating that enjoyment and satisfaction in motorcycling experience is not to be gained through driving in straight lines from A to B; rather from taking the indirect, scenic, challenging and winding route.

The iconic image on which this advertisement is based is similar to that of scene two of the self-assembly collage exercise administered to consumer respondents during depth interviewing (Section 8.2.2). Like scene two, it met an immediate positive response across the diverse range of respondents whose facial expressions and comments reflected an obvious liking for what they saw. Their comments included:

542. Tom

"Oh that's a fantastic picture that is… Oh, that's brilliant, don't you think that's a really good ad? That encaptures motorcycling that does to me."

546. Tom

"Fantastic… Quite simple, a bike and a road."

388. Katie

"That's what riding a bike is like, finding a piece of road like that and taking your sports bike down it, you know, just enjoying it. I think to a lot of people that's what bikes are like, that's what it's all about, you know."

Of the twelve advertisements shown to consumer respondents, this was the only one to meet a positive, enthusiastic response from all of them. In common with scene two of the self-assembly collage, respondents particularly focused on and made positive comments about the road featured on this scene:

422. Sam

"Well that looks like fun… Yeah it's a good advertisement, just because of the corners and the road, because every biker that looks at that will think 'oh I'd love to ride

down there'… I would look at that definitely yes because of the scenery, I mean curves, it's curving from there all the way down isn't it… and everybody that rides a bike would look at that and read it."

850. Matt

"… straight away you'd think 'where is that road?' you know what I mean, 'where is that road?'"

382. Katie

"Oh right yeah, yeah I quite like this one. Just because I look at the road and think 'where is it? I wanna go there' and I think that's probably what people would notice."

They were also attracted to and amused by the linguistic syntagm *"who cares how the crow flies"* clearly decoding the meaning of this syntagm relative to the enjoyment to be gained from riding experience on twisty, challenging, entertaining and certainly not the most direct, easy going roads:

347. John

"… I like the bit where it says 'who cares how the crow flies.' Because everyone has to get there quick, in a straight line, and when you're on your bike you don't. You want the nicest, most entertaining route that you can find…"

513. Rob

"'Who cares how the crow flies.' What an advert, yeah, fabulous, catches me. 'Who cares how the crow flies' yeah it's not always the easiest way, a nice way to get there, you've got a few bendies and a bike, it's brilliant, you can't fault it, proper advert."

Supporting the results of scene two of the self-assembly collage exercise and Section 7.2.3 of the semiotic audit, the wide ranging positive response by respondents to this advertisement reflects a dominant communication code of *diversity,* that represents fragmentation of the UK motorcycle market today. At an ideological level, the combination of signs employed in this ad draws on two highly significant subcultural myths, central to the ideology of the diverse range of groups that make up the

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motorcycle subculture; these are *freedom* and *adventure*. The core myths of freedom and adventure have materialised consistently throughout the results and discussion of Chapters 7 and 8. For the respondents in the study, the single motorcyclist on this 'perfect' road represents the ultimate freedom from the dullness and routine of everyday roles and responsibilities, as well as freedom from the constraints represented by increasingly congested roads and other motor vehicles such as cars; previously referred to by respondents as 'steel boxes' and 'cocoons'. Respondents described the freedom represented by the ad:

544. Tom

"The scenery, the road, the bike… even the time of day, you know, it looks to me like it's probably like seven, eight o'clock at night just as the sun's going down which is a fantastic time to ride a bike. That to me is just what biking's all about. No one else on the road, you know, freedom…"

328. Anna

"Yeah I like this one… open road and tonnes of freedom."

841. Matt

"Now that's, yeah. I can actually see what they're getting at there, I think that's a case of out, freedom of the road, go out there, enjoy yourself."

They also described a number of elements of adventure that include *danger, challenge* and *enjoyment:*

740. Helen

"Very, good, very very good… it's fun, it's free, it's dangerous."

747. Jack

"It's testing… you know, I mean you go from A to B as quickly as you want to get there in one piece, but this says have fun on the way…"

278. Tony

"Full of adventure, freedom… I suppose also you're sort of… catching your own destiny if you like, you know, you can go out, let your hair down and all the rest of it and so you can have some good fun on this and… challenges as well I think in terms of nice sweeping roads and everything else…"

Ultimately this advertisement focuses on the potential for intense, free, adventurous motorcycling performance that is offered through ownership of the Yamaha R1 supersports motorcycle featured. An indexical relationship exists where the ad's reader is encouraged to project himself into the image, to vicariously enjoy the benefits of this intense moment of flow experience and to consider the benefits of making this fantasy a reality through purchase of an R1 motorcycle.

Involvement in this kind of motorcycling performance has associated implications for the rider's self-identity construction. Successful performance outcome leads to a personal satisfaction that is gained from skills development and an intensification of the relationship between motorcyclist and motorcycle. The rider can gain self-confidence regarding his perceptions of subcultural role authenticity, knowing that he can add this experience to his 'folder' of motorcycling narratives to draw upon, and possibly 'exaggerate' in social motorcycling circles (described in Sections 8.2.1 and 8.3.1).

The ad producers do not fail to recognise the self-identity implications of successful motorcycling performance with inclusion of the linguistic syntagm, *"fast, confident cornering, where bike and rider get to prove themselves, that's what it's really all about."* The syntagm goes on to stress that this is what the new, modified R1 model is all about. It encourages readers to partake in discriminatory product behaviour by describing the new, innovative intrinsic and extrinsic attributes that differentiate the new R1 model from previous models, and from other manufacturers' models. This message aims to encourage consumer confidence in the performance capabilities, and thus the self-identity implications of ownership of the new R1 motorcycle. As noted previously by the R1 Design Manager, the 'humachine technology' approach on which the R1 motorcycle is designed and developed aims to allow the rider to feel excited and confident on the motorcycle, and to experience the riding behaviour and

thrill of adventure regardless of skill level and speed. This advertisement certainly instilled a sense of personal confidence in the performance capabilities of the R1 motorcycle featured for respondents in the study:

381. Chris

"That's what you want isn't it, you want an empty road that's got nice sweeping curves on it, nothing too sharp… that's what you want, you want the perfect curve like that, you want to be able to go round a bend like that and not worry about anything coming the other way and know that you've got a machine that'll cope with it, and that's obviously what they're trying to put across here, that's what they're selling. They're selling the fact that you buy this bike, you can ride these bends without any fear of falling off…"

345. John

"… to me the impression that that's giving to start with is obviously it's a Yamaha R1. He's giving the impression, yeah a nice twisty road, he's enjoying himself, and the bike handles well."

9.3.2 Motorcycles - Extrinsic Development

Whereas intrinsic brand attributes contribute to the functional characteristics of product design and development, the extrinsic attributes exist purely to provide the brand with a unique personality. If changed, the extrinsic attributes do not alter the material functioning or performance of the product itself; they allow the world of signs, symbols and semiotic meaning to be entered which endows brands, and ultimately consumers with personal meaning. A number of dominant subcultural communication codes/myths can be identified from semiotic analysis of extrinsic brand development and signification within the supersports motorcycle sector.

Extrinsic brand development plays a particularly important role within the supersports motorcycle subgroup, where signification of an up-to-date, fashionable *sports* look appears to be central to subcultural acceptance and authentic role development. The

importance of getting the 'total look' right was highlighted in a humorous quote by Lloyd Lifestyle's Marketing Manager:

98. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager
"… You know, it's like your wallpaper and your carpets, you know, they want them to be the same (laughing)."

Extrinsic development of supersports motorcycle personality is achieved through careful design of motorcycle names, labels, graphics, logos, colours and discourse represented by various marketing communications tools such as motorcycle sports sponsorship, advertising and web page discourse. The influence of the professional racing scene goes beyond intrinsic technological innovation employed in supersports motorcycle development. In fact, the whole imagery surrounding professional racing and professional racers carries through into extrinsic brand development. The dominant myth of *racing and speed* is clearly the key communication code on which extrinsic brand personality is built within this sector.

Motorcycles are given names with racing and speedy connotations, such as the 'Triumph Sprint RS' and 'TT600', 'TT' having connotations to the iconic Isle-of-Man Tourist Trophy road racing event. Also, amongst many, there is Honda's iconic 'Fireblade' motorcycle and the new 'Aprilia RSV 1000R Factory'. The term 'factory' immediately brings forth motorcycle *sports*, *racing* connotations. This point is supported in a press release posted on Aprilia's web page:

www.aprilia.com
"'Factory' is a magic word that immediately conjures up the world of racing and special bikes for special riders who fully appreciate the thrill of sports riding. The RSV 1000R is the top of the RSV 1000R range, and a refined supersport that is awesomely successful on the track."

Supersports motorcycles are often named with combinations of letters and numbers. Letters, such as 'RR' provide an abbreviation for 'race replica' and numbers often reflect the motorcycle's engine size, but often letters and numbers are used which, to outsiders of the subculture, do not mean anything; Suzuki's 'GSX' range, Yamaha's

'YZF' range and Honda's 'CBR' range for example. For members of the subculture, these combinations of letters and numbers have acquired a connotative status of *racing* authenticity. This is reflected in comments made by Lloyd Lifestyle's Marketing Manager:

106. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager
"... Letters are always popular, calling something an RGX 27, you know, nobody knows what it means but it sounds right doesn't it... motorcycle manufacturers stick the labels on the end of their bikes. You know, what do we know what a GSXR or a, you know a YZTT, it doesn't matter... it just trips off the tongue doesn't it."

Supersports motorcycles are fully faired and graphic lines are placed in an upwardly sloping direction, which contributes to the image of aerodynamic speed. Often fairings are covered with graphics that directly imitate those used on professional racing motorcycles. This is certainly evident in the 2005 'Honda CBR Fireblade Repsol' edition (illustrated in Figure 9.7) which replicates that used by sponsored Moto GP riders Max Biaggi and Nicky Hayden, and includes sponsors logos and stickers on the fairing.

Figure 9.7 2005 Honda CBR Fireblade Repsol

Source: www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

Motorcycle colour schemes also replicate those used on the racetrack, and various colours have become iconic in their associations with given manufacturers' racing teams; green for Kawasaki, blue and yellow for Yamaha, and red for Ducati, for example.

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Perhaps the most important and significant communications tool employed by manufacturers to attach authentic racing identity to their motorcycles is that of professional racing team and racing rider sponsorship. Investment in sponsorship is not only essential for intrinsic supersports motorcycle development, but it generates authentic racing discourse that supports and surrounds the development of extrinsic brand personality. The importance for consumers of gaining personal and subcultural role-authenticity through purchase and symbolic display of authentic products associated with the professional racing teams and racers cannot be underestimated. Company respondents noted the self-identity implications, for consumers, of ownership of brands associated with sponsored teams and racers:

174. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"… on the racing side of biking, because that's the reason why most of the motorcycle racers are sponsored with their suits and helmets and things because people look at them, (gasping) 'I want to be like John Reynolds' or 'I'd like to be like Valentino Rossi', so I think there's an aspirational side…"

118. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager
"…(referring to sponsorship) there's Italian companies and Japanese sports companies out there that have gone and spent fortunes on promoting themselves on the track. And it's what these people (customers) want to be associated with, they want to be associated with the winners."

Like the Honda Repsol motorcycle illustrated above, extrinsic design of a number of supersports motorcycles directly reflects that of the machines ridden by racing 'heroes'. The 2004 Suzuki GSX-R1000 Mladin Replica motorcycle (illustrated in Figure 9.8) is an example of this.

Figure 9.8: 2004 Suzuki GSX-R1000 Mladin Replica

Source: www.suzukicycles.com

The motorcycle accurately replicates that used to achieve championship success by sporting hero Matt Mladin. A description of the extrinsic design is provided in Suzuki web page narrative:

www.suzukicycles.com

"… Complete in all its Yoshimura Suzuki livery, the limited edition GSX-R1000 accurately replicates the look of Mladin's championship winning machine, including Mat Mladin's signature and four AMA number 1 plates on the fuel tank."

For the motorcyclist who chooses to purchase, use and symbolically display this motorcycle, the self-identity implications are clearly to achieve a desired self-image consistent with that of racing 'hero' and authentic role model Matt Mladin.

Yamaha has clearly recognised the desire of consumers to 'take on' and signify a role identity consistent with their racing heroes through exploitation of its sponsorship deal with Moto GP world champion, Valentino Rossi. They have recently developed a limited edition R6 supersports motorcycle whose extrinsic design has been completed in close association with Valentino Rossi. The aim of this motorcycle is to improve the R6's *race* appeal even more, as reflected in discourse posted on Yamaha's online design cafe:

www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/

"How can the R6 improve its race appeal even more? We asked Valentino Rossi to come up with his personal design ideas."

The extrinsic design of this motorcycle reflects the individual personality and personal preferences of Rossi himself. Consumer ownership and symbolic display of this motorcycle clearly anchors a motorcyclist's self-identity consistent with Rossi. The motorcycle (featured in Figure 9.9) is named the 'R46', taking on Rossi's personal racing identity number, and the number '46' is clearly positioned at the front of the motorcycle, imitating Rossi's professional racing model. The bodywork graphic design and colour scheme, based on a contrasting sun and moon theme, is unique and original, reflecting Rossi's personal preferences.

Figure 9.9: Yamaha YZF-R46 Limited Edition

Source: www.yamaha-motor.co.uk

The R46 Product Planning Manager reflected on Rossi's influence in the motorcycle's extrinsic design:

Yamaha   R46   Product   Planning   Manager   (www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/)

"... He (Rossi) really has an open mind and a strong opinion about his favoured design. When we talked about the colouring, he proposed his idea of a 'sun side' and

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a 'moon side' resulting in a different colour on each side of the bike! That is something which has never been done before on a production bike!"

Communications discourse surrounding the Yamaha R46 model encourages an indexical relationship whereby, at an ideological level, consumers can purchase the motorcycle to 'be' like Rossi. Yamaha web page narrative includes phrases such as:

www.yamaha-motor.co.uk
"Being like Rossi just got easier."

Featured in Yamaha R46 web page discourse is a video advertisement that also encourages this indexical relationship. The film sequence opens with a shot of an empty racetrack and the sound of fast beating, exciting background music. Suddenly Rossi appears, kitted out in his racing leathers and equipment, riding the R46 motorcycle. Alone on the track Rossi is hunched down, knee to the ground in a pose of fast, racing, highly skilled adventure performance. Rossi races past an anonymous, Yamaha branded R6 rider who, previously sitting at the side of the track, takes off in his pursuit. What follows is an action packed, dramatic race between the two riders that shows off the racing performance capabilities of both the riders and motorcycles. Excitement and adrenaline flow to the fast beating music as each rider challengingly overtakes the other. A climax is reached as Rossi just re-takes the lead as they cross the finish line. The two motorcyclists come to a stop side by side and Rossi takes his helmet off, clearly revealing his identity to those who aren't already aware, and looks at the anonymous Yamaha motorcyclist. The motorcyclist pats Rossi on the back, dismounts his bike and walks away, still helmeted. What follows is the strap line *"Ride with the Best."*

At a connotative level, this advertisement offers the reader opportunity for vicarious consumption of professional racetrack experience. It allows the reader to see, feel and experience the excitement, adrenaline and high level of performance skill associated with riding like a racing champion. Ideologically, the ad draws on the core myths of r*acing and speed,* and *adventure* that support the code of riding, and code of identity relative to the supersports motorcycle subculture. Like the two previous Yamaha motorcycle advertisements analysed, the combination of signs employed in this ad

provide a discourse that encourages the reader to project himself into the role of the anonymous R6 motorcyclist featured. Yamaha's ideological message is that purchase, use and symbolic display of the brands that make up this identity code will give the consumer performance capabilities and skills comparable to those of world Moto GP champion, Valentino Rossi; ultimately, as noted by Lloyd Lifestyle's Marketing Manager, ownership of this kind of product code allows the consumer to be associated with racetrack winners.

Motorcycle manufacturers certainly exploit the marketing communications opportunities associated with racing team and rider sponsorship for authentic brand development, positioning, and the generation of consumer awareness. Interactive company web pages contain 'racing news' sections with up to date racing news, results, reviews and calendars of racing events. Also, sections appear featuring the company's sponsored racing teams, providing a wealth of information surrounding their professional sponsored riders. Figure 9.10 illustrates an example from Kawasaki's web page discourse.

Manufacturers use racing team and rider sponsorship as a springboard to generate positive publicity surrounding their products. Journalists from sources regarded as highly credible by consumers, such as Motorcycle News, the glossy motorcycle magazines and motorcycle related web pages, regularly report on racing, team, rider and product news. Also manufacturers regularly provide the motorcycle press with press information relative to their sponsored teams, racers and products with an aim of generating positive publicity.

As well as *racing and speed*, a number of other communication codes/mythic elements of motorcycling are employed to build extrinsic brand personality of motorcycles within this sector; namely, *freedom* and *masculinity,* and the *strength* and *power* associated with it. The key myth of *freedom* is evident in the extrinsic design of the Suzuki Hayabusa motorcycle (featured previously in Figure 9.1). 'Hayabusa' is the Japanese interpretation of Peregrine Falcon, which is, in fact, the world's fastest flying bird. By naming the motorcycle the 'Hayabusa' the company has forged an immediate connotative link between the motorcycle and the bird, and a mythic association that relates to the freedom, speed and power associated with the bird. The

Japanese symbols for 'Hayabusa' are included on the motorcycle's livery. One must, however, question if the European or American consumer would be able to correctly interpret the message inferred from this Japanese discourse.

Figure 9.10: Sponsorship and Kawasaki Web Page Discourse

Source: www.kawasaki.co.uk

Kawasaki uses the name 'Ninja' to identify its full supersports motorcycle range, anchoring a connotative association between the motorcycle brand and the 'Ninja'. The Ninja were, in fact, a group of fourteenth century highly trained Japanese martial artists, who operated as an underground intelligence network, and were hired for espionage and assassination operations. In Western popular culture, the Ninja are depicted as supremely well trained martial artists who, in their legendary green costume, use many kinds of exotic equipment to accomplish their missions. The Japanese translation of Ninja is based on two symbols, the first meaning 'endurance' and the second meaning 'person'. The identifying name 'Ninja' is clearly signified, in 'English', on the livery of Kawasaki's supersports motorcycle range (as illustrated in Figure 9.11).

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Figure 9.11: Kawasaki Ninja ZX-10R

Source: www.kawasaki.co.uk

Use of the name 'Ninja' adorns this particular motorcycle range with a brand personality based on the communication codes of *masculinity, power, strength, flexibility* and *personal endurance.* The Ninja is a highly skilled, streetwise, tough, mean looking terminator like character. Kawasaki uses the meanings surrounding the Ninja's personality to create a differentiated product in a market sector competing heavily on a number of common categories. It's masculine, mean and powerful image is signified in the Ninja ZX-6R advertisement shown to consumer respondents during depth interviews (illustrated in Figure 9.12).

Semiotic analysis of this advertisement reveals, at a denotative level, a combination of iconic, linguistic and graphic signs. The ad is located across a double page spread in the opening two pages of RIDE Magazine. The advertising space is predominantly filled with a striking, iconic image of the front end of the new (at that time) Kawasaki Ninja ZX-6R model, in iconic Kawasaki green colour, with its headlights switched on, glaring strikingly at the reader. The motorcycle colour blends in a colour match with the ad's background colour, making the chrome colour of the motorcycle's face stand out.

Figure 9.12: Kawasaki Ninja ZX-6R Advertisement

Source: RIDE Magazine, January 2000, pp. 2-3

Interestingly, the cover page of this issue of RIDE Magazine is also set with a Kawasaki lime green coloured background (illustrated in Figure 9.13), creating a colour consistency leading into the advertisement.

Linguistic syntagms included in the ad include the name *"Kawasaki"* on the front of the motorcycle featured, as well as *"ZX-6R"* located on the side fairings; these linguistic syntagms clearly identify the brand and model number of the motorcycle featured. A number of linguistic syntagms are positioned at the bottom of the ad. They include Kawasaki's graphic brand logo, including the syntagm *"Kawasaki – Let the good times roll"*, positioned alone on the right side of the ad and on the left side, in very small print is Kawasaki's contact details and website address. Just above this is located the Total petrol brand logo with the text *"As used by Team Kawasaki."* Superimposed in larger white text at the side of the image of the motorcycle is the linguistic syntagm *"26TH JANUARY 2000… 'This is the best production bike I have ever sat on.' Chris Moss, Motorcycle News."* The final, but the largest and most prominent linguistic syntagm located across the top of one whole page of the ad, in

chrome coloured text similar to that of the motorcycle's front end, and in capital letters is the syntagm *"JUDGEMENT DAY."*

Figure 9.13: RIDE Magazine Cover and Iconic Kawasaki Green
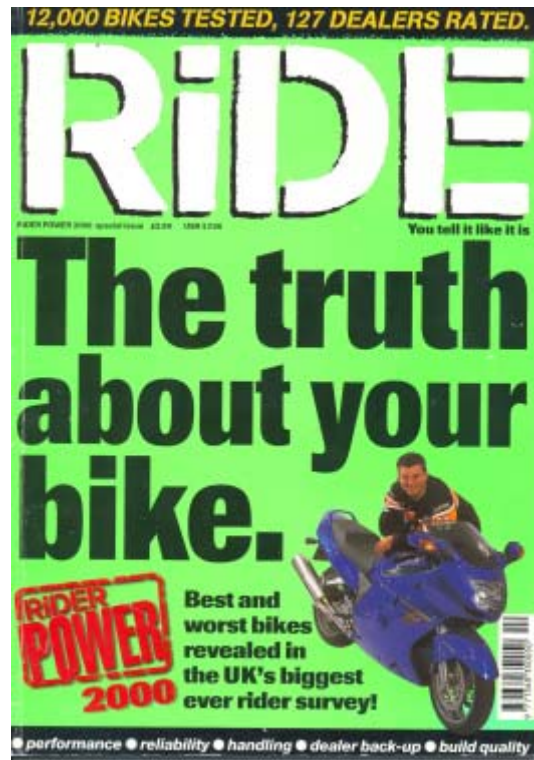
Source: RIDE Magazine, January 2000, p. 1

At a connotative level, the combination of signs employed creates a striking, attention grabbing image. This was reflected by consumer respondents:

671. Helen
"Yeah, that's striking."

456. Bill
"Yeah, it's quite striking, you know immediately…"

487.Rob
"Oh it would grab your attention for sure, for sure."

Particularly striking for consumer respondents is the use of iconic, bright Kawasaki lime green. The intensity with which this colour is used not only grabbed their attention but it created instantaneous Kawasaki brand identification:

467. Bill

"You know, even if I couldn't read it, I would know that was a Kawasaki ad. I suppose that's good from their point of view isn't it... you could have held that up at the end of the garden and I would have known that's Kawasaki."

583. Adam

"It's Kawasaki green, you know instantly its Kawasaki, there's good brand identification there,"

The magazine publishers have used the striking, attention grabbing Kawasaki green to their advantage by employment of the colour on the magazine's front cover. A clever, two way commercial advantage is generated from this as it not only draws consumer attention to the magazine, but it creates a connotative association between the brand identity of this edition of the magazine and that of Kawasaki. It also puts the consumer into a Kawasaki 'frame of mind' prior to opening the cover page and revealing the actual advertisement inside.

Adding to the attention grabbing, striking nature of the ad are the bright, shining headlights, which, staring out from the page, consumer respondents interpreted metaphorically as eyes:

483. Rob

"You'd notice that straight away because it's bright, the headlights are on it... It's a good advert I think... It grabs you, it makes you stop and look... you've got two headlights on there, you'd go 'oh what's that?"'

304. Anna

"I like that one because it's like eyes looking at you, yeah I like that one..."

668. Jack

"A couple of eyes, like piercing eyes looking at you."

Respondents reflected that the piercing eyes, along with the chrome coloured, close up front view image of the motorcycle signify a *mean, tough, aggressive* personality:

512.Tom

"That appeals to me (smiling), that appeals to me… That just says 'you get on me I'm gonna kick your ass,' don't you think that is a… it's quite an aggressive photo actually. Kawasakis are quite aggressive, because obviously I've got one and I like Kawasakis."

516.Tom

"That's really effective, yeah, that's really effective. That's what it says to me, just it shows a fast aggressive motorbike and they're the kind of bikes that you wanna ride you know. Well I shouldn't say everybody but most people."

354. Katie

"I like this one, yeah. I'll tell you why I like it, because the front view, Kawasakis are always, they have a slightly different brand image to other Japanese bikes, because they're kind of mean, they've got this kind of mean look to them, and I mean that's just playing on it, it's like God you stare in the face of that and think 'Oh, I'm terrified!'"

Katie recognised the differential brand identity gained by Kawasaki from giving this supersports motorcycle range such a distinctive, *"mean"* brand personality:

356.Katie

"… it's this kind of, you know it is this mean, big bad ass biker sort of feel isn't it, and that's kind of why I like it, you know. The main selling point about it is… you've got the CBR 600, the Suzuki version, you've got the Honda version, you've got a Yamaha version, and, as bikes they're all really good and, to be honest to choose between them you'd choose on looks alone, because as different bikes they're really quite similar. So you'd perhaps choose the Kawasaki because it's green, because

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that's the proper Kawasaki colour, and because it looks mean as well, that says it all as well doesn't it."

If the mean looking, aggressive personality was not previously evident, its meaning is certainly anchored with use of the linguistic syntagm *"JUDGEMENT DAY."* This metaphor formed the title of a previous (1991) Terminator movie, and draws immediate connotations to the iconic, mean looking, aggressive, chrome coloured machine playing the role of the Terminator. Consumer respondents certainly noticed this:

358.Katie

"It's the Terminator, 'I'll be back,' yeah, no it's cool, I kind of like it (laughing)."

573. Adam

"It's very Terminator isn't it."

806. Matt

"Just, how they've done that, off the back of sort of terminator type thing, you know what I mean, this is the ultimate machine, you know what I mean…"

With it's mean, aggressive looks, one should note that the Terminator of the movies is, in fact the mythic 'hero' of the piece who, as noted in Section 7.2.3, saves the future and is typically featured riding a motorcycle himself!

The metaphor "JUDGEMENT DAY' ultimately has ideological connotations to the end of humanity, when mankind will be judged by the greater power for it's worldly actions. This advertisement marked the introduction of the most recently modified Ninja ZX-6R supersports motorcycle of its time. The syntagm 'JUDGEMENT DAY' signified that the motorcycle was ready for expert and consumer judgement. The ad's producers aimed to influence an initial positive consumer judgement by including a quote from a 'credible' Motorcycle News journalist, and opinion leader, who states *"This is the best production 600 I have ever sat on."* The credibility of this quote was picked up on by consumer respondent Anna:

306. Anna

"... They're trying to get you to influence it because if you know who Chris Moss is, and you think he's a really decent bloke, and he's quoted 'this is the best production 600 I've ever sat on' you'd kind of follow his lead as well. "

This advertisement encourages connotative interpretation of two further signs, the Total petrol and Kawasaki brand logos. The Total petrol logo represents a sponsorship deal between Total and Kawasaki's professional racing team. A connotative relationship is formed between the two which represents *racing* authenticity for both brands. The Kawasaki graphic brand logo with its associated text *"Kawasaki – Let the good times role"* represents the total Kawasaki brand identity, and signifies the *fun* and *excitement* to be gained from investment in Kawasaki products.

At an ideological level, the key motorcyclist subcultural myth that this advertisement draws on is the highly significant residual communication code of motorcyclist as *dangerous, outlaw, bad-boy rebel*. It uses signifiers from 'The Golden Age', where in an era of 'blood and thunder' biking, groups such as the Hell's Angels, Ton-Up Boys and Rockers were portrayed as dangerous, outlaw folk devils, and motorcycles were icons of *freedom, speed, rebellion* and *youthful aggression* (as highlighted in Section 7.2.1). Ownership of this mean, aggressive and powerful Kawasaki supersports bike signifies for its owner, an associated role identity.

The personality that Kawasaki has attached to the Ninja range obviously appeals to the subcultural ideology of its target market, as Ninja sales are continuously within the top five selling supersports motorcycles in the UK (see APPENDIX L for figures). Consumer respondent Tom, a Ninja owner himself noted (above) his attraction to the *"fast, aggressive"* Ninja range. This advert, in fact, met a mixed response from consumer respondents and although they all noted the striking, attention grabbing nature of the ad, it was only the supersports motorcyclists who reacted positively to it. Comments from 'other' respondents included:

403.Sam

"I'd have noticed it but… another plastic bike, what's on the next page? (turning the page) and I'd have looked at that."

575. Adam

"Yeah, it wouldn't make me buy a Kawasaki."

561. Maggie

"...It certainly wouldn't inspire me to go and look at one."

Somewhat ironically, the mean, outlaw, bad-boy personality associated with the Ninja did not appeal to the 'traditional' cruiser motorcyclists in the study, even though this mythology forms a key part of the ideology on which their subgroup is based (evidenced in Section 8.3.1). Ultimately, the Ninja belongs to the supersports sector, and as noted in Section 8.3.1, owners of this kind of 'plastic rocket, Power Ranger' motorcycle do not belong to 'genuine' 'biker' groups. Consumer respondent Chris, noted he does not like the 'ostentatious image' on which Kawasaki Ninja motorcycles are based:

351.Chris

"… Well if you didn't know, I mean, I've already said I don't particularly have a feel for Kawasaki's… but that as a front end to a bike is about as ostentatious as you can possibly get, and that is all about image, it's not about what's behind it."

For dedicated members of the supersports motorcycle subcultural fraternity, however, dressing up to resemble racing heroes and creating a desirable authentic, somewhat 'ostentatious image' is an important part of subcultural identification and acceptance. Interestingly, classic Harley Davidson owner Tony, noted this advertisement does not appeal to him because it does not *"give a sense of freedom or emotions"*; those core ideological values on which the Yamaha R1 advertisement illustrated in Figure 9.6 is based, and which run through the veins of all groups of motorcyclists, past and present.

266.Tony

"Yeah I'd look twice at it, but… it doesn't give a sense of freedom or emotions very much."

9.3.3 *Clothing and Equipment – Intrinsic Development*

Manufacturers of supersports motorcycle related clothing and equipment products recognise the importance for motorcyclists within this sector of creating a single, unified code of motorcyclist self-identity. This code is built through ownership and symbolic display of syntagms of appropriate, fashion conscious and authentic products (discussed previously in Sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.3). Not surprisingly, in creating brand personality for their clothing and equipment products, manufacturers follow the lead set by the supersports motorcycle manufacturers, employing consistent communication codes for the development and signification of intrinsic and extrinsic brand identity; codes include *technological innovation, racing and speed*, *freedom, power* and *strength*.

Intrinsic attributes play a particularly important role in the development and signification of clothing and equipment brand personality, not just within the supersports motorcycle sector, but also across all market sectors (perhaps barring scooters). This is due to the critical functional role it plays in providing *safety, protection* and *comfort* for motorcyclists who choose to engage in this high-risk form of adventure activity. As noted by consumer respondents previously in the study (Sections 7.3 and 8.3.4), *safety* is, in fact, a core value of motorcycling and, aware of their own mortality and the *dangers* involved in motorcycling, they value, and gain self-confidence from ownership of what they perceive to be *well armoured, protective* and *comfortable* clothing and equipment.

Going back to the literature review, Section 4.4.2, it is necessary to recap on Alexander's (1996) work relating to brands as language, where he notes that most successful brands embody their own form of cultural myth. A brand myth is the belief by consumers that a brand offers them a way of resolving a problem or situation that hitherto represented some kind of contradiction. Alexander goes on to contend

that, from the point of view of the marketer, a brand holds the power to reconcile a cultural contradiction. Through intrinsic brand development of safe and protective motorcycle clothing and equipment manufacturers are, in fact, resolving a cultural contradiction.

Motorcycling is, in essence a high-risk, potentially unsafe and dangerous form of adventure experience. Motorcyclists are aware of their own mortality and the dangers involved in participation in this kind of pursuit; they value highly the desire to stay alive and to stay safe. At one extreme motorcyclists' desire involvement in this dangerous, high-risk activity and at the other, they value the importance of personal safety. Clothing and equipment manufacturers successfully reconcile this 'subcultural' opposition by providing protective, safety conscious clothing and equipment that provides motorcyclists with the opportunity for involvement in *'safe – adventure'*.

Manufacturers of supersports motorcycle related clothing and equipment products compete heavily for competitive advantage based on the *protective, safety* and *comfort* qualities of their brands. They do this by surrounding the products in a discourse of *technological innovation.* Product design, and materials used are based on state of the art, innovation technology, originating from the professional racetrack, that aims to create the ultimate comfort, safety and protection for consumers during motorcycling performance. Materials used are highly shock and abrasion resistant as well as increasingly ergonomically pleasing for the consumer. Patented specialist materials such as Kevlar ®, D-Stone ™ and Gore-Tex ® as well as premium, full grain cowhide leather are used to provide customer confidence in the protection capabilities and comfort of their products.

One-piece racing leather suits are heavily armoured, to provide a total shield of bodily protection; including armour in the shoulders, elbows, thighs and chunky knee sliders to protect the knees during 'knee-down,' cornering manoeuvres. Anti-shock, aerodynamic humps are often fitted to the back for increased rider aerodynamic performance capabilities and extra back protection. Texport's 'Wind' one-piece leather racing suit highlights these intrinsic features, and is illustrated in Figure 9.14 with its associated company web page product description.

Figure 9.14: Texport 'Wind' – One-Piece Leather Racing Suit

Wind - 1 Piece Suit

1.3mm Grade 1 Full Grain Italian Cow Hide • Texport CE Approved Pre-Shaped Armour fitted in Shoulders, Knees, Shins and Elbows • Memory Foam Insertion on Hips • Texport Knee Sliders • Aerodynamic Speed Hump • Pre-Curved Arms and Legs • Kevlar under Arms, Inner Thighs and Inner Calves • Non Allergic Anti-Bacteria Airtex Lining • Inside Pocket • Reinforced Double Layers of Leather on Seat Area • Stretch Leather Panel on Knees • Perforated Leather Panels

Source: www.phoenixnw.co.uk

The same kind of technologically advanced design and materials are used to give *protection*, *safety* and *comfort* to supersports helmets, gloves and boots. Manufacturers aim to inspire consumer confidence in their products, and ultimately gain differential, competitive advantage, by surrounding them with a discourse that spells out their vital intrinsic qualities. This is more than evident in company web page narrative:

www.dainese.com

(Dainese Kirishima V. Prof. one-piece racing suit)   "…The fruit of the Dainese Technology Centre D-Tec®'s thirty year experience on racetracks around the world, Kirishima embraces cutting-edge technical features… What's more, the use of D-Stone™ fabric makes Kirishima a highly comfortable as well as very safe suit…"

www.sidisport.com

"The new Vertigo Corsa racing boot, developed by Sidi is a perfect blend of comfort and high performance for champions and for all motor bike fans… Vertigo Corsa has a range of innovative features making it a unique boot… The captivating design and total quality of the materials and components, together with the research incorporated, provide maximum safety and make Vertigo Corsa a high-tech product

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with skilled workmanship, in line with the philosophy of Sidi… Sidi has taken another step forward… into the future."

For intrinsic design and development of supersports motorcycle clothing and equipment, integration of highly visible body armour such as knee sliders and increasingly, aerodynamic speed humps is a necessity. In reality, these elements are rarely, if at all, used by consumer motorcyclists during physical motorcycling activity. Consumers use these intrinsic attributes for extrinsic purposes, for symbolic signification of authentic subcultural *racing* motorcyclist self-identity. This is a point reflected by Lloyd Lifestyle's Marketing Manager:

74. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager
"Oh they (consumers) certainly want them (body armour), whether they actually use them, I mean your old stories about people taking them off and putting them through an angle grinder (laughing), and then sticking them back on and saying… they might not ever see the tarmac but to have a set of used knee sliders… When another biker sees you and if you've got used sliders on, you automatically get 'Oh Jesus, he can get his knee down round a roundabout,' sort of thing."

76. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager
"We (at Lloyd Lifestyle) think the sports bike, the whole side of the sports bike thing, it's sports led, it's driven by what they see on the TV at the weekend… by the Carl Foggartys and the Rossis of the world… they (consumers) want to see the big chunky knee armour, they want to see the sliders and the stuff in the elbows and the shoulders."

9.3.4 Clothing and Equipment – Extrinsic Development

As with supersports motorcycles, the development of extrinsic supersports clothing and equipment personality is predominantly based on the communication code of *racing and speed.* Extrinsic brand attributes are designed to signify a continuation of supersports motorcycle style, aiming to provide the motorcyclist with a full syntagm of products that contributes to the single, consistent self-image that he so much

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desires. Like motorcycles, products are often named with letters such as OGK's 'FF3' helmet, Arai's 'RX7' helmet and Alpine Stars 'S-MX' range of racing suits and boots. Products are also named to give *racing* connotations such as Dainese's 'Monza' racing suit, named after the Italian racetrack, Swift's 'speed' performance pants and Texport's 'Voltage' racing suit. Manufacturer's also make heavy use of professional rider sponsorship and aim to achieve ultimate racing authenticity by naming their products directly after their sponsored racers. This is particularly true for helmets, a number of which were previously illustrated in Figure 7.11. Arai helmets has a long list of sponsored professional riders, and produces replica helmets named directly after a number of them for the consumer market; two of which are illustrated in Figure 9.15.

Figure 9.15: Arai Sponsored Racer-Replica Helmets

Source: www.phoenixnw.co.uk

Manufacturers have recognised the commercial potential to be gained from making regular extrinsic modifications to these kinds of helmets, usually with regards to colour schemes and graphic style. In such a fashion, image conscious, and generally affluent market, it is hoped that consumers will regularly update their race-replica helmets, and other racing products, to authentically replicate the current style of their racing 'heroes'.

As with supersports motorcycles, professional team and rider sponsorship is used as a highly significant communications tool employed by supersports motorcycle clothing, equipment and other related manufacturers for the signification of authentic *racing* product/brand identity. Manufacturers of supersports motorcycle clothing, helmets, boots, tyres, exhausts, braking systems and even petrol (as seen in the Kawasaki Ninja

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advertisement - Figure 9.12), to mention a few, actively employ this tool as a means to surround their products and brands with a discourse of authentic *racing* identity.

Like Yamaha, leading clothing and equipment manufacturer Dainese has taken advantage of it's sponsorship deal with Moto GP world champion Valentino Rossi, producing a full range of Rossi branded clothing and equipment that replicates both the intrinsic and extrinsic features of those used by the champion himself. Dainese provides a rich communications discourse through advertising and web page imagery and narrative that features and focuses heavily on Rossi. Currently Dainese is creating a furore of Rossi related publicity by advertising, through it's web page, an ebay auction to sell one of Rossi's 2005 championship winning race suits. This includes a live countdown to the end of auction deadline, and a link that gives much imagery and detail about both intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of the suit. Textual web page discourse detailing the auction includes:

www.dainese.com
"The original Valentino Rossi's leather suit could be yours – Don't let Valentino Rossi's 'second skin' slip through your hands!"

Dainese has been highly successful in positioning its brand identity using the communication code of *racing and speed*. It has achieved an enviable status where it is perceived by consumers as a 'cool', highly fashionable and an authentic brand that provides intrinsic *comfort, safety* and *protection* during motorcycle performance as well as extrinsic opportunities for symbolic self-completion and subcultural role authenticity. Phoenix Distribution's Commercial Director noted the symbolic self-completion opportunities evident from consumer ownership of the Dainese brand that provides a uniform symbolic of authentic subcultural identity:

144. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"... I mean, if you look at the development of the Dainese brand that has completely cottoned on to the sheep instinct that British people have. The perception is really strange because the perception of Dainese is sporty racey, because that's where they've positioned themselves, and so you see all these big fat bloater type blokes

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trying to look sporty and racey because they've bought in or they've jumped on the bandwagon of that's what it should be, and they think the Italian styling is good…"

The Italian styling associated with the brand is highlighted by its close relationship with Valentino Rossi. He is not only the Moto GP world champion but he is also young, handsome and Italian. One could say that Dainese has created 'semiotic success' with its branding strategy. Another company that has identified positive consumer perceptions of Italian styling is Texport. It has given a number of its supersports racing products Italian names such as the 'Perla' and 'Mugello' one-piece leather racing suits. Lloyd Lifestyle's Marketing Manager highlighted the use of Texport's Italian names for the signification of brand authenticity:

106. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager
"… Texport use a lot of Italian, which sounds exotic here. In Italian it could mean a loaf of bread, but the British public doesn't know that…"

The colours, graphics, logos and labels represented on supersports motorcycle clothing and equipment signifies a continuation of the *racing and speed* look employed in extrinsic motorcycle design. Colours are generally bright, replicating those used on the professional racetrack, and graphic lines create a speedy, aerodynamic, sporty and fashionable look. When describing extrinsic design of the race-replica OGK helmets (illustrated in Figure 9.16), Lloyd Lifestyle's Marketing Manager described how the use of graphic lines creates an extension to the actual supersports motorcycle:

Figure 9.16: OGK Race-Replica Helmets

Source: www.lloydlifestyle.com

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66. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager

"… It's another extension to the actual bike really, you know with all these nice little fast, go faster stripes, they want them on the bikes, they want them on the helmets as well."

Brand logos and labels placed on supersports motorcycle clothing and equipment are large, bold, eye-catching and provide clear signification of the brand identity that they represent. They resemble the style of sponsors' logos and labels that appear on professional racers' attire, and as such aim to contribute to the signification of an authentic *racing* and *sporty* image. Triumph's Clothing and Merchandise Manager described how his company employs a dual branding strategy, including in its product range a combination of products that are both 'subtly' and 'boldly' Triumph branded. He recognised the importance of *"loud and proud"* bold Triumph branding in the supersports range to create a brand identity that appeals to supersports consumers:

58. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager

"…I can talk to you about the subtly branded products and the strongly branded products. Obviously on the leather suits, I think they're quite obvious, they're for the sports bike riders…They have loud and proud Triumph banners with the stripe across the chest…"

He went on to describe the Retro jacket (illustrated in Figure 9.17), which, he noted, is very popular amongst Triumph sports motorcycle riders. This jacket features a large, bold Triumph logo across the back, along with a chequered band across the chest and back that aims to connote imagery of the racetrack start/finish line and the chequers of the marshal's flag that so significantly marks the end of the race, giving victory to the winner.

This jacket, with its extrinsic features that draw on dominant subcultural mythic values of *racing and speed* and the supersports motorcyclists' desire to be associated with 'the winners' is one of Triumph's best selling clothing products:

74. *Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager*

"... that was introduced about three years ago and it's been a number one seller, it's been really successful, yeah. And it's worked geographically across the world as well so it's worked really well."

Figure 9.17: Triumph Retro Jacket

Source: www.triumph.co.uk

Interestingly, this jacket has achieved commercial success by appealing, not only to Triumph supersports motorcyclists, but to motorcyclists from across Triumph's motorcycle product range, both nationally and internationally. The Clothing and Merchandise Manager, who himself conceived the initial design for the product, noted how the jacket *"hits a note with Triumph riders":*

78. *Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager*

"... the Retro jacket, I think, I don't know quite why but that seems to have worked well across all the elements, across all our bikes yeah, it's been so successful. It's been a design that's just... it's not subtle (laughing), but it's not flashy... it just seems to have worked across all the bikes. I can't really tell you why, it's just really sort of hit a note with the Triumph riders."

It seems that a number of bold, symbolic signs are combined in this jacket that, successfully signify a discourse that *"hits a note with Triumph riders",* thus appealing

to the ideology of the 'Triumph' motorcycle subgroup. The combination of highly significant black leather, along with the name 'Retro', the large, bold Triumph logo across the back and the sporty gridlines brings about clear connotations to residual mythology of British motorcycling *heritage* of 'The Golden Era'. It draws connotations to the era where British bikers rode Triumph Bonneville motorcycles, hung out at the Ace Café, played jukebox rock 'n' roll music and raced between cafes. This mythological ideology forms a central part of Triumph's brand identity development to the present day. Ownership of the Retro jacket for the Triumph owner, whichever kind of Triumph motorcycle he rides, represents prescription to the ideology and inclusion within the Triumph subcultural fraternity.

Within supersports motorcycle clothing and equipment products, brand logos and labels are carefully positioned for maximum visual impact when the rider is mounted on the motorcycle. Lloyd Lifestyle's Marketing Manager noted the importance of careful positioning of brand logos and labels for maximum visual impact:

78. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager
*"The labels are definitely important, that Texport badge up the leg (*referring to Texport Podium 5 race suit – illustrated in Figure 9.18)**, *that means something…"*

Figure 9.18: Graphic Label on Texport Race Suit

Source: www.phoenixnw.co.uk

84. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager

"Well there's certain parts of a suit, it goes through all the gear actually, whether it's Texport right through to… there's certain places on a suit or a jacket where you stick your logo and it gets noticed. And down the outside of the leg, and down anywhere on the back it's obviously noticeable."

Manufacturers tend to produce a range of supersports motorcycle clothing and equipment products under the umbrella of a single, extrinsic brand identity; this may include leather suits, gloves, boots and helmets for example. This offers consumers the opportunity to choose, from the paradigmatic options available to them, a syntagm of products that represents a single, unified code of authentic role-identity. Dainese, for example, has created a single styled product line for its Kirishima collection, named and styled upon it's sponsored racer, that includes in it one-piece racing leathers, gloves and helmet. This is illustrated in Figure 9.19 and in the following Dainese web page narrative:

www.dainese.com

"(Describing the Dainese Kirishima V. Prof. one-piece racing suit) …A complete range of colour variants and high-impact graphics enables its stylistic integration with the most popular bikes on the market plus the gloves and helmet of the same line, for an integrated head-to-toe protective and aesthetic integration."

Figure 9.19: Dainese's Kirishima Collection

Source: www.dainese.com

Lloyd lifestyle designs a licensed product range for Kawasaki that is named and styled on the Ninja motorcycle. Referring to this, the Marketing Manager stated:

86. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager
"It's company colours basically, the Kawasaki's own colours are green and purple… So I mean, we even call the suit the 'Ninja' and the Kawasaki bike is called the 'Ninja'… ok, we do a two-piece suit and we do gloves, so Mr Kawasaki, if he was that much of an enthusiast could buy a full set of Kawasaki licensed clothing…"

A number of motorcycle manufacturers have extended the brand personality created for their supersports motorcycles into a range of clothing and equipment products, thus allowing the consumer to truly buy into, an integrate their self-image with that of the motorcycle. Suzuki has done this with it's GSX-R motorcycle, producing a full range of single styled, GSX-R branded rider's clothing and equipment, as well as casual clothing for wear off the motorcycle and associated merchandise (stickers, key fobs, tyre valve caps, licence plate holders to mention a few). Elements that contribute to the GSX-R 'identity code' are illustrated in Figure 9.20.

Figure 9.20: Suzuki GSX-R Identity Code

Source: www.suzukicycles.com

The importance, and significance of combining both intrinsic and extrinsic brand attributes for the development of supersports motorcycle clothing and equipment brand personality is more than evident in communications discourse generated from product advertising. Manufacturers/marketers use advertising to generate a discourse that reflects the key communication codes relative to the intrinsic and extrinsic brand personality of their products, as described above. Figure 9.21 shows a selection of advertisements that do exactly this. The ads included in this figure are representative of a wider selection, all of which employ consistent communication codes for the signification of product/brand personality.

It is commonly accepted that, by it's very nature, highly motivated iconic imagery elicits an emotive response from its interpreter. Producers of the advertisements featured in Figure 9.21 have consistently employed emotive, iconic signs featuring sponsored supersports motorcycle racing heroes to signify the extrinsic code of *racing* authenticity that is so central to the development of brand personality within this sector. The Sidi boots, Michelin and Bridgestone tyres advertisements featured provide iconic imagery of their sponsored racing heroes crouched down behind their motorcycles in a pose of highly skilled motorcycle racing performance. The Shoei helmets ad shows British Superbikes racer Kiyonari in a victory pose, holding his Shoei helmet in the air rather like he would a winner's trophy. Dainese has successfully built a connotative link in which world Moto GP champion Valentino Rossi has become the face of Dainese brand identity. Dainese's advertising campaign throughout 2004 heavily featured iconic imagery of the racing champion (as seen in advertisement number 1 featured in Figure 9.21), and this surrounded the brand with a discourse of *professional, championship winning racing* authenticity and of course, *Italian style* and *panache*.

Figure 9.21: Supersports Clothing and Equipment Advertising

1. Dainese - 2004

Source: www.dainese.com

2. Dainese - 2005

Source: Bike Magazine (People Supplement), November 2005, p. 15

3. Shoei Helmets - 2005

Source: Performance Bikes Magazine, September 2005, p. 20

4. Sidi Boots - 2004

Source: www.sidisport.com

5. Michelin Tyres - 2004

Source: Bike Magazine, October 2004, p. 35

6. Bridgestone Tyres - 2005

Source: Performance Bikes Magazine, September 2005, p. 26

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The use of iconic imagery of sponsored racing heroes not only gives the products featured extrinsic credibility but it gives them intrinsic credibility and authenticity. It highlights the influence of professional racing team experience and pioneering racing technology in intrinsic product development. This is supported by linguistic syntagms placed in the advertisements. The large linguistic syntagm positioned at the top of the Shoei ad (featured in Figure 9.21) states *"don't just take our word for it!"* Combined with the iconic image of Kiyonari and a number of awards and recommendations contained in graphic logos from credible sources such as Motorcycle News and RIDE Magazine, and positioned next to iconic images featuring three of the company's race replica helmet brands, this signifies intrinsic product performance credibility and encourages consumer trust in the brand.

The Sidi Vertigo Corsa racing boots advertisement (featured in Figure 9.21) simply, but effectively, places a linguistic syntagm in a bold red band, separating the iconic imagery of the professional sponsored racers from the imagery of the boot. The syntagm states *"... and the research goes on."* Sidi prides itself for being at the leading edge of the market for technological advances and performance features integrated into its boots. This is evident in web page discourse surrounding the Vertigo Corsa boots, which includes:

www.sidisport.com
"The captivating design and total quality of the materials and components, together with the research incorporated, provide maximum safety and make Vertigo Corsa a high-tech product with skilled workmanship, in line with the philosophy of Sidi…With Vertigo Corsa, Sidi has taken another important step forward… into the future."

The Michelin tyres advertisement (featured in Figure 9.21) provides clear signification of the professional racing influence that is integrated into intrinsic product design and development. This is signified by clever use of iconic imagery that shows five of Michelin's professional Moto GP sponsored racers, crouched down behind their motorcycles in a pose of focused racing performance. In fact, the racers are loaded into syringes, ready for targeted injection into the tread formation of the new Michelin tyre. Along with the bold linguistic syntagm *"100% Pure Racing Ingredients"* a clear message regarding the central role of professional racing

experience in product development is signified. Adding to this, a smaller but lengthier linguistic syntagm is provided at the bottom of the ad describing the new tyre's technological and performance capabilities concluding with, *"How did we do it? When you have a team of testers winning on 230-horsepower MotoGP bikes, you learn a few things about performance."*

Like the Sidi and Michelin advertisements, Bridgestone, also uses performance related iconic images of a number of its sponsored professional supersports motorcyclists for extrinsic racing brand authenticity. Like the others, connotations are drawn between the professional racing imagery and intrinsic brand development. The connotative message is clear that the intrinsic development of this tyre is significantly influenced by Bridgestone's experiences on the professional racing scene. Also, giving intrinsic performance credibility to the tyre, and ultimately consumer trust in its functionality is the 'MCN tyre of the year' graphic logo and the linguistic syntagm that focuses on the grip, stability and performance capabilities of the tyre.

Dainese has very effectively used credible narrative from racing hero Rossi to create consumer trust in its intrinsic product features. Linguistic syntagms in the first Dainese ad (featured in Figure 9.21) provide quotes from Rossi in which he draws on the key subcultural mythic values of *life* and *safety*, and notes the importance of 'protection' for 'success'. The message reflects that he puts his confidence in Dainese as a brand to provide him with protection, safety, life and ultimately success. The same kind of mythic values are drawn upon in Dainese's web page discourse. Its homepage includes an image of Rossi that provides a link to *"Rossi's Rules."* On entering this link, the viewer activates a video of Rossi, speaking authentically, and one could argue romantically, in Italian (with English subtitles), describing *"Safety with Valentino Rossi."* He states:

Valentino Rossi - www.dainese.com
"Do as I do – pay attention to the street. Do as I do – safety with attitude. Do as I do – brake. Do as I do – use your head. Do as I do – concentrate. Do as I do – do the right thing. Do as I do – give priority to life. Design saves lives and Dainese designs for life."

The influence of Rossi and the professional racing scene cascades into Dainese's full range of motorcycle products and this is evident in the second Dainese advertisement featured (Figure 9.21). The ad shows eleven iconic photographic images that represent Dainese products across the motorcycle sectors. One picture, however, is twice as large as the others, and features a side profile photographic image of Rossi in the same style as that used in the 2004 advertising campaign. The image is very similar to the small black and white photograph of him positioned in the bottom corner of the first Dainese ad featured. This signifies that Rossi, and the authentic *racing* discourse surrounding him, is represented by Dainese as the face of its total brand identity. Also, supporting the influence of the racing scene for intrinsic brand development across the range of Dainese products is the linguistic syntagm that includes in it, *"Safety and technology developed from Grand Prix available for everyone who rides a motorcycle."*

At an ideological level, all of the advertisements featured in Figure 9.21 employ emotive, iconic imagery to tap into the mythic values of *racing and speed,* and authentic *racing* motorcyclist identity. As noted previously, ownership and symbolic display of constellations of authentic racing products plays a key role for consumer supersports motorcyclists in prescribing to the ideology of their chosen motorcycle subgroup; it provides them with a code of fashion conscious, authentic racing identity associated with successful *racing winners*. The emotive imagery is combined with linguistic syntagms and logos to surround the brands featured in authentic discourse relative to intrinsic attributes. Ideologically, these messages aim to create consumer trust in the functional and performance capabilities of the brands, and do this by creating clear connotative links with professional racers and racing teams, and by drawing on the key subcultural myths of *safety, life* and *success*.

Both supersports motorcycle manufacturers and the manufacturers of related clothing and equipment have recognised the importance of key subcultural myths of *freedom, masculinity, strength* and *power* for the signification of extrinsic brand identity relative to their supersports motorcycle clothing and equipment products. The central myth of *freedom* so effectively signified in the Yamaha R1 motorcycle advertisement (Figure 9.6) is also used by Bridgestone in its recent tyres advertisement (illustrated in Figure 9.21). The ad includes in it, the linguistic syntagm *"grip the road… escape to*

freedom.'' The phrase *"escape to freedom"* is particularly powerful for members of motorcycle subculture as it draws on the core mythic and motivating value of freedom central to involvement in motorcycle activity and subcultural involvement. Bridgestone identifies an indexical relationship whereby ownership of the featured tyres allows the motorcyclist to grip the road, to safely and successfully perform, and to ultimately achieve the sense of escape and freedom so central involvement in this adventure activity.

Connotative links are frequently made between supersports clothing and equipment brands and the mythic values of *masculinity, power* and *strength* through the use of product names. Manufacturers often attribute 'warlike' names to their products to provide them with this kind of extrinsic brand identity; examples include Swift's Warrior, Viper and Stealth sports clothing, and also Bridgestone's Battlax and Michelin's Pilot Power tyres featured in the above advertisements. This extrinsic tool aims to generate consumer trust in intrinsic, safety, strength and protective product features.

9.4   Touring Brands

Returning to the touring scene (scene two) of the self-assembly collage exercise (Section 8.2.2), it was clearly identified by the range of consumer respondents in the study that product functionality, and thus intrinsic brand attributes, play a highly significant role in consumer choice of constellations of products/brands for this kind of motorcycling activity. Respondents identified that although motorcyclists from a diverse range of motorcycle sectors are likely to be involved in this kind of touring activity, at an ideological level, this is not about signification of a fashion-conscious image for subcultural role-inauguration or role-authenticity; on the contrary, this is 'more about dirty bikes that clean ones!' It is about the motorcyclists' personal quest for *freedom* and *adventure* of the open road and, according to respondents, constellations of products and brands are chosen for functional, intrinsic *comfort, safety* and *protection* requirements.

Manufacturers and marketers of touring motorcycles and touring related clothing and equipment products/brands have, of course, recognised the critical importance of intrinsic brand attributes for the development of products to succeed in this competitive market sector. They have, however, also recognised the importance of the development and signification of extrinsic brand personality, which is, although much more subtle than the highly visible racing imagery attached to supersports brands, it is based on a number of key signifying influencers, and dominant subcultural, and wider cultural communication codes.

9.4.1 Motorcycles, Clothing and Equipment – Intrinsic Development

Like other motorcycle market sectors, intrinsic brand development of touring motorcycles and related clothing and equipment is heavily influenced by the communication code of *technological innovation.* For touring motorcycles, technological innovation is combined with practical features that aim to give the touring motorcyclist a highly *comfortable*, if not somewhat *luxurious, smooth, powerful, safe* and *protective* ride over long, road-going distances. This is something noted by both Honda and BMW with regards to their touring range of motorcycles:

www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles
"As the standard bearer of luxury touring, the Honda range showers an array of technical innovations and practical features upon its rider. Honda gets you to your destination with ease."

www.bmw-mottorad.co.uk
"The latest generation of the luxury tourer BMW K 1200 LT perfectly fulfils your dream of dynamic travel. Its technology is state-of-the-art, its comfort is first class and it has everything for relaxed, powerful touring…"

Specifically, with regard to its latest Pan-European touring motorcycle, Honda states:

www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

"… it was decided that the time had finally come to develop an all-new Pan-European infusing it with all of Honda's latest advances in technology and innovation."

The quest for adventure and freedom of the open road pertained to by touring motorcyclists is not one of knee down, crouched down racing performance; more so it is one of luxurious, comfortable, easy travel to widespread, often foreign, road-going destinations. Manufacturers have recognised consumers' specific touring needs, and aim to gain competitive advantage based on intrinsic *technological innovations* related to their touring motorcycles' *performance capabilities, safety, protection, comfort* and *luxurious* riding capabilities. Focusing on performance capabilities, manufacturers are keen to signify the *power, handling* and *reliability* features of their touring machines:

www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

"The Pan-European is a comfortable high-speed tourer with unrivalled power and handling for its class, and with an impressive range between fuel fill-ups it is the perfect touring machine."

www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

"The Deauville's well proven V-twin engine has won respect and admiration for being a hard-working powerhouse delivering reliable and strong performance day in, day out."

Manufacturer communications discourse commonly describes the fuel economy characteristics of their touring motorcycles and increasingly, the technologically advanced fitment of catalytic converters that reflects the trend in the wider transportation market, and wider culture in general towards concern for *environmental issues*. The fitment of catalytic converters in the two-wheel motorcycle market was identified as an emergent communication code in Section 7.2.5.

Manufacturers of touring motorcycles have recognised consumer demand, within this sector, for motorcycles that include in them *safety* and *protection* features. Taking steps to resolve the subcultural contradiction noted previously that places *safety* at a

binary opposition to *danger* (associated with the *uncertainty* of *adventure)*, it appears that manufacturers have employed technologically innovative intrinsic product attributes to resolve this contradiction and thus contribute to what can be termed, *'safe - adventure'.* Ultimately, at an ideological level, motorcyclists are aware of their own mortality and they desire to stay alive, and stay safe to get the ultimate personal benefit from involvement in this kind of adventure experience. Safety and protection product features included in modern touring motorcycles include electrically adjustable windscreens and seat height adjusters for weather protection, and Advanced Braking Systems (ABS) for enhanced safety in all riding conditions. Manufacturer web page narrative includes:

www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles
"A deluxe version of the Pan-European features Honda's famed Antilock Brake System working in seamless combination with its Dual Combined Brake System."

www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk
(Describing the BMW R 1150 RT Touring Motorcycle) "… Comfort and safety make every trip a genuine pleasure… Supreme and safe… plenty of power, and the standard BMW Integral ABS system ensures optimum safety when braking…"

Honda particularly focuses on, and signifies its commitment to motorcyclist safety issues, and recently announced the establishment of its own Motorcycle Safety Organisation that operates as part of the company's research and development team. In fact, as announced recently in Bike magazine (November 2005, p. 18), the 2006 model Honda Gold Wing luxury touring motorcycle (illustrated in Figure 9.22) will be the first ever production motorcycle to be fitted with an airbag system. The article states:

Bike, November 2005, p. 18
"… The initiative is part of Honda's commitment to reduce motorcycle fatalities by 50 per cent come 2010, in line with the European Road Safety Charter. Honda signed the Charter in April last year, when they announced their commitment to fitting Advanced Braking Systems to most of their bikes by 2007… advanced safety features

will continue to appear on new bikes in the future and the development of the airbag will accelerate this…"

Figure 9.22: 'Airbag on the Wing'

Source: Bike, November 2005, p. 18

Honda, and other motorcycle manufacturers, are not only responding to the subcultural 'ideological' awareness of ones own mortality and the desire to stay alive, and stay safe, but also to wider Governmental pressure to reduce motorcyclist fatalities on European roads.

Finally, technologically advanced intrinsic features that are particularly individual to the needs of the touring motorcycle consumer segment are focused on rider and pillion *comfort* and *luxury*. These motorcycles are designed with ergonomically spacious, comfortable seating; the Honda Gold Wing at the extreme is designed with armchair like pillion seat. Motorcycles (such as the Honda Gold Wing illustrated in Figure 9.23) are designed with large luggage carrying capacity in the form of tank boxes and panniers and they are also fitted with luxury features such as auto reverse, cruise control, satellite navigation, technologically advanced radio entertainment systems that include intercom systems for rider-to-pillion, and bike-to-bike communications.

Figure 9.23: Honda Gold Wing – Ultimate Comfort and Luxury

Source: www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

Manufacturer communications discourse commonly describes these features:

www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

"The Gold Wing showers its rider with technical innovation and practical features creating a cosseted, lavish environment of comfort and serenity. Cruise control, a new slow-speed reverse operated by thumb controls and a new ratchet windscreen for optimum riding comfort – the Gold Wing is the ultimate in sheer luxury."

www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk

"A connoisseur like you that demands the most from life should not be satisfied with less in a motorbike… Its (BMW Luxury Tourer) strong character, highest degree of comfort and handling qualities will easily meet your expectations and any challenge… the BMW Luxury Tourer does not make any compromises regarding comfort or riding pleasure…"

www.harley-davidson.com

"For those who want it all. The Ultra Classic ® Electra Glide ® motorcycle. Down to the EFI Twin Cam 88® core, it's everything you expect a Harley ® road machine to be. Powerful, Refined, Legendary. Then it goes further in the way of creature comforts. Starting with the comfort-stitched saddle with wraparound passenger

backrest. There are spacious hard bags and a two-position Kind Tour-Pak ® luggage rack and more passenger room. Vented fairing keeps legs cool. Integrated storage. Electronic passenger controls. Cruise control. A new 80-watt advanced audio system by Harman/Kardon®. But the best music happens when rubber meets road."

The theme of *technological innovation* for *safety, protection* and *comfort* continues in the intrinsic product/brand development of touring motorcycle clothing and equipment products. Technological advances in textile fabrics that have increased their performance capabilities, specifically regarding their *strength, durability, breathability, warmth, waterproof* and *safety* conscious capabilities have made them increasingly popular as an alternative to leather for the diverse range of motorcyclist segments that partake in touring activity. Phoenix Distribution's Commercial Director noted this trend:

78. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"… they're (touring motorcyclists) out in all weathers, they need greater protection, they do want to be waterproof all the time… So the kind of products that would be suitable… the waterproof textiles are more suitable towards this market because they're fully waterproof. They can take them through all kinds of weather, all kinds of seasons, whereas leather, you can't wear that all the time unless you have a waterproof on top…"

Manufacturers aim to gain consumer trust in the functionality of their products through signification of the use of technologically advanced, highly performance capable, licensed materials such as Gore-Tex®, Sympatex®, Dry-Dry™, and Anti-Freeze®. Web page discourse surrounding touring clothing and equipment brands commonly describes these features:

www.dainese.com
"(Dainese G. Gator Gore-Tex® Jacket) This is the ideal jacket for those who hate being caught out by sudden changes in the weather conditions and expect the best in technicity and performance… Gator Gore-Tex® is made by using the new Texas fabric externally… Internally, the Gore-Tex® membrane provides excellent

waterproofing and breathability, creating an ideal microclimate for the human body..."

www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk
"(Santiago Suit)... It is just the right suit for tours... Its innovative materials and thus use of modern production techniques ensure high levels of comfort and safety... The Santiago suit contains highly abrasion-proof Dynatec...The product also has removable CE protectors and can be fitted with a Gore-Tex® textile insert."

Advertising discourse also commonly focuses on these features and this is illustrated in Figure 9.24, which shows a compilation of recent advertisements for textile riding jackets produced by Frank Thomas, REV'IT, and Triumph respectively. All three of these advertisements appeared in the November 2005 edition of Bike; the Frank Thomas and REV'IT ads located in the People supplement, and the Triumph ad appearing as a separate leaflet inserted into the magazine.

Semiotic analysis of these ads again reveals employment of a combination of iconic, linguistic and graphic signs to deliver connotative and ultimately ideological messages relative to the products featured. In contrast to the supersports related product advertisements analysed previously which primarily employed highly motivated, iconic imagery to signify image conscious, authentic race related brand identity, the touring ads featured here, focus much more on the use of linguistic syntagms and graphic detail to highlight intrinsic product characteristics.

At a connotative level, the combinations of signs employed within these advertisements clearly provide a message that signifies technological innovation employed within product design that aims to generate consumer trust in the safety, protection and comfort qualities of the products featured. Both Frank Thomas and Triumph focus on their products' weather protection capabilities. Frank Thomas does this by setting the two iconic images of the Aquaguard Glide jacket wearing male model on a background featuring a snow-capped mountain scene. Positioned in the crisp blue sky of the 'cold' looking scene is the bold text *"Three jackets in one... Whatever the weather."* This is accompanied by the 'Anti Freeze®' graphic logo, a licensed fabric innovation that gives the jacket authentic weather protection. This ad

continues with a number of further licensed product innovation graphic logos and linguistic syntagms that stress the three-in-one nature of the jacket and the innovative technology that makes it waterproof, windproof and abrasion-resistant. On the 'weather' related theme, the graphic logos and linguistic syntagms positioned in the lower part of the ad are superimposed on an iconic image of a cloudy sky.

Figure 9.24: Motorcycle Touring Jacket Advertising

Source: Bike Magazine,
November 2005, p. 41

Source: Bike Magazine,
November 2005, p. 71

Source: Pull-out leaflet in Bike Magazine, November 2005

Also using the weather as its theme, Triumph focuses on the waterproof functionality of its Sympatex ® Evo II range that includes jacket and gloves (featured in Figure 9.24). The front page of the leaflet is dominated by an iconic image of a black leather clad Triumph sports touring motorcyclist riding in what looks like torrential rain. The linguistic syntagm that is completed over the page states *"When it's wet… stay dry."* Inside, iconic imagery of a male model wearing the jacket and an image of the full colour range of gloves is surrounded on one side with textual data listing the performance capabilities of the Sympatex products. Detail focuses on the high-performance membrane with which the products are constructed along with the strength, waterproof, windproof and breathability features incorporated. Graphic illustrations at the other side highlight, and give authenticity to these technical features. Innovative functional authenticity is also generated by use of the Sympatex ® graphic logo that appears distinctively in the right corner of both leaflet pages. This logo, places the Sympatex ® linguistic syntagm in an iconic triangle of cloudy sky that draws connotations to the weather. The message is completed with the linguistic syntagm *"Total Weather Protection"* located below the triangle.

During his interview Triumph's Clothing and Merchandise Manager highlighted the importance for touring consumers of ownership of high performance, functional products. He confidently described how the Triumph Sympatex ® range is designed and rigorously tested to meet these requirements:

88. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"… So, we've got the Sympatex® range… it is really for someone who's a serious motorcycle rider, he goes touring, very concerned about performance, wants a garment that will serve him all year round because it (Sympatex® range) has ventilation as well as waterproofing, removable linings, it's got practically everything on it. 3M reflective so it's safety conscious as well…"

94. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"… These type of garmets (Sympatex®), as well as being tested by our test riders, they're actually tested in a laboratory as well, under controlled conditions. Because all of our Sympatex® garments are licensed… There's lots of testing that goes on with them."

The graphic imagery employed in the Triumph Sympatex Evo II advertisement that creates connotative imagery of technological innovation relative to functional design elements is also employed in a similar way in the REV'IT ad (Figure 9.24). The signs employed on the black background of this ad combine to resemble a technologically innovative computer aided design screen. A multi-layered mesh follows the contour of the jacket's arm and a number of innovative design features are highlighted by labelled graphic images positioned on various jacket features; these, in turn, illustrate the jacket's storage, active reflex, laser cut zipper and drinking systems. The total image is one of 'engineered' design, and this is reflected in the company logo, which includes the linguist syntagm *"Engineered skin."* As noted in Section 8.3.4, the motorcyclist's clothing moulds directly to the body, effectively forming another layer of skin and an embodiment with the self. REV'IT's use of the term *"engineered skin"* provides connotations that this 'extra' layer of skin is engineered, and thus strong, protective, safety conscious and comfortable.

Ultimately, at an ideological level, the advertisements featured in Figure 9.24 spell out a message of *technologically innovative, performance* related functional garments that aim to instil consumer trust in their *safety, protection* and *comfort* capabilities. For touring motorcyclists, who are aware of their own mortality, and value strongly their personal safety, the ads' producers hope that purchase and use of their touring products will give consumers' confidence to 'ride' towards the touring ideologies of *adventure* and *freedom* of the open road.

When probed about the key influencers that drive touring motorcycle clothing and equipment intrinsic product development, company interviewees not only mentioned their response to customer feedback, but Triumph's Clothing and Merchandise Manager and Phoenix's Product Design Manager and Commercial Director all described a cross-over of technologically advanced functional attributes used for garments designed for the motorcycle touring market and those designed for other high-risk adventure sports sectors such as skiing, snowboarding, hiking and sailing. In essence, they identified that for consumers choosing involvement in such high-risk, dangerous, uncertain, outdoor adventure experiences, a number of common intrinsic product benefits can contribute to *'safe - adventure'*. Triumph's Clothing and

Merchandise Manager noted the crossover of performance functionality required for products designed for high-risk, outdoor performance pursuits:

94. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"There's a lot of crossover between ski, snowboard, hiking and motorcycling, they're all functional outdoor pursuits. I think between motorcycling and sailing, they are the highest performance sports; you need the highest performance garments because of the sport. You know, when you think you could be riding at ninety miles an hour into a driving rain that's going against you. There aren't many other sports where you're gonna need that level of protection or performance garment."

Company interviewees admitted taking intrinsic design influence for their motorcycle touring garments from other high-risk adventure sports products. This is certainly the case for the Belstaff Celsius jacket (illustrated in Figure 9.25), which includes in it a rain-skirt inspired from snow-skirts used in ski garments. Phoenix Distribution's Commercial Director and Product Design Manager described the ski influence included in the design of this Belstaff jacket:

184b. Phoenix Distribution – Product Design Manager
"... and there is a snow skirt."

185. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"Underneath here look (lifting the lower part of the jacket to reveal the underneath), you've got like a rain, this thing here that you fix round, that stops water wicking up inside and that comes from…"

185b. Phoenix Distribution – Product Design Manager
"That's come from skiing…"

Figure 9.25: Ski Influence and Belstaff Celcius Jacket

Source: www.phoenixnw.co.uk

9.4.2 Motorcycles, Clothing and Equipment – Extrinsic Development

It is clearly evident that within the touring sector of the UK motorcycle market, intrinsic, functional product development plays a highly significant role in the construction of brands and their associated identity and personality; functionality was concluded to be the key influencing factor that consumer respondents in the study (self-assembly collage exercise, scene two, Section 8.2.2) believe guides touring motorcyclists through relevant decision-making processes. Manufacturers evidently use functionality as a key factor for the development and signification of touring brand personality.

Manufacturers, however, who conceive, develop, produce, signify and ultimately sell their touring products, have not forgotten the importance of extrinsic attributes for the development of touring brand personality. Triumph's Clothing and Merchandise Manager reflected an opinion shared by other touring related product manufacturers that consumers do, in fact, pay attention to extrinsic brand attributes, and they do value connotative imagery surrounding their touring ranges:

90. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager

"I hear many times (from customers) 'I don't care what it looks like as long as it keeps me dry,' but I don't think that's quite true, especially when you're paying a fairly high price point for a garment. I think it's gotta be all things to all people, it's got to look good as well as function…"

As noted previously, the development and signification of extrinsic brand personality within the touring sector of the market is not a 'loud and proud' fashion conscious statement of racing role-authenticity like the supersports market sector, but it does subtly and succinctly reflect the dominant ideology aspired to by members of the touring motorcycle subculture.   Manufacturers employ a number of consistent communication codes for the extrinsic development and signification of touring motorcycle, clothing and equipment brand personality. These codes are built upon the mythic, and somewhat romantic subcultural ideals of *travel, freedom of travel* and it's associated *adventure.*

Manufacturers give their touring motorcycles names that signify travel and freedom of travel connotations. Honda's Pan-European and Deuville models, and BMW's K1200GT models are examples of this.   The name 'Pan-European' connotes movement across Europe, and this is supported by Honda's use of a brand logo (illustrated in Figure 9.26) that consists of the linguistic syntagm of its name, set in italic text, surrounded by the symbolic European circle of golden stars.

Figure 9.26: Honda Pan-European Brand Logo

Source: www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

Honda's Deuville model (illustrated in Figure 9.27) is named after a coastal town on the French coast, nicknamed the 'Lady of the French Coast' and famous for its glamour, prestige and sophistication. Deuville has links with the wider transportation

industry through the infamous Paris-Deuville vintage car rally that it hosts annually; the rally aims to recall residual mythology of the 'roaring twenties' when lovers of elegance gathered there. Naming this touring motorcycle the 'Deuville' not only draws connotations to travel, and freedom of travel to foreign destinations, but it anchors the motorcycle with a personality of *elegance* and *sophistication*.

Figure 9.27 Honda Deuville Touring Motorcycle

Source: www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

The 'GT' of the BMW K1200 GT model is an abbreviation for 'Gran Tourismo' which, similar to the name 'Pan-European' connotes heritage of *European travel*. BMW has certainly picked up on the ideological need of the touring consumer to seek travel, and freedom of travel. Web page narrative surrounding its touring motorcycles includes narrative that includes:

www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk
"(R 1150 RT model) When freedom calls, the R 1150 RT is your ideal travel companion… this is a "bird of passage" among the long-distance tourers… follow that inner voice."

www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk
"(K 1200 GT model) Every trip has its own dynamic appeal. Wherever your passion takes you and whatever route you take, the main goal is always the same: maximum touring pleasure. We have designed a fascinating engine to give wings to your travel lust…"

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A core value particular to the touring motorcycle market sector is that of *comfort* and *luxury*, and this is not only implemented in functional touring motorcycle design, as highlighted previously, but it is employed as a communication code on which to build extrinsic brand personality. Touring motorcycles are surrounded in a communications discourse of *comfort, luxury, sophistication* and even *regality*. Ideologically, as noted by Harley Davidson with reference to its touring range, for this kind of motorcyclist, ownership of a touring motorcycle allows one to 'live life to the fullest':

www.harley-davidson.com
"Live to the fullest on a motorcycle built to go just as far…"

Touring motorcycle names that link this kind of touring with life's luxury include Honda's 'Gold Wing', as well as names employed in the Harley Davidson range that include 'Glide' and 'Road King ®'. The name 'Gold Wing' draws connotations to *luxury freedom*; Gold is a precious metal, symbolic in wider culture of *luxury, value, affluence* and *success*. The wider cultural connection between 'gold' and 'luxury' is one highlighted by Lawe (2002). 'Wing' is a term that captures the essence of *freedom* pertained to across the range of motorcycle subcultural groups. Honda supports the name 'Gold Wing' with a highly iconic brand logo (illustrated in Figure 9.28) featuring a gold coloured eagle with outspread wings; symbolising *power, strength, freedom, flight* and *precious value.* This is supported underneath with a gold coloured, italic, linguistic syntagm that clearly identifies the motorcycle brand's name.

Figure 9.28: Honda Gold Wing Brand Logo
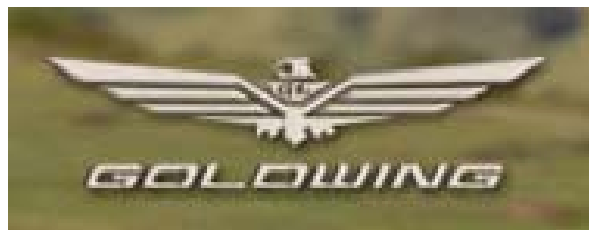
Source: www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

Use of the name 'Glide' in Harley Davidson's touring range signifies the smooth, luxurious ride generated by the motorcycle. Harley's web page narrative describes this *gliding luxury*:

www.harley-davidson.com
"Powerful, refined, legendary… surrounded in creature comforts."

Honda also recognises the importance of 'glide' for the experience of touring adventure in web page narrative relative to its Gold Wing model:

www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles
"The Gold Wing glides on to its next adventure."

Harley Davidson surrounds its Road King® touring motorcycle range in a discourse of *royalty, regality, luxury* and *power*. Web page narrative describing the FLHRI Road King® motorcycle (illustrated in Figure 9.29) includes:

www.harley-davidson.com
"… Check out the bold, strong, profile. It's bold and strong… two-piece throne… The fresh new tank graphic fit for a king… a royal ride… There's no denying Road King has earned the road's respect. Only question left is, which roads are worthy of the Road King?"

Figure 9.29 Harley-Davidson FLHRI Road King® Touring Motorcycle

Source: www.harley-davidson.com

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 As noted in the touring scene of the self-assembly collage (scene two, Section 8.2.2), discourse analysed from both consumer respondents in the study, and wider subcultural discourse revealed a particular affinity that motorcyclists have for roads; particularly their surfaces, condition, twists, bends and locations. Motorcyclists hold a particular respect for the roads that play a significant part in the production of this intense adventure experience; held in 'awe', certain roads are attributed, by motorcyclists, a position of 'sacred'. Harley Davidson has tapped into the relationship between motorcyclists and roads, giving the FLHRI Road King® a 'regal' personality, that is in fact, sacred to, and worthy of the roads' respect!

Key communication codes employed for extrinsic brand development of motorcycle touring clothing and equipment products can be seen through comparison of product names. Specifically, these codes reflect intrinsic brand attributes of *technological innovation, strength, protection,* as well as the mythic *travel, freedom* and *adventure* values seen previously in development of extrinsic touring motorcycle brand personality. Names that reflect technological innovation include Texport's 'Tecnica' touring jacket, REV'IT's 'Dynamic' touring range and BMW's 'Venting Machine' jacket. Swift's 'Warrior' and 'Stealth' jackets are given warlike names that connote battle like *strength* and *masculinity*. The 'Warrior' jacket actually includes on its front, a graphic design that resembles a warrior's chest armour; this is illustrated in Figure 9.30.

Figure 9.30: Swift's Warrior Jacket – Graphic Armour

Source: www.lloydlifestyle.com

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Lloyd Lifestyle produces the 'Swift' product range, and the Marketing Manager described the company's use of an aggressive male theme to connote *strength* and *masculinity* when naming its touring products, which at the time of interviewing included an aggressive reptile theme:

110. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager

"... But yeah, name stuff, we generally tend to find that, I mean our current range of cordura now, we have the Python, the Cobra, Dragon, you know, it's all sort of reptiles, type of thing at the moment. We've had like, Falcons, and Eagles and… we've done the birds of prey theme. It generally is, it is always quite an aggressive male thing… It is a masculine sounding thing isn't it."

Weather protection, which is a central communication code for the development of technologically innovative, intrinsic product features (as seen in the advertisements – Figure 9.24), is further signified through extrinsic brand development and a number of manufacturers have named touring products after types of weather phenomena. Examples include Triumph's 'Tornado II' jacket, and Frank Thomas' 'Force Ten', 'Blast', 'Bolt', 'Boost' jackets as well as its' full 'Aqua' range.

The most frequently used names that manufacturers attribute to their touring related clothing and equipment products draw connotations to the central mythic values of *travel*, *freedom* and *adventure*. Names such as BMWs 'Tourance' range, Swift's 'Tourismo' boots, Belstaff's 'Atlas', 'Sirocco', 'Bora' 'Adventure', 'Discovery' jackets, and 'Pro-Toura' range do exactly this. Triumph's Clothing and Merchandise Manager recognised the significance of careful naming of products, describing the difficulty and care that is taken to name its product ranges. He identified the values of *adventure* and *travel,* central to naming Triumph's touring product range:

96. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager

"...the names that we want to put on our garments, especially the touring garments are about adventure, are about travel, so you've got the 'Evolution', 'Expedition'. We used to have 'Explorer,' 'Frontiers', so it's about travel, giving that sort of sense of it…"

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The Belstaff brand of motorcycle clothing and equipment products traditionally carries with it residual imagery of early twentieth century British motorcycle cultural *heritage,* when motorcycling was used purely as a form of transportation from A to B. The Belstaff wax-cotton jacket, still in production today (illustrated in Figure 9.31) and named the 'Trialmaster Classic' signifies Belstaff's traditional British identity and carries with it functional connotations of *quality* and *reliability*.

Figure 9.31: Wax-Cotton and Belstaff's Trialmaster Classic Jacket

Source: www.phoenixnw.co.uk

Phoenix Distribution's (owner of Belstaff UK) Commercial Director reflected that motorcyclists perceive Belstaff as an *"old-fashioned"* functional brand designed to *"do the job":*

16. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
" … they (consumers) see Belstaff perhaps as being a little old-fashioned, primarily because it's been around since 1924 and because it is famous for having a wax-cotton type product… but, if you ask them what their perception of Belstaff is they turn round and they'll give you the words, 'quality', 'reliability' you know, sort of, 'does the job'…"

Recently instated, and from a commercial brand building background, the Commercial Director was, at the time of interviewing, leading a project to rebuild, update and reposition Belstaff's brand personality. She aimed to do this by creating a

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more up-to-date, 'trendy' personality supported by consistent and continuous communications messages:

21. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"… they (Belstaff customers) know the quality, they know the reliability… If we can just show that it's a little bit more up-to-date, then potentially people should be able to buy more of it. Also, by increasing the design of it and the look, and putting it in the right place at the right time with the right marketing message, then we should be able to bring some younger people into it…"

During consumer research for the Belstaff brand, Phoenix's project team recognised the wider cultural move in today's British society towards increased involvement in adventurous pursuits:

160. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"… the things that have made our lives easier, like the washing machines and the dishwashers, everything's so much faster than it used to be, and so the leisure time, in theory, you're supposed to have more leisure time. So people are going out wanting to get this alter-ego out."

The team also identified the importance of the role of product/brand ownership for symbolic display of ones actual, or desired self identity:

52. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"… it's to do with a person's aspirations and how they view themselves as to what they ride, what they buy."

148. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"The brands that they buy, the bike that they ride, is part of it, part of that perception of what I really am."

They concluded that product/brand ownership reflects consumers' lifestyle choices, and the key driving force behind motorcyclists' involvement in this kind of activity is

a lifestyle desire for freedom and adventure. The Commercial Director described the kind of freedom and adventure prescribed to by touring motorcyclists:

82. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"... they like the freedom of being able to get on the bike... it's that freedom of being out in the elements... The touring type person, it's that feeling of getting away... they quite like that freedom element, that adventure. And that's... I think, what touring is about, it's that adventure, it's going to see something different, being out in the elements..."

96. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"... I think a lot of people perceive their adventure as being big open roads, open roads and blue skies..."

The team agreed to reposition Belstaff as the 'ultimate adventure brand'. An advertising campaign was employed as a key communications tool to signify the repositioned brand personality. Entitled 'Real Stuff', the campaign consisted of five separate advertisements (illustrated in Figure 9.32) and appeared for a full year in ten different glossy motorcycle magazines and newspapers. It aimed to change consumer perception of Belstaff as a 'heritage' brand, and reposition it as an 'authentic adventure' brand:

216. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"The advertising campaign, we wanted to position Belstaff as an adventure brand, 'Real Stuff for real bikers... we wanted to just get the message across that it was actually for real people who were having real adventures..."

Figure 9.32: Belstaff 2001 Advertising Campaign

Source: Phoenix Distribution (2001) Advertising Campaigns Poster

The Commercial Director described the key communications concept on which the campaign was based:

216. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"… we briefed an advertising agency to come up with a concept and they came… it started off from the film 'The Right Stuff,' and that was the first thing, basically, people are made of the right stuff and they go out and do the world's firsts. And so we then sort of said 'Real Stuff' because it's real stuff for real people, and that's really how the initial concept came up…"

The 1983 movie 'The Right Stuff' focused on the 1940s and 50s space race, and the worldwide quest for the Holy Grail of aviation, which was to successfully get man into space. Not only does it connote the use of *high-technology,* but the emotive deep throb of the aviation engines wets the motorcyclists' appetite for *adventure* and draws on the exhilarating, electrifying feeling of flying at speed and *freedom* associated with motorcycle experience. The linguistic syntagm 'Real Stuff' appears in large, bold text

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in each Belstaff advertisement and aims to draw connotations to the movie, and together with other signs employed in the ads, to anchor a meaning of brand authenticity for *adventure*.

The Belstaff advertisements each employ a large, emotive, iconic photographic image featuring a used, and slightly battered Belstaff jacket, thrown down or placed on the back of a chair, in what represents a lifestyle shot. The iconic photograph employed in each of these advertisements aims to reflect a lifestyle image of the jacket's owner; it aims to signify the owners' personal story, which, according to Phoenix's Commercial Director, reflects that of an adventure lifestyle. Featuring the used Belstaff jacket, and anchored with the linguistic 'Real Stuff' syntagm and Belstaff's brand logo, the overall signifying message aims to be one of 'real stuff, for real motorcyclists on real adventures':

232. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"So each one of those (advertisements) obviously tells a story about the person who wears that jacket, and in turn, the lifestyle of the person who wears that jacket… and because we used garments that had been a bit battered and because they weren't the most glamorous looking shots, the link with the 'Real Stuff' was that it's been on an adventure, it's now home, it's 'real stuff' for doing the job."

The Commercial Director was probed specifically to narrate the lifestyle type stories that these advertisements aimed to signify. With regards to the Atlas touring jacket advertisement (top of Figure 9.32), she stated:

220. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"… the Altas one with the scones on, that was based around a touring couple that perhaps went down to the Cotswolds on a Sunday, and they'd stopped off at the traditional kind of English tea shop, which is why the scone is there and the cup of tea. They're a BMW rider because the BMW keys are there and the map and their wallet. And perhaps they've sort of put their jacket on the back of the chair, very much, sort of you can see the floor of the shop, that kind of thing, and then perhaps gone off to the loo. That's basically telling the story of the touring type adventure, going to the Cotswolds…"

On a theoretical level, this advertising campaign was certainly produced in line with the European communication metaphor, which, as noted previously by Lannon and Cooper (1983) aims to carry its culture, or in this case its subculture, with it. The campaign aimed to tap into subcultural desire at an ideological level for *freedom*, and particularly, *adventure*, through use of combinations of signs that connote subcultural adventure lifestyles. Typical of advertising in 'English' culture, the campaign certainly demanded a high level of consumer information processing for analysis.

Consumer respondent analysis of the campaign would reveal if, and to what extent motorcyclists in the study were swept into its levels of subcultural meaning and understanding. Respondents were shown the Belstaff Omega sports touring jacket advertisement (larger illustration provided in Figure 9.33), and asked to respond.

Figure 9.33 Belstaff 'Real Stuff' Campaign – Omega Sports Touring Jacket

Source: Suzuki 2 magazine, November 2001, p13

Phoenix's Commercial Director described the 'true' lifestyle character on which this advertisement was based:

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224. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"…We felt that this was probably a, sort of, a twenty five to thirty five year old who had a plush apartment, probably a city type apartment so, you'll see very much it's sort of light pine and that sort of thing… we decided that was probably his sophisticated kitchen, it was probably his designer type kitchen because it's very pale and… he's been to a… superbike race…"

228. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"He's got his Brands Hatch ticket so, he's basically emptied his pockets, his helmet is down here, he's just put it down on the floor but he was really hungry so he's, actually had a quick, it's a burger or something, I can't remember what it was but it's got ketchup… and… a nice vinaigrette type bottle, because the idea is that the apartment would actually be quite nice but he's a little bit of a slob because next to it is the ketchup bottle. So, he's kind of like, 'well', you know. Although he lives in a nice sophisticated surrounding with his girlfriend…"

Ideologically, like the other Belstaff advertisements in the campaign, this advertisement aims to signify the Belstaff Omega jacket as an 'authentic' product, for 'authentic' motorcyclists who desire 'authentic' adventure lifestyles.

For the majority of consumer respondents in the study, one could argue that this advertisement was perhaps a little too intelligent! This was reflected by comments made by both Chris and Rob:

383. Chris

"… I think that's a bl**dy confusing advert (laughing)… You know before when I said intelligent adverts, well that's somebody that's being far too intelligent because I don't understand it!"

529. Rob

"… without being rude it's probably above a lot of people to be honest."

Fifteen of the twenty consumer respondents noted a lack of understanding, a confusion created by the ad, and a dislike for it. Comments included:

519. Bill

"I don't know, that leaves me quite cold really… I can't see what they're trying to get at."

344. Angela

"I've got no idea what that's getting at… quite a bizarre advert. Reading it, it's obviously the jacket but you look at that and you're like, 'what's that all about then?' Mm, I don't like that one, strange."

863. Matt

"It doesn't appeal to me in any way but I'm trying to understand what the picture's all about, and I can't see what they're getting at. I think they ought to change their advertising agency!"

Five respondents were able to provide an interpretation of signification relative to the advertisement, two of whom showed a particularly positive response. Tom identified the lifestyle element, akin to his own motorcyclist lifestyle:

554. Tom

"…I mean biking, it's a lifestyle and you'll talk to most people when we go somewhere they'll say 'yeah we stop off at Little Chef and we always sit our jackets on the end of a… you know, and you've got all your wallet and your change and your ticket, yeah."

Tony, a cruiser motorcycle owner showed an immediate positive response to the advertisement, and provided an interpretation that directly reflected the advertising brief:

290. Tony

"(laughing) I like this one… I suppose it gives you a sense of… you're out there having an adventure and this is the sort of kit that you want to have with you, because

it's gonna be, you know, reliable and everything else, and it's real biker's gear… And all these sorts of thing, you know, it's part of the adventure, part of the journey, and… you know, you've got a ticket to wherever it might be…"

Phoenix's Commercial Director was well aware of the generally negative, sometimes mixed consumer response generated by the campaign, but was happy to accept that any response is a good one because of the associated brand awareness that it generates:

232. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"… It's caused a bit of stir because people have seen it and they either like it or they don't… As far as I'm concerned if they're stopping at the page then that's what it's to do, because it's just making them aware, you know 'Belstaff is real,' its 'Real Stuff'."

Returning to extrinsic brand development of touring motorcycle clothing and equipment products, it was found that with regard to product styling and the use of graphic design and brand logos, manufacturers are influenced by styles and designs employed in associated sports brands. Triumph's Clothing and Merchandise Manager described the influence of associated sports images for extrinsic touring brand development:

66. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"…What we try and do is look at associated sports images… in terms of some of the touring items we went to ski shops and ski shows and looked at snow-boarding… there's a big cross-over happening there… in terms of some of the detailing or shapes, they're interesting to look at."

Phoenix Distribution's Product Design Manager noted the particular influence of sports styles in the extrinsic design of their touring clothing product range. She illustrated her point by using the example of a small eyelet included in the Belstaff Explorer jacket design (featured in Figure 9.34). This eyelet, which in fact holds sunglasses, is taken directly from ski product design and is used in motorcycling purely for fashion purposes:

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183b. Phoenix Distribution – Product Design Manager

"We take a lot of inspiration from sports fashion… and from the textile aspect, the styling there… I mean the jacket there (holding up the Explorer jacket), come from skiing, things like that hook there, that eyelet there, it's for putting your sunglasses in and that's a particular sort of…"

184. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"That's a ski thing, you've got your sunglasses on in the snow."

Figure 9.34: Belstaff Explorer Touring Jacket

Source: www.phoenixnw.co.uk

It is this close, subtle attention to stylistic detail, influenced by other sports brand discourse that signifies the fashion conscious, authentic adventure look relative to motorcycle touring styles. Phoenix's Commercial Director noted how this attention to sporting influenced detail adds value to the motorcycle touring clothing brand:

206.   Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"… it's what people will look for, because it's in sporting clothes already, it's in the sporting arena, and also… it's adding value to the brand which allows us to justify the price which allows us to make the margins we need as a business to keep going."

The crossover of extrinsic sports design style that exists between ski and motorcycle touring clothing products is evident in Dainese's product range. Dainese designs and

manufactures clothing and equipment products for both the motorcycle and the ski and snowboard markets. Figure 9.35 illustrates this crossover of design style, with consistent use of colour schemes, logos and graphic design:

Figure 9.35 Crossover of Design Style in Dainese Products

Source: www.dainese.com

As well as the influence of sports discourse, it is evident that elements from popular cultural fashion discourse have cascaded into the stylistic design of touring motorcycle clothing. Highlighted by company interviewees from Triumph and Phoenix Distribution, signification of touring motorcycle clothing brand identity is today based on a high street, fashion conscious 'less is more' concept:

88. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"On textile… we decided to only go subtle with the branding…"

92. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"… we've gone with… that is actually a streety type thing, is the less is more concept…"

If one considers Texport's ladies City jacket (illustrated in Figure 9.36), this jacket has the full functionality of a motorcycle jacket, but it's stylistic design and name directly reflect any jacket that could be found on the high street.

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Figure 9.36: Texport Ladies City Jacket

Source: www.phoenixnw.co.uk

A wider cultural trend picked up by Phoenix Distribution and implemented in extrinsic product design for the Belstaff range relates to the modern technological era. Modern technology products such as mobile phones, MP3 players and increasingly, ipods, serve both a functional and a fashion requirement in today's British popular culture. Phoenix followed high street fashion designers, by responding to this cultural trend in jacket design, with the inclusion of extra pockets to hold these technologically innovative, 'cool' devices:

186. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"But I mean things like the mobile phone pocket, that's a fashion thing."

187b. Phoenix Distribution – Product Design Manager
"Within fashion there was a big trend for designing jackets with pockets that would fit particular technical gadgets like you phone or your laptop or any new gadget that's coming out on the market."

9.5   Adventure-Sports Brands

As noted in the semiotic audit (Section 7.2.5), this market segment was initiated in Continental Europe in the mid 1990s, spreading to Britain in the early 2000s as a response to wider popular cultural trends towards high-risk adventure pursuits and a

trend towards increasingly popular public perceptions of motorcycling in the UK. Sometimes termed the 'travel-enduro' segment, its growth phase intensified in 2005 as a result of the release of The Long Way Round documentary that featured Hollywood actors Ewan McGregor and Charlie Boorman riding BMW R1150 GS Adventure motorcycles on an epic round the world adventure trip. This documentary illustrates the power of media as a tool for signifying communications messages within this market; in an about turn it has historically contributed to a change in general consumer perception of BMW GS motorcycles from *boring, ugly, old-man, old-fashioned* machines to *exiting, fun,* ultimate *adventure* machines.

The adventure-sports sector remained the fastest growing UK motorcycle market sector throughout 2005 (achieving a twenty eight percent increase by the end of the year (see MCIA Figures – APPENDIX J), and the BMW R1200 GS adventure-sports motorcycle was the fifth best-selling powered two-wheeler across all market sectors by the end of 2005, led only by the top selling supersports motorcycles, and outselling the Yamaha YZF R1 supersports motorcycle.

Manufacturers operating within this market sector are building brand personalities that are clearly based on the myth of *adventure*, and that encourage consumers to participate in this increasingly influential semiotic world of adventure (as reflected in the UK car market which has seen an explosion in the growth of sports-utility vehicle (4x4) brands which, often in reality used primarily on congested, urban roads, are enveloped with an identity of off-road *freedom* and *adventure*). Effectively, like brand development of the well-established supersports motorcycle sector 'commodifies' the racetrack experience, manufacturers are designing, developing and importantly, giving personality to products and services within the adventure-sports sector that commodify adventure experience. Consumer ownership, use and symbolic display of combinations of adventure-sports props, along with involvement in manufacturer's customer involvement and wider packaged adventure experience 'lifestyle' programmes provides them with a code of self-discourse that says 'I'm an authentic adventurer.'

9.5.1 Motorcycles, Clothing and Equipment – Intrinsic Development

A key communication code that drives intrinsic brand development of motorcycle products within the adventure-sports sector, and indeed makes these motorcycles unique is *versatility*. They are designed to be tough, reliable, all-rounder machines with a capability to perform on any surface or terrain, including urban, motorway, A and B road surfaces as well as more remote tracks and at the extreme, off-road surfaces. Manufacturer web page discourse reflects this:

www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk
"Asphalt, rough track or sand? The BMW F650 GS can cope with any surface. It really is multitalented. Whether narrow alleyways in town, sweeping bends on country roads or off-road tracks…"

www.yamaha-motor-europe/desgincafe
"The XT 660R is a true dual purpose machine to its best… whether used for touring, city riding, light off-road or adventure trips, the XT 660R will do the job."

In a press release, describing its new Caponord Rally Raid adventure-sports motorcycle (illustrated in Figure 9.37), Aprilia writes:

Figure 9.37: Aprilia Caponord Rally Raid
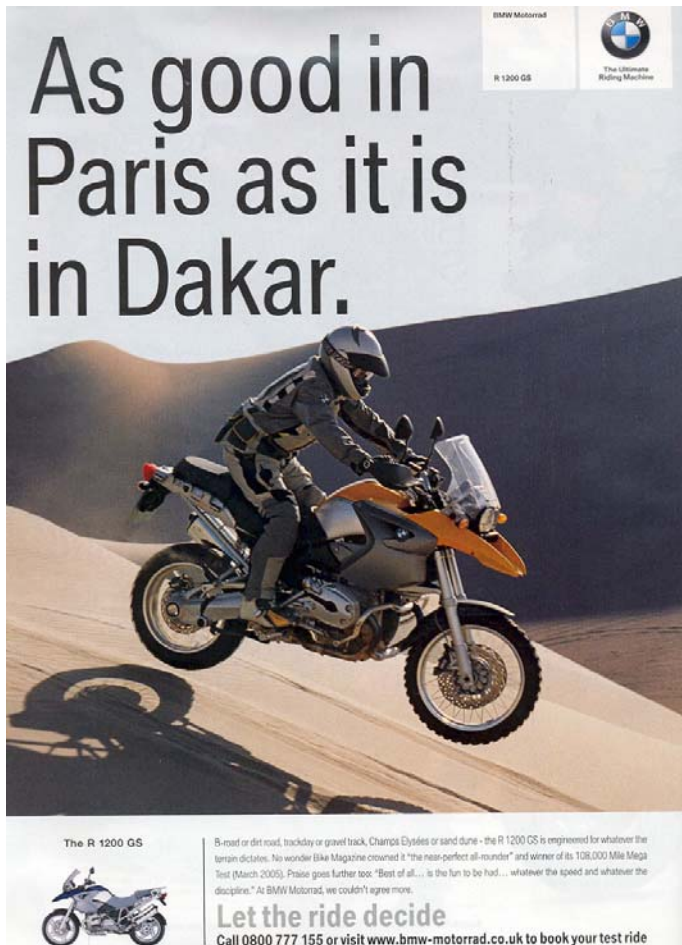
Source: www.aprilia.com

www.aprilia.com/pressreleases

"Aprilia's total motorcycle, the Caponord has become even more unstoppable… the new Rally Raid version is in a class of its own. The Rally Raid combines in one machine the concepts of tourer, enduro, extreme off-road and fashion leader…"

The versatility that characterises these kind of machines is clearly signified in BMW's recent magazine advertisement for the R1200 GS model (illustrated in Figure 9.38).

Figure 9.38: BMW R1200 GS Magazine Advertisement

Source: Bike, November 2005, p. 6.

The reader's eye is immediately drawn to an iconic, action image featuring a BMW R1200 GS rider, fully clad in BMW adventure-sports riding gear and enduro style, peaked helmet; the anonymous rider represents a unified code of BMW GS identity. Set in a sun filled, sand dune, desert scene, the rider, standing on the toe pegs of the machine, is in peak performance, mid-air flight, about to land on the sand dune. This

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action packed image that connotes *off-road, enduro* style riding signifies, at an ideological level, the myth of *adventure* central to this kind of riding activity.

The dominant linguistic syntagm of this advertisement that also catches the reader's eye is positioned in large, bold black text, superimposed on the sky of the iconic desert scene. It states *"As good in Paris as it is in Dakar."* This syntagm connotes the versatility of the motorcycle, suggesting that it functions just as well on the urban, congested, First World streets of Paris as it does on the distant, Third World desert tracks of Dakar. Use of the cities Paris and Dakar draws connotations familiar to motorcycle enthusiasts, of the famous Paris-Dakar rally races in which motorcyclists endeavour and challenge to cross the extreme climates and sand terrain of the Sahara Desert. An anchorage of meaning is created between the linguistic text and the iconic imagery featured in the ad.

The versatility of the motorcycle is further signified in the linguistic text positioned at the bottom of the advertisement that includes *"B-road or dirt road, trackday or gravel track, Champs Elysees or sand dune – the R1200 GS is engineered for whatever the terrain dictates. No wonder Bike magazine crowned it "the near-perfect all-rounder" and winner of its 108,000 Mile Mega Test (March 2005)…"* Authenticity of the motorcycle's 'all-round' capability is generated by reference to Bike magazine's 'crowning' of relevant awards.

Like the other motorcycle market sectors, *technological innovation* drives intrinsic motorcycle design and development within the adventure-sports sector. Manufacturers regularly refer to 'state-of-the-art technology' in communications discourse surrounding their products. This is reflected in company web page narrative:

www.aprilia.com/pressreleases
"… In the Caponord Rally Raid, technology has been pushed even further, with aluminium-magnesium frame, powerful 1000cc V twin engine and much, much more…"

www.aprilia.com

"... Cleverly designed and attractively styled, the Pegaso has always been packed with advanced technology..."

www.ktm.co.uk/news (15/11/2005)

"... KTM... is releasing a new generation of the successful Travel Enduro (adventure-sports) concept that combines the best of off- and on-road riding pleasure and the latest high-tech features..."

Uniquely, technological innovation employed in the intrinsic design and development of adventure-sports motorcycles is transferred from, and heavily influenced by, both the trail/enduro and touring segments of the market. The motorcycles, which outwardly resemble large trail/enduro bikes, incorporate off-road features and capabilities such as light, narrow body design with deep treaded, often knobbly tyres, highly sprung suspensions, and loud, high torque off-road capable engines. However they also incorporate design features and performance capabilities of touring machines; elements include large fuel tanks for increased road going distances, height adjustable windscreens and seat adjusters for *safety* and *protection* as well as ergonomic designing for rider *comfort* that includes large luggage carrying capacity. Manufacturers consistently describe these combined, innovative features in their web page discourse:

www.worldofbmw.com/news (27/10/2005)

"... the overall aim for the R1200 GS Adventure has been for less weight, more power and increased off-road ability... Some of the highlights of the new model are that it has 15 percent more power than its predecessor and 17 percent more torque. It is lighter, has a larger fuel tank and a potential range of up to 450 miles. The larger screen provides better protection from wind and weather, and there is longer spring travel to give even more off-road ability. To perfectly suit individual riders, many of the components can be adjusted and tailored, such as the seat, handlebars, footrests, gearshift, brake and clutch levers... The new R1200 GS Adventure aims to be the definitive bike for serious long-distance on and off-road riding..."

www.triumph.co.uk

"The Tiger is a great all-rounder. A bike Triumph have developed so that you can depend on it to get you, a pillion, and enough luggage to stock a small department store wherever you want to go. An enduro-style bike with a gusty, dependable 955cc triple in a quick-steering frame, the motor sits under a cavernous tank with a range of 200 plus miles… It'll scratch down back lanes hundreds of miles, along roads that time forgot…"

www.ktm.co.uk/news (15/11/2005)

"… With even more displacement, an electronic fuel injection catalytic converter and an ABS system, the 990 Adventure is now elevated to the highest technical level in matters of safety and emission control. It is fitted with proven light weight LCB engine with an increased displacement of now 999cc. In addition, new motor management guarantees a powerful and dynamic unfolding of power and significantly improved torque while maintaining the same level of top performance…"

Manufacturers, when describing the intrinsic characteristics of their adventure-sports motorcycles, are very keen to make a clear, and direct link between the functionality of the machines and their capability to facilitate adventure experience; stressing that the adventure-sports motorcycle provides a tangible means to take its owner on any kind of desired adventure experience. Company web page discourse includes:

www.bmw-motorrad.com/adventure

"The adventure is so close you can touch it… The ADVENTURE (motorcycle)… combines robustness, reliability and safety with state-of-the-art technology and impressive equipment. Never has the discovery of exotic cultures and the investigation of breathtaking landscapes been so tangible as with the ADVENTURE... It's not just about motorcycling, there's more to it: it's about experiencing adventures."

www.aprilia.com

"… Only the Caponord Rally Raid is capable of conveying limitless sensations and taking you wherever you dream of going. In the Rally Raid version, Aprilia's pace setting maxi enduro is even more versatile, exciting and comfortable than ever. And it

comes with all the equipment you could possibly need for the greatest adventure of your life… your next journey!"

www.suzukicycles.com
"The V-Strom 1000 is dedicated to the simple concept that every road should be open for adventure… With its outstanding overall performance and versatility, the V-Strom is the perfect choice for the sport-adventure rider… every weekend you'll be looking for a new adventure."

Yamaha also makes the connection between the functional capabilities of its XT 660R motorcycle and the consumers' desire for adventure in the following narrative (accompanied on web page by iconic imagery illustrated in Figure 9.39):

www.yamaha-motor.co.uk/products/motorcycles/adventure
"It's Friday evening, another week is behind you and the whole weekend is ahead of you. That's 48 hours of memories waiting to be made… The XT 660R's fuel-injected 660cc motor, sturdy steel chassis and on/off road suspension have got what you need – piles of mid-range torque and seriously rugged handling for black-top cruising or dirt-lane riding. There's a whole world out there, now's the time to discover it…"

Figure 9.39: Yamaha XT 660R

Source: www.yamaha-motor.co.uk/products/motorcycles/adventure

Part of adventure, manufacturers also commonly highlight the communication code of *enjoyment and fun*, that influences intrinsic development of their adventure-sports products:

www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

"… the famous Transalp provides a balance of fun and adventure in a compact, easy handling package of performance."

www.aprilia.com

"… no matter how you use the Pegaso, enjoyment is guaranteed, in keeping with Aprilia's philosophy that biking should be fun…"

Along with their adventure-sports motorcycle products, manufacturers have developed a range of associated functional equipment products for rider *safety*, *comfort* and *protection* such as luggage carrying boxes and panniers, satellite navigation and intercom systems. Figure 9.40 illustrates the coordinated luggage cases designed by BMW for its GS series.

Figure 9.40: BMW R1200 GS Adventure with Coordinated Luggage Carrying Cases

Source: www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk

Recently, BMW has introduced a range of rider clothing and equipment products aimed at the adventure-sports market sector, specifically BMW GS motorcycle riders. Figure 9.41 illustrates BMW's 'Rallye 2' product syntagm.

Figure 9.41: BMW Rallye 2 Product Syntagm

Source: Images taken from www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk

Like other rider clothing and equipment products, intrinsic development of the Rallye 2 brand is built upon the code of *technological innovation* for rider *performance, safety, protection* and *comfort*. Web page narrative surrounding the brand describes this:

www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk

"… the large and innovative ventilation system on sleeves, chest back and upper thighs and the included zip-in GORE-TEX® insert ensure an excellent climate in every weather. The jacket in tear-resistant Cordura®500… provides plenty of storage space… and can be retrofitted with the BMW Motorrad drink bag for a direct drink supply… In the trousers, leather reinforcements in the knee area provide better holding for Enduro riding and extremely tear-resistant Dynatec and Cordura® Stretch at the upper thighs, calves and seat provide freedom of movement."

Currently BMW, market leader of the adventure-sports market sector, is the only manufacturer to have aimed a rider clothing and equipment product range specifically at consumers in the sector. Other manufacturers have been slow to respond to this

opportunity, initially focusing their efforts on motorcycle and motorcycle equipment product and brand development, and on the design and development of adventure experience packages and interactive adventure customer involvement programmes. Ultimately a crossover exists between the functional characteristics of rider clothing and equipment products required by riders in the adventure-sports market sector and those that exist already in other market sectors; touring and trail/enduro in particular. In reality, the vast proportion of adventure-sports motorcycle owners' presently use them on the road, for commuting, day-to-day leisure, and touring purposes and the functionality of touring clothing and equipment adequately fulfils their practical requirements.

9.5.2 Motorcycles, Clothing and Equipment – Extrinsic Development

In a society becoming increasingly sanitised and characterised by sources of constraint, involvement in this kind of motorcycling, and signification of one's 'adventure' self identity provides a release for freedom and a mechanism for the generation of self-status. Particularly for motorcyclists, discourse surrounding adventure-sports motorcycle brands, that builds extrinsic brand personality, signifies a clear message that the adventure to be found within motorcycling is much wider than purely seeking speed on asphalt road surfaces. In the mythic *freedom versus constraint* battle (highlighted in Section 7.2.3) one can see that motorcyclists, who represent *freedom*, are today becoming increasingly constrained by speed cameras on British roads. Involvement in adventure-sports motorcycling and its associated discourse offers the motorcyclist an alternative, and attainable means to experience motorcycling freedom and to construct an authentic 'adventure' self-identity

Semiotic analysis reveals that for the development of extrinsic brand personality that signifies *adventure*, manufacturers/suppliers pick up and use core myths of *travel* and *freedom of travel* associated with touring motorcycle adventure. They combine these myths with communication codes of *adventure* relative to off-road, enduro type motorcycling; codes that signify the *natural environment, challenge, uncertainty, risks, excitement, adrenaline and fun, skill, mastery, flow experience and physical rider capability* that make off-road motorcycling such an adventurous pursuit.

Certainly some of these codes are evident if one considers the extrinsic design of adventure-sports motorcycle, clothing and equipment products. A number of motorcycles include the term 'adventure' within their name, the BMW 'R1200 GS Adventure' and KTM's '640, 950 and 990 Adventure' models for example. The commodification of adventure experience cannot be clearer than the signification that this creates. Other motorcycles are given names that clearly connote *travel*, the term 'Transalp' in Honda's 'Transalp XL 650V' model for example and in the case of Honda's 'Africa Twin'. Adventure-sports products are commonly given names that connote *off-road* riding adventure. Examples include the term 'trail' in Aprilia's 'Pegaso 650 Trail' motorcycle and the term 'Rally Raid' in its 'Caponord Rally Raid' model. Also relevant here is the term 'Rallye' used to name BMW's range of rider clothing and equipment (illustrated in Figure 9.41 above). The use of these names clearly draws connotations to enduro/trail riding and the adventure discourse that surrounds it.

Triumph symbolically names its adventure-sports motorcycle the 'Tiger', a name that draws connotations to the *wild, powerful, aggressive* and *free* animal that lives in and roams the *wilderness, natural environment*. By using this name, Triumph hopes the motorcycle's personality will take on the indexical characteristics associated with it; characteristics common to the mythic values of trail/enduro motorcycling. For the motorcyclist, there are clear *adventure* connotations associated with 'riding the tiger'; in a natural environment encounter, the rider faces the *challenge, danger* and *uncertainty* of taming, and *controlling* this *wild, aggressive, powerful* animal. It's like riding a horse but more extreme. To give the motorcycle an authentic tiger's personality, the company even included iconic tiger graphic stripes on the machine's bodywork (illustrated in Figure 9.42).

On the themes of *power* and *freedom*, Aprilia describes the symbolic use of the name 'Pegaso' for its Pegaso 650 Trail motorcycle that aims to give it a personality that embodies the 'universal motorcycle concept' of *freedom*:

www.aprilia.com

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"In the history of motorcycling, no name has been more apt for a machine made to satisfy its rider's need for freedom. In Greek legend, Pegaso was the winged horse, a symbol of power and freedom. Ever since it was introduced, the Aprilia Pegaso has perfectly embodied the universal motorcycling concept."

Figure 9.42: Triumph Tiger

Source: www.triumph.co.uk

There is no doubt that adventure-sports motorcycles are extrinsically styled to represent trail/enduro motorcycles. With their design features, fairings, knobbly tyres and grunty engines they resemble, and sound like large trail/enduro machines. The Honda FMX 650 and KTM 640 Adventure motorcycles (illustrated in Figure 9.43) are perfect examples of this.

Figure 9.43: Trail/Enduro styling of Adventure-Sports Motorcycles

Honda FMX 650   KTM 640 Adventure

Source: www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles   *Source:* www.ktm.co.uk

Motorcycle colours, graphic fairing designs and logos also commonly reflect trail/enduro influence. KTM, a world-renowned Austrian company famous for its

influence in the production of trail/enduro motorcycles and its dominance in the off-road racing scene, produces its range of adventure-sports motorcycles in the highly iconic colour of orange that is associated with its off-road machines. The linguistic brand logo 'KTM' is positioned, in eye-catching bold, black text on the motorcycles' side fairing (highlighted in Figure 9.43). The most recent (2006) KTM 990 Adventure S model (illustrated in Figure 9.44) features the iconic KTM orange colour, with blue optics, orange striped graphic design and the linguistic text 'Dakar' that aims to signify the bike's origins in off-road rally sport. KTM describes this in its online news section:

www.ktm.co.uk/news - 15/11/2005
"... The KTM 990 Adventure S, the ultra sporty model with longer suspension travel comes with new 'Dakar-Desgin' blue optics sourcing its origins in rally sport..."

Figure 9.44: 990 Adventure S (2006 Model)

Source: www.ktm.co.uk

On the side fairing of its Caponord Rally Raid motorcycle, Aprilia features the syntagm 'Raid' in large, bold text (highlighted previously in Figure 9.37). This not only draws connotations to the motorcycle's association with off-road riding, but it gives it a *tough*, *aggressive* personality. Manufacturers commonly attribute this kind of personality to their adventure-sports motorcycles, which are intrinsically designed for their *tough*, *versatile*, all-round capabilities. On a wider level, the *tough*, *aggressive* theme is one that crosses all motorcycle sectors (as illustrated in the Kawasaki Ninja advertisement – Section 9.3.2) and harps back to the residual *outlaw,*

bad-boy imagery associated with 'The Golden Age'. Honda describes the detailing touches that give its Transalp XL 650V motorcycle (illustrated in Figure 9.45) a *tough* image relative to its sporty and adventurous nature:

www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

"... Giving stronger emphasis to the Transalp's sporty and adventurous nature, the new model features new detailing touches that really catch the eye. One of the first changes to be noticed is the new black alumite finish gracing its lightweight aluminium wheel rims. Sharing the same colour shade and semi-gloss finish as the dual-sport tyres they mount, these new rims project a tougher image that perfectly complements the Transalp's new colours…"

Figure 9.45: Honda Transalp XL 650 V

Source: www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

Honda's focus on detailing touches extends as far as the bike's exhaust ends which are tapered like air jets to provide a decorative feature and a unique exhaust tone that gives the motorcycle a unique 'voice':

www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

"... Another design touch can be seen in the Transalp's new stainless steel dual exhaust ends. Tapering at the ends like air jets, these decorative new pieces also extend a more exhilarating tone to the Transalp's exhaust note."

Through extrinsic design of these product attributes manufacturers are offering consumers a gateway to a semiotic world of adventure. For the consumer, mere ownership and symbolic display of these kind of motorcycle related products indexically signifies a self-identity of 'adventure'. Manufacturers are increasingly developing eye-catching, fashion conscious codes of products to drive consumer brand discrimination within the sector. Market leader (for this segment) BMW offers the GS adventure-sports motorcyclist a single, unified code of identity with its colour, and stylistically coordinated Rallye 2 rider clothing and equipment range (illustrated in the BMW R1200 GS advertisement above - Figure 9.38).

Manufacturer web page narrative (Honda and Aprilia quotes above) commonly reflects the motorcycles' 'eye-catching' design features. Aprilia particularly, aims to inform consumers of the fashion-conscious, eye-catching styling of its adventure-sports motorcycles that makes the owner 'stand out from the crowd' and thus 'unique' (attaining a sense of personal meaningful 'sovereignty' described in Section 8.3.1):

www.aprilia.com
"… The dynamically styled Pegaso Trail makes you want to ride it the moment you see it. With its unmistakably aggressive and eye-catching looks, this is a motorcycle made to tackle any journey in style. The Pegaso 650 Trail is so unmistakably Aprilia in look and feel, you just can't help standing out from the crowd."

'Eye-catching' stylistic design features included in Aprilia's Pegaso 650 Trail motorcycle (illustrated in Figure 9.46) that contribute to its aggressive, adventure look include its off-road, trail bike shape with diamond shaped steel frame and 'anthracite' grey faired finish. Also, its spoked wheels with knobbly tyres contribute to this.

As noted above, in reality, the vast proportion of adventure-sports motorcyclists use their motorcycles on the road for commuting, day-to-day leisure and touring purposes. Off-road, enduro riding requires a different kind, and level, of rider skill, and demands a level of physical fitness and suppleness usually associated with youth; one must remember that the vast proportion of motorcyclists (highlighted in Section 2.3.5) are, in fact, above forty years old. Also, if one considers the MCIA's official definition of

adventure-sports motorcycles, it claims that these motorcycles are 'predominantly' designed and capable for on-road use:

www.mcia.co.uk
"These bikes are similar in style to enduro motorcycles but are predominantly designed and capable for on-road use only. Often they will have features similar to machines included in the touring category, eg. Fairings, luggage carrying capacity etc."

Figure 9.46: Aprilia Pegaso 650 Trail

Source: www.aprilia.com

With advances in technological innovation*,* these motorcycles are becoming increasingly off-road capable. But the fact is that manufacturers are feeding consumer adventure-fantasy by constructing brands, and codes of identity for consumers to buy into, that represent 'adventure'. Through extrinsic brand development, they are effectively making tangible, and bringing highly skilled, physical and intense adventure experience to a broad consumer base, giving a wide range of motorcyclists the opportunity to pick up these products and use them to construct a desired 'adventure' identity. Communications messages commonly employ a kind of fantasy/dream like appeal and focus on the extremes of adventure experience; appealing to the emotive level of desired self. The recent BMW R1200 GS advertisement (illustrated previously in Figure 9.38) certainly does this with inclusion of the dominant, iconic off-road performance image. Advertisements described

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briefly in the semiotic audit for the BMW R1150 GS Adventure model and Suzuki's DL1000 V-Strom model also do this.

In more detail, semiotic analysis of the BMW R1150 GS Adventure advertisement (illustrated here in Figure 9.47) reveals the use of emotive advertising through iconic 'fantastic' images that feature the *natural environment*. The upper image, which fills at least half of the advertising space, focuses on a dramatic, purple and pink coloured tornado, a natural weather phenomenon that connotes sheer *power* and *'greater' force* as it dwarfs the buildings that appear on the flat plane beside it. The lower strip of the ad features a turquoise sea, shoreline with mountains and the same purple, pink coloured sky in the background. A BMW R1150 GS Adventure rider appears in this scene, fully clad in GS rider gear, riding in the water, and what looks to be, out to sea! This kind of riding certainly requires a high level of *performance mastery* and carries with it an amount of *risk* and *uncertainty* associated with adventure.

Figure 9.47: R1150 GS Adventure Advertisement

Source: Motorcycle Voyager (2003, p.116)

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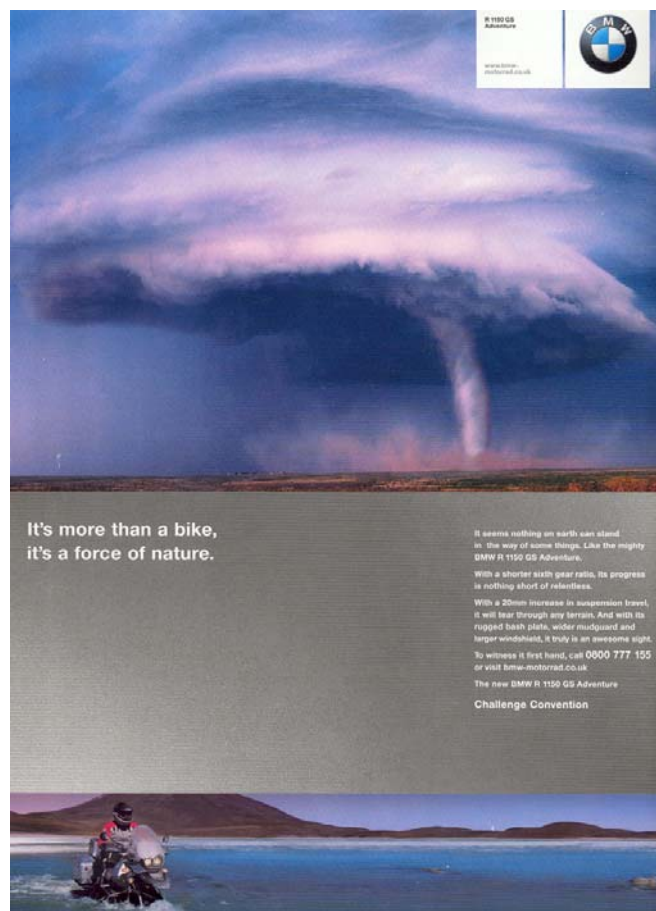
Meaning is anchored in the advertisement with the text, positioned in a grey band between the two images that includes, *"It's more than a bike, it's a force of nature."* The motorcycle is attributed the power and status of 'a force of nature,' like the tornado, the mountains and the sea featured. The unworldly *power* and seeming *invincibility* of the 'mighty' GS motorcycle is further signified with the text:

"It seems nothing on earth can stand in the way of some things. Like the mighty BMW R1150 GS Adventure."

When asked to describe their understanding of this advertisement, consumer interviewees noted the *power* and *oneness with nature* that it signifies:

373b. Sam's wife
"… looking at that, that advert would be saying that this is a powerful bike, and … you'll get close to nature."

525. Maggie
"Along (being at one) with nature."

264. Anna
"It's saying this bike is really really powerful… which is what people want in a bike."

Anna went on to relate the motorcycle's *power* to 'otherworldly' biblical references:

270. Anna
"… he (the rider) looks to me, in a way, I know the water's not opened… but it's like, when something to do with the bible, somebody went like (gesturing with her arms) and the water kind of moved and it's kind of saying that it's dead powerful…"

Further linguistic text included in the grey strip describes the GS Adventure motorcycle's intrinsic features, and concludes with the phrase, *"Challenge Convention."* Certainly the image that features the motorcycle in water, riding out to sea is unconventional, and together with the text a message is signified that this motorcycle, and this kind of motorcycling activity challenges conventional riding with

its *all-round* capabilitie*s* and *versatility*. Consumer interviewees decoded this meaning:

457. Tom

"… I suppose they're saying it's a … It's not just a bike for the road, it's a bike for everything isn't it… You know, you could use it on the road, you could use it off-road, for touring."

285. John

"… basically it'll go anywhere, cause it's going through water. It's doesn't matter what conditions, it'll do anything you want it to."

604. Jack

"That bike can do almost anything really."

At an ideological level (supported in the core-values exercise – Section 7.3, and Section 8.3.1), involvement in this kind of motorcycling, and indeed any kind of motorcycling, allows the motorcyclist to challenge societal convention through construction of a different, 'unique', 'sovereign' self-identity. Specifically here, this advertisement encourages vicarious consumption of *adventure* experience, signifying that this is the bike of the 'adventure type' for involvement in 'real' adventure experiences. Consumer interviewees concluded:

51. Brian

"It's the new BMW, kind of pseudo adventure type of thing."

318. Katie

"… it's kind of like, you know, this bike defies seas and tornados but it's kind of, you know, this is the bike of the rugged adventure type that doesn't care whether it's raining or snowing, or whatever the weather's like, it's, you know, challenge convention. But I do like it, it's nice…"

240. Tom

"Owning a BMW, you know, you can have a great adventure and do things that maybe you wouldn't be able to do on other bikes."

599. Jack

"There's that all round image, you know, that adventure, you buy this bike and we'll guarantee you and adventure sort of thing, that's what they're saying."

The Suzuki DL1000 V-Strom advertisement (illustrated in Figure 9.48) also uses emotive advertising with a highly iconic, 'fantastic' image that literally fills the advertising space and again features the *natural environment.* The V-Strom motorcycle and rider appear at the forefront of the image, the rider standing beside the motorcycle on off-road scrubland with helmet in hand and his back to the reader. He is facing, and taking in the 'awesome' purple and red mountain scene in the distance, on which the sun is setting. Superimposed in the sky above the mountain scene is the linguistic syntagm, *"Look no further, the adventure begins here."*

Figure 9.48: Suzuki DL1000 V-Strom Advertisement
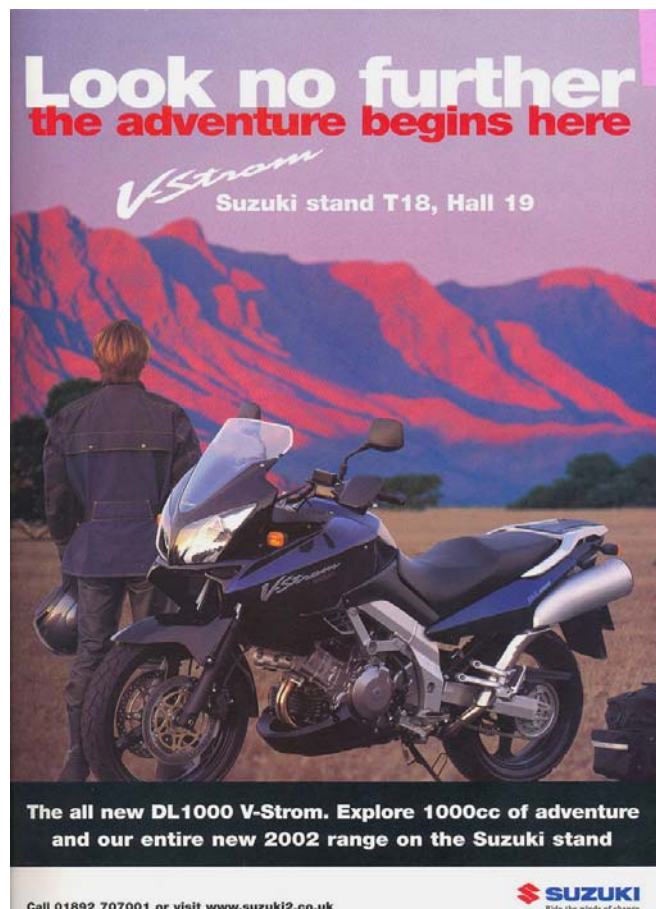
Source: The International Motorcycle and Scooter Show,
NEC Birmingham, Official Show Guide (2001, p. 23)

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The combination of signs employed in this advertisement aim to connote a romantic message of the *freedom*, *enjoyment* and *oneness with nature* associated with this kind of motorcycle adventure. A number of consumer respondents recognised this:

566. Tom

"… To me, again, that is another picture of what biking's all about, you know, going somewhere and getting there and… being in the open air and the wind in your face. Someone once said to me it's like being back with nature…"

357. John

"… this one to me shows that this person is enjoying life. He's took a few minutes time out to watch the sun go down, he just wants to enjoy the countryside more than anything else."

403. Katie

"… yeah, it's a picture of a bike and it's also in a sort of, aspirational location. Is that supposed to be like the Grand Canyon or something?"

The 'aspirational location' and the romantic sunset certainly elicited a positive emotive reaction from a number of respondents:

348. Angela

"… It's… setting the scene quite nicely, going somewhere absolutely gorgeous on your bike (smiling)…"

779. Helen

"(smiling and exclaiming) Beautiful!"

Respondents clearly identified the myth of *adventure* signified by the advertisement:

640. Brian

"It's saying it's an adventure, so you've got the mountains and the man looking longingly at the mountains."

562. Tom

"I like that yeah, that's quite appealing that… again its adventure isn't it."

433. Sam

"… It's a bit, get up off your bum and go out there and actually do it rather than just think about it and you could be seeing things like this (pointing to the scenery)…"

Signs employed in the ad also aim to give the motorcycle itself a personality of 'adventure'. This is illustrated with the syntagm *"Look no further the adventure begins here,"* as well as the further syntagm located underneath the iconic image that includes *"The all new DL100 V-Strom. Explore 1000cc of adventure."* Consumer respondents Anna and Matt both identified the motorcycle's 'adventure' personality:

346. Anna

"Oh I like this one, I like how he's looking over… I like that one, freedom, and he's out of the way and he's… looking on and the adventure's here and he could be in thought, thinking 'what's over the hills, is there anything better over there?' But his adventure is right here (pointing at the motorcycle)."

872. Matt

"I think looking at where the photo's been taken, you know, you're in the Rockies or whatever… that would be an adventure wouldn't it, you know, you're heading into the mountains… which is an adventure on it's own but, it starts here on this bike when you leave the showroom or whatever."

Ultimately the advertisement is using fantasy adventure imagery to appeal to consumer desired self-identity. At an ideological level, it suggests that through ownership of this 'piece of *adventure'* one can effectively become an authentic *adventurer*; the motorcycle is thus indexical of the kind of *freedom*, *enjoyment* and *oneness with nature* signified by the iconic adventure imagery employed. Speaking realistically, Katie identified the limited off-road capabilities of the V-Strom motorcycle, and noted the 'aspirational image' sought by owners of the bike:

405. Katie

"… I think in the sense that if you're gonna have one of these big rugged sort of like, adventure type bikes, then perhaps you'd take it, I mean to be honest apparently these are really cr*p off-road. They're just too heavy, they're not good to ride off-road but they have that kind of look about them. So, I mean, I'm not saying that somebody that would buy this bike is gonna go rushing off to the Grand Canyon just to put it to the test… it's more a sort of aspirational image in that sense…"

Consumer response was, in fact, very mixed with regards to this advertisement and whilst some respondents showed a very positive reaction, others were not impressed by design details. A number of respondents felt that the ad is not 'authentic' because the imagery of the motorcycle and its rider are too clean, clinical, artificial and contrived:

405. Katie

"… And it's like… I presume, the rider's stopped to look at the scenery, there's not an ounce of dirt on him and there's not an ounce of dirt on the bike, it's like, 'yeah, you've not really ridden there have you,' yeah. You can even see where it's been cut out and plonked on anyway!"

541. Rob

"… the bike's all clean and shiny, it's obviously been dropped off on a trailer… and he's all clean and, nice and clean cut… it's all too clean and clinical."

292. Tony

"… (shying) It's a difficult one this because it's trying to portray all of the, 'I'm out there having an adventure,' there's this guy who's a male model who's got f*cking perfect hair and everything else, and his bike's never been used, and he's got a brand new crash helmet in his hand, and it's all a bit contrived…"

The clean, shiny, contrived imagery employed rather contradicts the rugged, involved, natural, off-road elements of adventure the ad aims to signify! Also, respondents

Tony and Chris were rather offended by the ad's obvious meaning that demands little attention to consumer cognitive interpretation:

292. Tony

"... a lot of them are contrived to a certain extent but this is... The one's that have an element of, this is real life and you can either put your own imagination to it or... a bit like the Belstaff one that I liked, because this is how it really is, but this is a bit artificial..."

389. Chris

"(laughing) Malborough Man, that's like 'please God' come out of the 80s for God's sake. I think that's a dreadful advert... I think that's absolutely awful!"

391. Chris

"It's just a cliché... You show me the open road with no bike on, it leaves something to my imagination, you show me the red sunset over the mountains with some guy staring at it in awe... the fact that his bike has got him there, that's like, 'please God,' you know, 'what do you think, I'm thick?'... That doesn't work for me."

The Suzuki Motorcycles web page (www.suzukicycles.com) currently features a similar kind of *'fantasy-adventure'*, iconic image alongside the description of its V-Strom 650 adventure-sports model (illustrated in Figure 9.49). Like the previous advertisement, the motorcycle appears in full side profile at the forefront of the image with a dramatic sunset, mountainous scene in the background. In this current image, however, there is no clean, clinical looking rider and the motorcycle has snow in its tyre tread, offering a more 'authentic' and 'realistic' adventure image.

Manufacturer web page discourse surrounding their adventure-sports motorcycles commonly includes this kind of *'fantasy-adventure'* imagery. It appears alongside product descriptions, and is widely used in product photograph galleries. Yamaha uses the image illustrated in Figure 9.50 alongside the textual introduction to its adventure-sports range. The compilation of pictures included here signifies the authentic roots of meaningful *off-road adventure* that the company wants its adventure-sports motorcycles to represent. Set in off-road, rugged, mountain and river terrain, the rider, clad in off-road, colour-coordinated rider gear is shown, in the

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right image, in a pose of performance skill, mastering the challenge of skilfully negotiating the natural landscape with which he is faced. The top-left picture signifies his *oneness* with the *natural environment* and his self-sufficiency, as he lays across the gravel, relaxing after the challenging ride, with his tent, camping stove and pans.

Figure 9.49: Suzuki V-Strom 650 - Web Page Image

Source: www.suzukicycles.com

Figure 9.50: Yamaha Adventure-Sports Motorcycles – Web Page Image

Source: www.yamaha-motor.co.uk/products/motorcycles/adventure

Along with still, iconic photographic imagery used to capture authentic *adventure*, and '*adventure-fantasy*' relative to adventure-sports motorcycles, manufacturers sometimes use television advertising, and increasingly, are using web page flash techniques and web page video advertising. In autumn 2005, KTM ran a television

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advertising campaign for its 950 Adventure motorcycle (storyboard illustrated in Figure 9.51). The advertisement begins with a scene, set to relaxing, jazz style music that features a small boy playing with toy cars and a new teddy bear. He smiles at his father, who returns the smile and pulls the off-road riding helmet over his head. The focus then pans out to show the smiling mother, working happily in the family garden, with the young boy sitting, playing on the lawn next to a pram with a small baby. The father, wearing full off-road riding gear, starts up the KTM 950 Adventure motorcycle, and with the engine's raw exhaust note, the music changes to a fast beating, adrenaline pumping, exciting style.

Figure 9.51: KTM 950 Adventure – Television Advertisement Storyboard
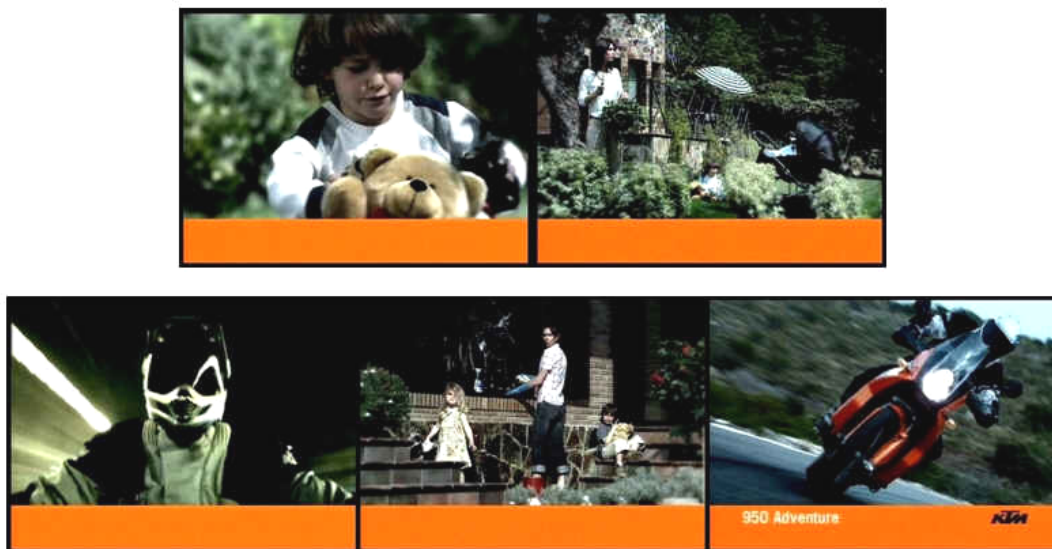
Source: www.creativeclub.co.uk

The advertisement continues with a number of shots that feature the father's KTM riding adventure. With images of skilled riding performance and what looks like adrenaline pumping fun, the rider speeds, wheelies and jumps with the motorcycle on on-road and off-road, natural environment surfaces; he rides on quality tarmac, through mountain scenes, through tunnels, on water logged gravel tracks, and finally through the sea on a sunset shore line. He arrives home and the music abruptly stops with the screech of the motorcycle's breaks. He takes his helmet off to reveal a bearded face. He looks towards his family, again in the garden, but his big smile suddenly turns to a look of confusion as he sees that his family have become older.

The baby is now a little girl and the boy has grown, his 'new' teddy now looking older and worn. His family look shocked to see him, and the boy, hiding behind his mother peers round and asks, as if just remembering, "daddy?" The spoken strap line follows, *"Warning, KTM adventures may last longer than you expect."*

At an ideological level, this advertisement spells out the elements of KTM *adventure* riding experience, focusing on the exciting, adrenaline pumping fun to be gained from skilful rider performance/mastery of a range of adventurous riding environments. More than anything it highlights the KTM machine's *versatile*, *agile*, *all-round capability* that allows the rider to loose conscious awareness of time and the real world around him as he experiences intense flow experience associated with KTM *adventure* performance.

With its new 990 Adventure series, KTM is certainly attempting to involve the consumer in a discourse of '*adventure fantasy*'. The 990 Adventure series has its own, separate website (www.990adventure.com) which links from the company's main UK web page (www.ktm.co.uk). This website is certainly dedicated to surrounding the products with a discourse based upon the elements of adventure, and fantasy adventure lifestyles. The page initially opens with a large iconic image that fills the screen (illustrated in Figure 9.52).

Figure 9.52: KTM 990 Adventure Web Page

Source: www.990adventure.com

This image employs a combination of iconic, linguistic and graphic signs to signify *freedom* and *adventure.* The iconic image features two KTM 990 Adventure motorcyclists fully loaded with luggage, riding off into the distance on a forest road. Obvious from the barrier located across the road, and at the forefront of the image, the road has been 'closed.' With the linguistic syntagm located across the bottom of the image that states, *"ready for adventure?"* the message is clearly signified that the motorcyclists have deliberately chosen to ride on, even with the uncertainty of what lies ahead. With their loaded tank boxes, representing *touring adventure*, the riders appear to be confidently pursuing this natural, unknown environment. The image indexically signifies rider *skill,* and *performance capability* of both the riders and the machines.

Importantly, the small, bright orange graphic box located in the bottom left corner of the ad is significant. Going back to the categories of signs discussed in the literature review (Section 3.4.2), it is possible to see that this small, simple sign has iconic, symbolic and indexical properties. Iconically, it visually looks like a road sign, and the bright-orange colour represents the KTM motorcycle brand. Symbolically, through an awareness of the Highway Code one understands that the two arrows represent a major road, with a more minor road leading off it. Generally arrows are used symbolically to lead to a goal, and in this case the goal is *freedom*. *Freedom* is represented by the combination of symbolic letters that make up the word, located at the end of the narrow arrow. An indexical interpretation of this sign reveals that the goal of *freedom* is to be found when the KTM motorcyclist takes his/her motorcycle 'off the beaten track' onto more minor and off-road terrain. Put into context with the wider web page image, the total meaning is one of *freedom* and *adventure* relative to this kind of riding experience.

When clicking on the language option to further enter the site, a short video sequence is activated which is accompanied by fast beating, mood inducing, exciting and adrenaline pumping music. The video sequence features a group of three KTM 990 Adventure riders performing together on dramatic, mountainous roads. In this natural environment, the mythic value of *communitas* from shared riding experience is signified. There follows a close-up action shot of a single rider skilfully mastering

what looks like a deep ford crossing the road. The music continues and the visual sequence comes to a halt on the '*fantasy-adventure*' still image shown in Figure 9.53.

Figure 9.53: KTM 990 Adventure – Fantasy-Adventure Web Page Image

Source: www.990adventure.com

This image employs a combination of iconic, linguistic and graphic signs to clearly signify romantic *adventure motorcycle fantasy.* The image itself, featuring wooded mountain valleys and lakes, and thus the natural environment, takes on a very dream like pose, with turquoise and yellow colours and the blurred, misting effect; it almost looks like something from a fairytale story. In the centre of the valley scene the linguistic text reappears, asking, *"ready for adventure?"* connoting that the adventure lies within the scene. The bright-orange 'freedom' box again appears here, this time at the top left side of the scene. Now, the *freedom* myth relative to this kind of motorcycling is expanded upon with use of the poetic linguistic narrative:

"Freedom is what is hiding around the next curve: Out there in the wildly romantic woods there are azure blue lakes lying like mirrors between the gently wooded hills. The air is filled with the smell of moss, pine needles and wild flowers. This is the here and now and you are free. This is true freedom."

This highly romantic narrative aims to stimulate the motorcyclists' emotive senses by describing the *excitement*, *uncertainty* and true *oneness with nature* that this kind of

motorcycling gives the rider; it stimulates both the sense of sight and smell. It encourages the reader to momentarily enter this fantasy, dream like world and to feel the true sense *freedom* associated with it. It claims *"This is the here and now and you are free. This is true freedom."* Like the previous image, the overall ideological meaning of this image focuses on core myths of *freedom* and its associate, *adventure*.

Interestingly, the first two, and dominant images featured on KTM's 990 Adventure website do not focus on close up images of the motorcycles at all. They are seen riding into the distance in the first image, and do not appear at all in the second one. KTM is clearly setting the scene by employing imagery that focuses on the 'experience' of adventure.

The most influential, successful and significant company to enter this market segment to date is BMW with its GS series of motorcycles. Arguably, it is BMW and its highly sophisticated marketing strategies and communications messages that have fired the growth of this market segment, effectively changing the shape of the motorcycle market, and changing wider motorcycle consumer perception of BMW motorcycles along the way. In November 2005 BMW won the Best Manufacturer Award and the R1200 GS won the Best All-Rounder (motorcycle) Award at the 'respected' annual Motor Cycle News Awards dinner. In December 2005 the motorcycle won the Best Bike in the Adventure-Sports category of The Sun Newspaper's annual 'Bikes of the Year Awards'. BMW Motorrad's General Manager for Motorcycles attributed the company's success to 'conquest marketing strategies and its comprehensive customer activity programme.' He recently stated:

BMW Motorrad General Manager for Motorcycles (www.worldofbmw.com/news - 28/10/2005)
"... Thanks to our conquest marketing strategies and comprehensive World of BMW customer activity programme, more motorcyclists than ever before are tying our bikes and discovering what owning and riding a BMW really means. To receive more awards than any other manufacturer proves that we are achieving our objectives..."

BMWs recent GS success story was accelerated when it attached Hollywood celebrity opinion leaders Ewan McGregor and Charlie Boorman to its R1150 GS Adventure

model through a sponsorship arrangement in which it provided them with the motorcycles, clothing and equipment to take on their Long Way Round adventure (featured in Figure 9.54).

Figure 9.54: Ewan Mcgregor, Charlie Boorman and the Long Way Round: Adventure

McGregor and Boorman decided to team up to share their common dream of riding around the world on motorcycles. After a last minute sponsorship refusal from KTM, who were almost certain the riders would fail, and of the negative publicity this would generate, BMW offered them R1150 GS Adventure motorcycles as well as clothing and various other pieces of equipment. The riders aimed to create a 'realistic' documentary of their personal endeavour by working with hand held cameras and recording equipment attached to their motorcycles. In addition, a third motorcyclist, a cameraman, was to ride along with them to capture their experiences.

What they created was a genuine, authentic story of adventure. They captured the real-life experience of two celebrity film stars whose journey started in London, and continued through Europe, Russia and subsequently the wild plains of Central Asia. Here they faced an increasingly life-threatening environment where rocks, craters and rubble made the way virtually impassable. Finally, the fifteen week journey ended as they rode into North America and reached their final destination of New York City. This is a story of personal endeavour and challenge as the riders face the wild, extreme natural environment full of uncertainty and the continual risk of adventure

breakdown. It is a story of the overcoming of adversity, of the exploration of exotic, distant cultures and of rider skills development and motorcycling mastery.

The documentary, produced as a television series shown on Sky One (UK), released on DVD and published as a book has really 'struck a chord' with members of motorcycle subculture as well as wider popular culture. With the use of popular celebrity opinion leaders along with the portrayal of 'authentic' adventure experience and the increasingly positive public opinions towards motorcycling in today's wider popular culture, it generates/signifies an ideology which has achieved unimaginable UK and worldwide success. In 2005 the book won the Travel Book of the Year Award, outselling its closest competitor, Michael Palin, by one hundred thousand copies. The DVD went platinum in the UK, Australia and New Zealand and was also the number one selling DVD in Canada. In January 2006 the television series won the Broadcaster Award for the Best Multichannel Programme. In the News section of its World of BMW website, BMW noted:

www.worldofbmw.com/news - 27/1/06
"… For this award, judges were looking for the outstanding original production commissioned by a UK digital-only television channel… Judges searched for shows that were original, brought something new to the market and struck a chord with its audience…"

The Producer and Director of The Long Way Round stated:

Producer and Director – The Long Way Round (www.worldofbmw.com/news - 27/1/06)
"This is a fantastic award to win… Ewan and Charlie's journey has really caught the imagination of so many people that the success of the project has thrived. Since the series was shown on Sky in the UK, it has been released internationally and we are now getting a whole wave of positive feedback from around the world."

This documentary illustrates the power of media as a tool for signifying communications messages within this market. It changed the shape of the motorcycle market, spiralling the adventure-sports sector into a significant growth stage. For

BMW it generated a huge amount of positive publicity in both motorcycle related and wider sources. HSBC Bank for example, picked up on the wider cultural popularity of McGregor and Boorman's motorcycle adventure, and featured a BMW R1150 GS Adventure motorcyclist on a similar kind of South American riding adventure in a television advertisement that formed part of its 'The World's Local Bank' campaign, contributing to an wider cultural discourse of travel and adventure (storyboard illustrated in Figure 9.55).

Figure 9.55: HSBC Television Advertisement Storyboard – Featuring BMW R1150 GS Adventure Motorcycle

Source: www.creativeclub.co.uk

Opening to exciting, beating rock 'n' roll music, the ad sequence features a number of *'fun-packed'* shots of the lone BMW GS Adventure motorcyclist (who himself resembles Ewan McGregor), enjoying the freedom of the South American riding adventure experience. His adventure includes exploration and experience of riding on wide ranging environmental terrain that includes long-straight highways as well as dramatic seashore roads, snow filled mountainous roads and desert tracks. With each environment, he rides past and experiences people from a wide range of exotic cultures, gesturing the universal 'ok' hand gesture to them. They smile and respond with the same gesture; that is, until Brazil where he confidently uses the same gesture in a Bistro café to meet a shocked, angry response from the butch looking café owner and other customers. The spoken strap line states:

"All over South America this gesture means 'everything is ok' apart from Brazil, where it's rather rude… We never underestimate the power of local knowledge… HSBC, the world's local bank."

With this advertisement, HSBC successfully tapped into British wider popular cultural positivity towards this 'new' increasingly 'trendy' style of adventure motorcycle experience. The ad's producers effectively used humour, and encapsulated the *excitement, fun, enjoyment, environmental* and *cultural exploration* opportunities, and *uncertainty* of adventure-sports motorcycle experience. Ultimately, HSBC's message was to stress the importance of local cultural knowledge. For BMW, this was a fantastic opportunity for positive publicity, to communicate the motorcycle *adventure* mythology surrounding its R1150 GS Adventure brand.

With its pioneering GS range, BMW has continuously led the growth of the adventure-sports market sector; by the end of 2006, the R1200 GS and R1200 GS Adventure models had outsold their nearest competitor, the Honda XL 125V Varadero by almost four times (see MCIA Figures – APPENDIX L). BMW is certainly taking advantage of its market opportunity through the development of a highly sophisticated marketing strategy with communications messages that spell out the authenticity of the GS range for adventure. BMW continues to link its GS products with opinion leaders, celebrity stars Ewan McGregor and particularly Charlie Boorman, who have become icons of *BMW* adventure, and representatives of the GS brand personality. It frequently includes their 'credible' narrative in web page news, with quotes such as:

Charlie Boorman – www.worldofbmw.com/news - 30/7/04
"Our BMW R1150 GS Adventure's mastered the most challenging stages of the trip superbly. These are fantastic machines: it is due to their reliability and power that we were able to undertake our Long Way Round through the most remote areas of the world in the first place!"

BMW used the (November) 2005 International Motorcycle and Scooter Show at the NEC in Birmingham, to launch its new R1200 GS Adventure model. The motorcycle was placed on a circular, off-road stone effect centre stage and the company aimed to

generate a media frenzy and a great deal of publicity from the product's unveiling. With a rather large atmospheric build up and a growing audience, Charlie Boorman entered to unveil the motorcycle, to sit on it and give it his stamp of 'authentic' *adventure* approval. This is illustrated in Figure 9.56**.**

Figure 9.56: BMW R1200 GS Adventure Product Launch – International Motorcycle and Scooter Show, NEC Birmingham, November 2005
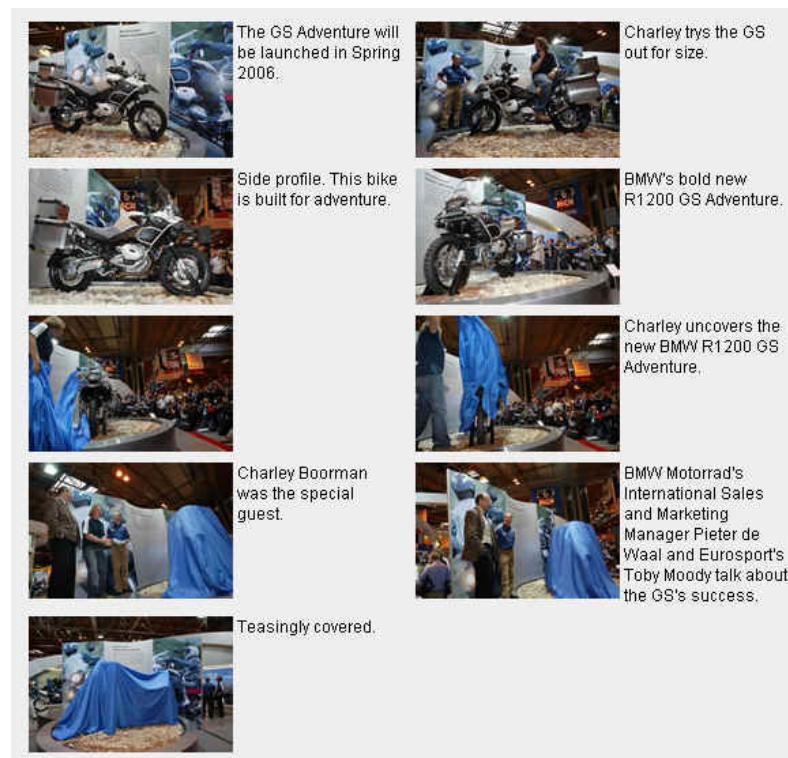
Source: www.worldofbmw.com

With extrinsic design features and atmospherics ('off-road' stone effect centre stage, background adventure imagery, veiled motorcycle, unveiled shiny new motorcycle with matching chrome boxes, music), along with verbal narration from BMW's International Sales and Marketing Manager, a Eurosport television channel presenter and Charlie Boorman himself (illustrated in Figure 9.57**)** regarding the intrinsic capabilities of this motorcycle, the overall aim was to signify the 'authentic' nature of the motorcycle for 'authentic*' adventure* experience. Ultimately, for the consumer, this is an ideological message about the significance of ownership of this kind of motorcycle brand and constellations of associated equipment products for

construction of ones 'authentic' *adventure* self-identity. Significantly, BMW Motorrad won the award for the Best Exhibitors Stand at the show.

Figure 9.57: Charlie Boorman and Authentic BMW R1200 GS Adventure Personality

In a continuation of the Long Way Round adventure theme, BMW recently sponsored Charlie Boorman, along with two other supporting riders, to compete on BMW F650 GS Dakar machines in the 2006 Euromilhoes Dakar Rally; arguably the most gruelling, extreme and dangerous off-road adventure motorsport event in the world, that runs from Lisbon to Dakar. Like the Long Way Round, the riders' adventure was filmed and will later be produced as a television series, on DVD and as a book. The next instalment of the celebrity's quest for adventure aims to grip audiences/readers who were so taken with the Long Way Round. For BMW it provides the opportunity to restate and further signify the GS motorcycles' status as an authentic 'celebrity' machine capable of extreme off-road *adventure*.

BMW has used the 'Race to Dakar' adventure as a great platform to generate positive publicity for the GS brand, and to involve consumers in the whole discourse that surrounds it. With almost daily web page news surrounding the team's preparations for the race, and the unfolding story of race itself, BMW Motorrad encouraged constant consumer interaction through its World of BMW website (www.worldofbmw.com). The company used the NEC show as a further platform for publicity by including a 'launch the team' event (see Figure 9.58). Here, Boorman and his two teammates appeared for a weekend to 'put a face' to the 'Race to Dakar'

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brand. They mixed with consumers, signing posters and answering questions, and posed for the media with the F650 GS motorcycle on display. Note the final photograph in the Figure, which shows Boorman gazing at his 'original' and authentic Long Way Round R1150 GS motorcycle, and anchors a connotative link as he contemplates his new 'Race to Dakar' adventure experience.

Figure 9.58: BMW Race to Dakar – Team Launch Event – International Motorcycle and Scooter Show, NEC, Birmingham, November 2005
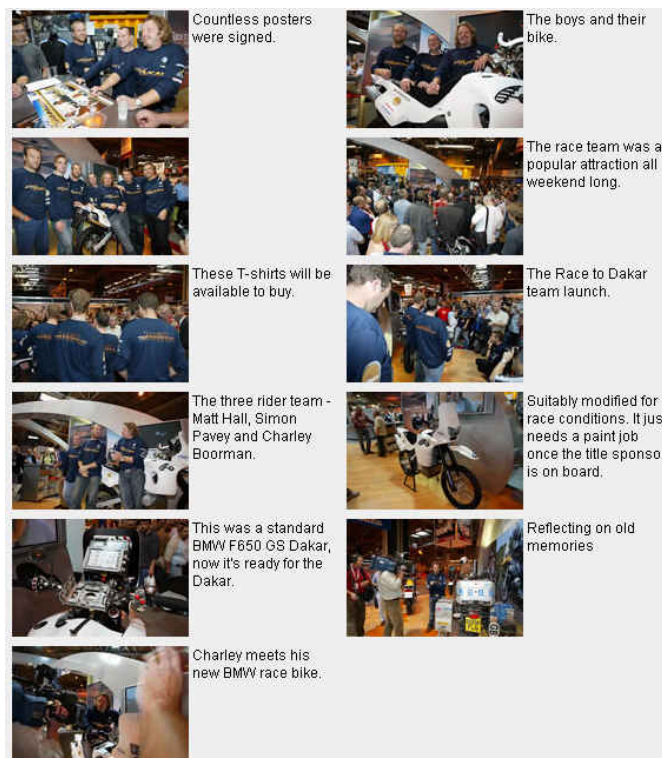
Source: www.worldofbmw.com

BMW's platform for publicity did not end there, and in December 2005 a crowd was invited of around seventy guests, sponsors and a selection of the UK's top motorcycle press journalists to attend a further 'Race to Dakar' team launch. Here the team was introduced by Long Way Round star Ewan McGregor, and the completed F650 GS Dakar race machines with sponsorship logos on the fairings, and BMWs X5 support vehicle were unveiled.

Through its customer activity programme BMW Motorrad offered consumers a 'piece' of the real experience and a great opportunity for communitas development. It

took several opportunities to get 'like minded' consumers together and to enable them to mix with the Race to Dakar team itself. Consumers were invited to join the team in Lisbon for a send off party prior to the beginning of the race for example. For consumers, involvement in this kind of experience can give them a sense of satisfaction from subcultural communitas involvement, and it can add to their set of key narratives that make up the desired authentic *adventure* self-identity.

Boorman, in fact, failed to complete the race due to personal injury, but he did continue his 'heroic' encounter with the support team, for involvement in the filming of the evolving 'Race to Dakar' story. Even with Boorman's eventual adventure breakdown, BMW's sponsorship arrangement with the team, and it's marketing and communications activity surrounding the event can only be beneficial for generating consumer awareness and involvement with a brand designed to signify its authenticity for *adventure* experience.

9.5.3 Customer Involvement in Motorcycle Adventure Lifestyles

BMW Motorrad's General Manager for Motorcycles, quoted above, pinpointed a key to the company's success in the adventure-sports market sector is its customer activity programme. BMW, and competing manufacturers increasingly, are recognising the 'lifestyle need' of this kind of motorcycle consumer. More than supplying customers with syntagms of adventure-sports motorcycle products branded with a personality of 'adventure', they are increasingly offering lifestyle involvement programmes that encourage active customer participation in their 'brand communities'. This facilitates consumer involvement and role acquisition into the ideology of their chosen adventure subculture and for the companies, it generates increased customer retention and brand loyalty.

With advances in technology, manufacturers are developing increasingly interactive and sophisticated websites that offer consumers a high level of involvement and interaction with adventure-sports motorcycling lifestyle discourse; with the simple click of a button, from their own homes, consumers can vicariously consume a whole world of 'virtual adventure' motorcycling lifestyle. Ultimately, this virtual

consumption contributes to the construction of ones' personal, 'adventure' self-identity. Website sections include 'advanced product information', 'company and product news', 'event reviews', 'interactive design labs', 'interactive consumer questionnaires', 'e-newsletter subscriptions' and importantly 'chat forums', 'photograph galleries' and 'travel stories'.

Chat forum facilities open up a new world for subcultural communitas development. Motorcyclists can log on from their own homes, at any time, and share in much loved 'bike talk,' prescribing to the language codes that represent their chosen subcultural ideology. Noted throughout the Results and Discussion (Sections 7.2.2 and 8.3.1 for example), communitas/brotherhood is an extremely strong residual and dominant myth of motorcycle subcultures that provides motorcyclists with a means to construct personal meaning in their lives. Today this can be achieved without even getting the motorcycle out of the garage!

Interestingly, consumer respondent results from the self-assembly collage exercise (Sections 8.2.4 and 8.2.7) showed that pure off-road enduro/trials motorcyclists are, in fact, loners who do not prescribe to the communitas element of motorcycle subculture. Manufacturers, who have focused on off-road imagery for extrinsic brand development within the adventure-sports sector, appear to have recognised the communitas need of the more general motorcyclist who is, in reality, likely to purchase this kind of motorcycle.

Manufacturers encourage adventure-sports consumers to submit real-life adventure photographs and stories of authentic adventure travel experience to their websites for publishing. With regard to GS riders' travel stories, BMW requests:

www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk/gsworld
"Wanted: Your most fascinating travel stories! GS riders are a special breed of biker. They are at home in the most beautifully exotic corners of the earth, and are therefore perfectly equipped to tell stories of unforgettable journeys…"

BMW tends to publish the photographs and stories that focus on extreme adventure, stories of world trips, off-road natural terrains and record-breaking attempts; personal

stories of challenge, endurance, endeavour, uncertainty, risk, adversity and the elements that make up extreme adventure. BMW names these experienced and highly involved adventurers 'globetrotters,' and they represent the high-end, role models that the majority of consumers can only aspire to become. But, by generalising the invite for consumers to submit their own adventure photographs and stories, the company is placing consumers in the same subcultural category as 'globetrotters,' allowing them to feel that they can take on the 'globetrotter' identity as part of their 'actual' self. This association can be made by consumer ownership of the GS motorcycle, clothing and equipment brand.

Ultimately, through interactive consumer lifestyle programmes, manufacturers are able to 'get close' to the customer, picking up detailed information for the development of highly advanced database information systems; information that can be integrated into product/service design and associated development and communications programmes. In a two-way relationship, this benefits both the manufacturer and the consumer; manufacturers are able to accurately build brands with a personality based on key subcultural communication codes/dominant myths, and consumers are able to pick up and use those brands for 'self-enhancement' and the construction of 'desired' self-identity. Certainly within the developing (and highly growing) adventure-sports motorcycle market sector, manufacturers have picked up on consumers' adventure aspirations and 'commodified' them into their adventure-sports product/service brands. This highlights the significance of the marketer's role in purveying subcultural messages and constructing the categories of culture.

9.6   Supplier Configuration of Packaged Motorcycle Adventure Experiences

For consumers who desire to convert their adventure fantasies into reality and partake in real adventure experience, manufacturers and specialist packaged adventure experience/holiday suppliers are increasingly offering motorcyclists fully configured 'parcels' of packaged adventure experience (noted previously in Section 7.2.5). They offer packages that range from on and off-road training events and courses such as

motorcycle track days and off-road training schools to longer duration, on-road touring and off-road trails type holiday adventures. What consumers purchase is a package that includes a fully controlled physical and human support structure that aims to increase the chances of successful adventure experience and reduce the potential risk of adventure breakdown. Supplier web page narrative describes this structure:

www.aprilia.com
"… from the transport of the motorbikes to the overnight stay, the riding courses and the excursions, insurance and technical assistance, Aprilia is ready to organise your next adventure."

www.worldofbmw.com/travel/tours
"Ferry bookings, hotels, local maps, telephone numbers, travel packs and detailed route information are all taken care of. All that participants need to do is select a suitable motorcycle holiday, book a place and arrive at the ferry terminal on time. The rest is arranged for you."

Identified in previous analysis of track day participant motives (Section 8.2.1), these motorcyclists have a real quest to experience a number of elements of adventure; namely, the desire for skills development that involves risk-taking behaviour through the deliberate confrontation of danger and pushing ones own and motorcycle's performance limits to 'the edge', as well a desire for adrenaline, speed, excitement and freedom from constraints of congested roads. Consumers' desire to experience their own form of performance flow experience to evoke personal 'rites of intensification' and a phase of personal, and subcultural 'role-transition'. They expect to share the performance stage with other track day participants and ultimately involvement in, and successful completion of the event leads to communitas and positive social validation. They also expect to gather tangible evidence of their heroic performance*,* in the form of video recordings, photographic evidence and event completion certificates to use as evidence of adventure engagement, to support their narrative of renewed, and authentic 'adventure' self-identity.

Specific consumer motives for other kinds of packaged motorcycling adventure experience vary slightly, but ultimately consumers share a desire for self-enriching, skill enhancing, adventure motorcycle performance and they do all rely on the package provided by the adventure supplier to facilitate that performance; they want to make 'real' their adventure fantasy, but they want the supplier's package to reduce the physical and psychological risks of adventure breakdown, and to increase the chances of successful completion (evidenced in Ghurbal, 2000). It appears that packaged adventure experience suppliers are once again aiming to resolve a mythic cultural contradiction by providing what can be termed *'safe – adventure'.*

Focusing on motorcycle track days, it was possible to enter these sacred, semiotically charged enclaves of motorcyclist adventure consumption, and to identify the key mythic themes/communication codes signified through track day organisers' configuration and communication of the packages they offer; the following case study deals with this.

9.6.1 Case Study: Signs, Signification and Supplier Configuration of the Motorcycle Adventure Track Day Package

There are currently eighteen licensed racetracks across the UK and motorcycle track days are available at fifteen of them. The most frequently used racetracks for motorcycle track days, and arguably the most significant and well known are Brands Hatch, Silverstone, Donnington Park and Cadwell Park. Motorcycle track days are partly supplied by racetrack owners, but the majority are supplied by independent track day organisers who hire racetrack venues and supply the track day package with their own brand identity. Around fifty track day organisers are currently operating in the UK. Market leaders include Hottrax, Speed Freak, 100% Bikes and Focused Events. Motorcycle track day prices range from around £50 to £165 depending on the amount of *racing* authenticity attributed to a particular track. For detailed 2007 track day information including dates, tracks and organisers refer to www.biketrackdays.co.uk.

The Package - Racing Authenticity and Heritage

Arguably the most predominant values signified through supplier configuration of the motorcycle track day package are that of *racing* authenticity and *heritage*. This is consistent with the myth of *racing and speed* central to the construction of supersports motorcyclist self-identity (found in Section 8.2.1), and a recognised element of adventure. Track day suppliers aim to provide a combination of authentic racing venues along with tangible and human factors to signify this *racing* authenticity.

Venue

Racetracks such as Silverstone and Brands Hatch are highly significant and sacred enclaves of motorcycle consumption. They are contaminated due to motorcycle racing events that have occurred there in the past and continue to occur there today, events such as rounds of the British and World Superbikes, and Moto GP racing championships. Also, playing an important role in their contamination are the racing 'heroes' who have ridden, succeeded, crashed, and sometimes fatefully died there. The motorcycle racetrack venue is a shrine where motorcyclists go for indulgence in experiences that represent meaningful *racing* identity quests.

The venue provides the consumption enclave where the track day performance takes place. Superficially, the venue entrance and sign, and the road that emerges at the trackside do not represent anything more than a denotative, functional entrance/exit point (as illustrated in Figure 9.59). For track day participants however, driving the motorcycle past the sign, through the gates and into the venue arouses intense emotional feelings and a heightened sense of awareness. They have entered the sacred ground that connotes values of *racing* authenticity and *heritage*, and their levels of excitement build as they leave the outside 'everyday' world behind and enter this 'fantasyland' in anticipation of living the dream, experiencing the self-ideal and driving in the tracks of their racing 'heroes'.

Physical elements such as the paddock, the frontage of the pits and track entry lane provide first indications to the rider of the proximity of the track. The visual spectacle of the racetrack is centred around the track itself. A line of asphalt bounded by crash

barriers and advertising hoardings with dug out fortifications of the track marshals indicating locations of heightened danger. Bales, tyre walls, crash barriers, the staffed control tower, medical centre, ambulances and safety car serve as a constant reminder of the high level of risk involved in this adventure pursuit (illustrated previously in Figure 8.3). Permanent physical elements along with elements provided by track day suppliers contribute to an almost complete schema of an 'authentic' race. This includes the signal flags of the marshals as well as the chequered flags and signal lights on the start/finish line.

Figure 9.59: Donnington Park Entrance

The Director of Octagon Motorsports Ltd. noted the value of connotations of *racing* authenticity and *heritage* signified by their racing venues, which compel motorcyclists to ride there:

65. Director – Octagon Motorsports Ltd.
"... you (track day participants) are where the champions walked, you are in their wheel tracks which can't be devalued at all really."

79. Director – Octagon Motorsports Ltd.
"Brands, Oulton, Donnington, Cadwell, because those are the ones that bikers want to go, bikers are very… they're very loyal to the bike circuits, when we started running the bike school at Brands no-one would buy it, but then when Brands became

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known for world superbikes no-one wanted to go anywhere else but Brands because it was suddenly the ultimate bike track."

Occupation of pit lane garage space gives witness to a number of stylistic borrowings from an authentic race scenario. As noted in Section 8.2.1, employing symbolic self-completion behaviours, track day participants image consciously don themselves and their motorcycles with race-replica clothing and equipment. Pit lane garages, filled with the aroma of Castrol R, are occupied by supersports motorcycles, placed on stands and tangible evidence such as tyre warmers and comprehensive tool chests including laptop technology support the enactment of subcultural rituals and narratives. Ritualistic behaviour such as constant touching, fiddling, fixing and cleaning the machinery is common along with an element of ritualistic narrative exchange between participants (illustrated in Figure 9.60). Whilst off the track, the pit lane garage space becomes the central venue for subcultural communitas and racing role-authentication.

Figure 9.60: Racing Authenticity in the Pit Lane Garage Space

The elements that make up the venue together form an authentic performance arena, a theatre for adventure performance. When track day participants drive through the venue gates they leave the reality of the everyday world, and everyday life behind and

enter a kind of theatrical 'fantasyland' akin to that of the shopping mall described by Danesi (1999). The racetrack becomes a stage for adventure 'performance' which offers opportunities for skills development and mastery, for freedom from constraints of the everyday and public roads, for experience of speed, adrenaline, excitement and challenge, and for risk taking, allowing enough control to take it to 'the edge' but not beyond it. The racetrack becomes a theatre for success or failure. This was reflected in comments made by Octagon's Director:

18. Director – Octagon Motorsports Ltd.
"...because without belittling anything… what's a normal life, people go to work, come home, watch TV and there's not a lot going on is there… but, what we offer is to step outside of the norm for a day…"

90. Director – Octagon Motorsports Ltd.
"It's the theatre for them to succeed in and fail."

As noted in Section 8.2.1, a key thrill for track day participants is gained from riding fast, on the edge. This was reflected in informal interview narrative with participants on the trackside:

Track day participant (informal trackside interview)
"Because the track is in the same position all the time you can push it a little bit further. At the end of the day you know your own limits."

Track day participant (informal trackside interview)
"I come for the thrill. Once you've experienced it you can't stop, there's nothing better."

Supersports motorcyclists appear to gain satisfaction from riding fast, on the edge, in the knowledge that it is accumulated skill that is keeping them on the brink; that they are in ultimate control of their own destiny, close to disaster, but not too close. Unfortunately, track day participants' perceived limits of their own skill level often exceeds their real limits, and pumped up with adrenaline, testosterone and excitement they take their motorcycles beyond the edge on the racetrack, which results in

adventure breakdown. An informal interview with the flag marshal at a Donnington Park track day revealed that every session that morning had been stopped due do a 'spill' (motorcyclist falling off)! Thankfully, due to physical and human safety elements put in place by racetrack owners and track day suppliers, the mortality rate at this kind of event is relatively low.

Through successful performance on this social stage, track day participants aim to develop an image that emulates their racing heroes. They disengage from everyday life, entering a phase of role-transition and experiencing personal rites of intensification, finally emerging with a renewed self of self-identity closer to their ideal, semiotic self:

8. Director – Octagon Motorsports Ltd.
"...it's to live the dream isn't it…"

22. Director – Octagon Motorsports Ltd.
"… you become… you know, Fogarty for a day…"

Other Tangible Elements

As well as the tangible elements that contribute to the venue, described above, track day suppliers provide a number of other tangible elements that contribute to the track day package. Carefully configured, these elements contribute to signification of racing authenticity. A number of suppliers offer customers the facility of motorcycle hire from either a fleet of motorcycles they themselves own or through separate hiring companies. They offer authentic, top of the range supersports motorcycles, set up for the racetrack by experts, waiting to be tested to their limits by 'wannabe' track day heroes who do not own supersports motorcycles of their own, or prefer not to take such a high level of risk on their own motorcycles (see Figure 9.61).

Figure 9.61: Track Day Motorcycle Hire

Source: www.nolimitstrackdays.com

www.focusedevents.com

"All our bikes are prepared to the highest standards and are the same spec as any Production 600 or powerbike that would be competing at National level today in the UK."

Contributing to racing authenticity, motorcycle hire staff remain at the trackside for the duration of the track day event to support the customer. Ensuring maximum performance levels of the motorcycle, they alter suspension settings, change tyres for different weather conditions, fit tyre warmers, and generally perform the role of a professional racer's supporting team. Here the racer wannabe can truly live the fantasy of being a racing hero for the day.

Motorcycle hire is however expensive at around two hundred pounds it is generally more expensive than the track day itself. Not all suppliers offer the hire facility, and in reality, many track day participants prefer to live the racing dream and share the intense experience with their own 'beloved' motorcycles.

For the majority of track day customers who participate on their own motorcycles, track day suppliers offer a number of authentic racing motorcycle parts. Fitted to the motorcycles by experts, these parts aim to enhance motorcycle and thus racetrack performance, as well as contribute to the syntagm of props that make up the authentic racing motorcyclist's total self-image. These props include racing tyres, brake pads, chains (as illustrated in Figure 9.62) and the associated expert service includes fitting and the setting up of motorcycle suspensions for racing.

www.focusedevents.com

"Do you want the best performance motorcycle tyres in the world, at the best prices, provided and fitted by Pirelli-Metzler trained technicians? Speak to Focused Events"

www.hottrax-online.com

"Tyre supply and fitting from Competition Logistics The company is headed by Eddie and Liz Roberts and run the World Superbike and British Superbike official Pirelli and Metzeler tyre service. They can supply all the latest rubber including Slicks, Wets and Intermediates in all sizes. Fitted at the track by world class fitters used to fitting tyres to the entire World Superbike paddock."

Figure 9.62: Tyres and Suspension Service offered by Track Day Organiser

Source: www.100pc.co.uk

Racing authenticity and heritage are also signified by extra merchandise displayed and for sale within the racetrack venue. Retail shops sell a range of race related souvenirs such as racing team and racing hero branded clothing, hats, badges and pens amongst other things. Also for sale are photographs and paintings featuring, and signed by, racing heroes. This kind of merchandise can also be found, displayed for sale in the track day registration area. Octagon's Director described this, relevant to the supply of both motorcycle and car track days:

49. Director – Octagon Motorsports Ltd.

"We give them, they sign on in an area that is full of merchandising and sets the stand, you know there's all the Ferrari hats and badges and photographs of, all the bikes, all the cars, the signed photos from Carl Fogarty and Nigel Mansell…"

He went on to describe the racing authenticity and heritage provided by the display of authentic pictures on the walls of the track day briefing area. These pictures serve as an iconic and contaminating reminder of the sacred nature of the racetrack on which the participants are about to perform:

55. Director – Octagon Motorsports Ltd.

"…And then we try to, in the briefing we try to make them a place where it reminds you that you're in a special environment, you know, the pictures on the walls of things that have happened there…"

The merchandise and pictures described here clearly provide connotations that signify the sacred nature and authentic racing heritage of the venue. What was clearly noticeable though from track day observation, was a lack of tangible evidence to signify and support the track day suppliers' individual brand identity. Other than perhaps a poster in the registration area, one would not easily be able to identify, through any visual, tangible evidence, which supplier is, in fact, providing a particular track day.

A tangible element that track day suppliers have not failed to recognise is the importance of offering participants physical evidence of their heroic racetrack performance through certificates, photographs and video evidence:

www.100pc.co.uk

"Whether you want a chance to impress your mates, or you just want a personal everlasting memory of your track event, look know further because 100% Bikes in conjunction with Video Star can now bring you an excellent quality video which includes exhaust sound and a music soundtrack (if required), giving a real professional piece of uncut action footage to let you relive your track day over and over again."

www.fresh-orange.co.uk

"Fresh Orange Photography will take fast paced, action packed shots of your exciting day at the event, making sure you don't just leave with only memories!"

The importance to motorcyclists of gathering this kind of proof to support engagement with adventure, and the authenticity of their heroic racer self-narrative was discussed in Section 8.2.1. All track day suppliers in the study provide certificates of successful completion and official photography facilities. Octagon's Director noted the importance of this, describing the role of a carefully taken action shot in making the fantasy (ideal) a reality:

111. Director – Octagon Motorsports

"... they (track day participants) want the dreams, the exaggerated story and they want bits to take back, like a model bike, a hat, you know some of the merchandise, the photo is the big thing... They like to have a nice big picture on display with the certificate, because we do photo folders; it's a certificate, open it and there's your picture..."

121. Director – Octagon Motorsports

"It's just the memory and the proof I think... they want the proof. The problem with the photos, that if it doesn't have them with their knee down they don't want it. If they're looking even slightly timid, 'there's something wrong with your camera mate' (laughing). It's so true they want the illusion to be complete by looking at the picture and going 'wow, that looks like a true pro'... it doesn't show that I'm doing about 20 miles per hour, my knee's on the floor so I'm winning the grand prix."

One track day participant's comments reflected this:

Track day participant (informal trackside interview)

"I will buy a photo if it's a good one. I normally buy photos of my track days. I show them to people, keep them and look at them."

The Human Element

For suppliers of track day experiences, facilitating authentic racing style motorcycle track days requires a carefully configured human support structure. This includes staff involved in logistical and safety elements to facilitate and control racetrack performance as well as those involved in peripheral elements such as administration and catering. Particularly significant are the expert, role models who play an important role in successful track day facilitation. Experts mentioned above include motorcycle hire staff as well as staff involved in selling motorcycle parts and setting them up for optimum racetrack performance.

www.focusedevents.com
"The team consists of a wealth of experience from National and International licence holders… to ex Grand Prix mechanics and suspension and mechanical technicians. The instructors have all been hand picked for their ability, knowledge, and communication skills."

Arguably, the most iconic and significant experts, and role models, are the track day event managers and instructors. Track day suppliers appear to have recognised the importance, and significance, of employing authentic motorcycle racers to fulfil these roles.

49. Director – Octagon Motorsports
"…we try to make sure that the instructor… he would be… a successful national racer or, Steve Plater, you know, rides for Yamaha this year, or Matt Lewelin, a former winner in superbikes, or Chris Walker was an instructor for me, em… but you try to, even if it's a national racer that's won a few, they don't know who he is, I want that instructor to walk in, and for them to look and see a minor celebrity…"

55. Director – Octagon Motorsports
"…you can see their faces light up, 'your instructor today is Steve Plater,' and they're knocked over by it, or Matt Llewlyn or, there's a lot of instructors, there's a lot of multiple champions, a lot of them from the past now but, people's faces light up

and they know they've got quality, even if sometimes the best racer doesn't make the best instructor…"

Racing role authenticity gained from event managers and instructors appears to be one of the key selling points for track day suppliers. Octagon's Director, above, believes that the authenticity gained from the customer's interaction with an iconic racer is even more important than the service quality that racer provides as an instructor. Track day organisers commonly attract customer attention by offering personal tuition, advice and photographs during the track day event with their expert instructors:

www.speedfreaktrackdays.com
"There is more than likely going to be ten or more famous names at any one-day who will all be willing to have photos with or just talk to… Your instructor will also have time to look at your bike and give you his advise on set up, condition and maintenance tips."

Certainly the significance of authentic instructors was witnessed during track day observations. The pit lane garages appeared to signify a hierarchy of racing authenticity and status with garages closest to the instructors being eagerly filled first with participants complete with their syntagms of top of the range racing props. Somewhat ironically, the need for shiny, new expensive equipment and gadgets for symbolic self-completion was not reflected by instructors, who as authentic experts use well worn, well worked, battered and scratched clothing and equipment.

These factors were more than evident at Speed Freak track days, managed by James Witham, ex world Supersport and Moto GP rider. Track day participants appeared eager to be in close proximity to the racing icon, to exchange narrative and ask his advice about motorcycle related subjects, and ultimately to receive authentic role 'contamination' from him. Undoubtedly photographs taken alongside James, or other credible racing instructors, would proudly be shown to others and displayed by participants, signifying their indexical relationship with an authentic racer. Octagon's Director noted the importance of narrative exchange with authentic racing instructors:

107. Director – Octagon Motorsports

"... people will ask them questions, and especially if they're with someone they recognise, then they want the story that they can't read off the page don't they."

A final human element that plays an important role in authentic track day configuration are the motorcyclist participants themselves. As actors (in the dramaturgical sense previously defined by Goffman, 1957), they play a highly active role within the service delivery as ultimately, their individual racetrack performance contributes to the overall success of the event. Track day suppliers cannot provide a large audience akin to a professional racing event, but racing authenticity is gained from shared racetrack performance with other participants who form racing competitors, and through ritualistic narrative exchange and social validation between participants whilst off the track. Track day participants are regularly seen leaning on the pit wall, scrutinising, evaluating and socially validating their peers (see Figure 9.63).

Figure 9.63: Peer Evaluation From the Pit Wall

The post ride ritual provides important performance feedback and peer evaluation that contributes to authentic role development. Riders, often accompanied by instructors dissect the ride in detail. Backslapping and other displays of shared emotion are common as well as a great deal of enthusiastic story telling. This ritualistic behaviour contributes to the communitas/brotherhood element so much sought after by

supersports motorcycle riders. The common, barrier-free bond between riders and instructors observed here is akin to that between river rafting participants and instructors described by Arnould and Price (1993).

Safety

Safety provides another important myth that is signified through supplier configuration and communication of the motorcycle track day package; after all, to facilitate *'safe – adventure'* experience is the key aim of the supplier. Track day participants enter the adventure consumption enclave, the racing venue, pumped with adrenaline, heightened emotions and self-confidence to push their performance envelopes to their own perceived tolerable limits. As described in Section 8.2.1, confidence is gained to push these tolerable limits by safety elements they perceive are included in racetrack design, and by safety elements put in place by track day suppliers (well-experienced instructors and organisers, flag marshals, safety car drivers and medical staff working in both ambulances and the medical centre). Octagon's Director reflected on consumer perceptions of track day safety:

10. Director – Octagon Motorsports
"…it's a fairground, there's no way they're gonna get hurt… because safety standards in everything in this country have to be high… I don't think they see the risk, they see the glamour. You know, when Aerton Senna was killed everyone went, 'you mean this is dangerous?' Because people don't see that any more. When did you last see someone badly hurt at a race bike meeting?"

Like a fairground, track day participants expect the thrills and excitement of adventure, and they perceive the risks are lowered through ultimate trust in the safety elements and standards employed by the supplier's package. In reality, whereas fairground customers do not require a level of performance skill, successful and safe outcomes for track day motorcyclists are influenced by their personal levels of performance skill and control. As noted previously, pumped with adrenaline, testosterone and excitement, participants frequently overestimate their skill levels, taking it beyond their performance capabilities and lose control.

For track day suppliers, safety is a critical issue in the configuration and communication of track day packages. Before racetrack performance can commence all suppliers carry out a briefing session (as illustrated in Figure 9.64), attendance at which is compulsory for all participants. The serious and compulsory nature of attendance at the briefing is illustrated by a number of track day providers who operate a card system. Participants are issued with a card as proof of attendance, and this card must be handed in at the trackside before they can begin racetrack riding:

www.100pc.co.uk

"A full briefing will always take place before any rider is allowed access to the circuit. Safety is of paramount importance and 100% Bikes ensures that everyone listens to this briefing and will only be permitted on track on production of a pass which proves their attendance at this vital presentation."

www.hottrax-online.com

"For 2004 we will be operating a 'Briefing Card' system. After you have attended the briefing you will be given a briefing card to show that you have attended. You must hand this card in to the pit lane co-ordinator as you line up for your first session. If you do not have a briefing card you will not be allowed on track."

Figure 9.64: Track Day Safety Briefing

Source: www.tracktimepromotions.co.uk

During the briefing, event managers and instructors aim to cut through the adrenaline and excitement, encouraging participants to leave the fantasy, dream (ideal) world for a few moments, bringing them 'down to earth,' by accentuating the real nature of the danger and risks involved in racetrack riding:

49. Director – Octagon Motorsports

"... the instructor will come in, take them away and brief them, but his job is difficult because he's got to bring people down to earth, he's got to take them from, 'I'm gonna go out there and prove to everyone that I should be world champion', to bring them down to say, 'ok you may very well be the next world champion, but, you've got to start gently, and you know, there's a few safety things you've got to know'..."

The safety briefing includes a clear description of running events for the day, explanation of flag signal meanings (illustrated in Figure 9.64 above), racetrack entrance and exit procedures, incident procedures, pit lane and paddock rules as well as the statement of strict racetrack codes of behaviour:

www.tracktimepromotions.co.uk
"Rider Brief: This is quite rude & "in your face" and deliberately meant to offend those who are most likely to offend others i.e, the wheelie popping brain dead moron who doesn't care about the safety of other riders on the day. It is compulsory for ALL riders to attend prior to being allowed on the track. No-one is excluded from the briefing, it is essential to find out which pit entrance/exit is being used, flags etc."

www.100pc.co.uk
"Wheelies, stoppies or other similar activities will not be tolerated. Bad/dangerous behaviour will not be permitted and 100% Bikes reserves the right to remove any rider."

Marketing Communications – Tools and Messages

Marketing communications tools currently employed by track day suppliers are limited. This reflects not only the limited nature of supplier communications budgets, but also the focused nature of potential target audiences; motorcycle track day events are available only to consumers who hold full UK motorcycle licences. Key tools employed by track day suppliers include limited above-the-line advertising as well as below-the-line web pages and limited sales promotions. Suppliers particularly rely on third party publicity gained through motorcycle media discourse such as track day listings and expert/journalist track day reviews published in the motorcycle media.

Highly popular motorcycle newspapers, magazines and websites regularly publish this kind of 'credible' narrative. Track day suppliers also rely on credible customer word-of-mouth recommendation which, ideally, spreads positive messages about the 'authentic' track day packages that they offer.

With limited advertising spend, track day suppliers place small box advertisements in the 'What's On' section of the weekly newspaper, Motorcycle News (MCN). A powerful communication tool, MCN reaches one hundred and forty thousand motorcyclists weekly, and over sixty percent of the 500cc+ motorcycle market (figures from - www.emapbikes.com). These visually similar, undifferentiated ads (a selection illustrated in Figure 9.65), placed in close proximity to each other generally employ linguistic syntagms to outline factual information relative to supplier packages; information such as instructor tuition, motorcycle hire, trackside photography and video facilities, telephone and website addresses.

Figure 9.65: Track Day Supplier Advertisements in Motorcycle News

Source: Motorcycle News, September 1, 2004

Connotations of *racing* authenticity are signified only through reader subcultural understanding of the arbitrary linguistic syntagms employed. These include the names of venues listed (such as Brands Hatch, Oulton Park, Silverstone, Cadwell Park), the mentions of authentic instructors and tuition (ie. 'James Witham's Track Days) and the availability of hire motorcycles and other authentic equipment such as 'Bridgestone' tyres. Considering the emotionally charged, 'fantastic' nature of this kind of adventure experience, these ads are somewhat disappointing! However, increasingly sophisticated supplier websites certainly encourage consumer involvement in the emotive aspects of this kind of adventure experience.

Feeding the Adventure Fantasy

The fantastic, emotionally charged nature of motorcycle track day experience has clearly been recognised; consumers disengage from the 'reality' of everyday life for a day, to enter this 'fantasyland', where they perform in a kind of theatrical performance arena, a performance consistent with their racing heroes that ultimately brings them closer to their desired ideal, semiotic selves. Track day suppliers are providing increasingly sophisticated and interactive websites as a key communication tool to feed track day consumer adventure fantasies. Along with much informational discourse, sites include interactive membership clubs, chat forum facilities as well as testimonial sections and photograph galleries for participants to post their heroic experience stories and photographic evidence; to support their renewed self-identity and prescription to the ideals of their chosen motorcycle adventure subculture. Interactive websites also provide a great opportunity for the motorcyclist to indulge him/herself in a great deal of much loved subcultural communitas/brotherhood.

Supplier websites commonly include emotionally charged, highly iconic photographic imagery that captures the key elements that make up this kind of adventure fantasy. An example of this, Figure 9.66 illustrates photographic imagery used by Focused Events in its homepage:

Figure 9.66: Website Iconic Imagery and Adventure Fantasy

Source: www.focusedevents.com

Ideologically, these photographs alone communicate authentic skilled, exciting, heroic racetrack performance, of authentic machinery and kit, and of the communitas/brotherhood associated with this kind of adventure experience.

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At the time of primary research, Octagon Motorsports Ltd. produced a brochure that combines syntagms of linguistic signs with highly motivated iconic imagery to tap the emotive, fantastic and adventurous nature of racetrack driving experience. Octagon's Director described the core mythic message of 'living the dream' that this aims to signify:

135. Director – Octagon Motorsports

"... live the dream is a catch phrase of ours, 'live the dream, don't spectate, participate' you know, 'drive your dream, whatever your dream may be.'"

137. Director – Octagon Motorsports

"... you step outside your ordinary mundane life every now and then and do something different, because we all do lead fairly mundane lives don't we, I think I do, and every now and then I like to step outside of it, and dream a bit."

Particularly, the signs employed in the brochure draw connotations to *childhood fantasy*. The cover page consists of a collage of iconic photographs of children driving go-karts, toy cars and motorcycles (illustrated in Figure 9.67). These images, the style of which clearly reflects were taken in the past at a time when the potential target audience were themselves children, aim to invoke feelings and emotions of childhood nostalgia for the reader. They invoke feelings of *childhood freedom* and *happiness*, and allow the reader to remember and feel nostalgic about a time when one believed it was possible to 'be' and to 'do' anything in life, and to act out dreams and imaginary fantasies.

The iconic images are accompanied by one red box that includes the linguistic syntagm stating, *"You always wanted to drive…"* and continuing overleaf *"So drive."* Along with Octagon's brand logo and the names of a number of 'sacred' British racetracks, the combination of signs here anchors a meaning that Octagon provides driving packages at authentic racetracks to facilitate the fulfilment of childhood driving fantasies; thus Octagon provides the facility to make consumer driving fantasies a reality. This message is re-enforced throughout the brochure with syntagms of linguistic signs and further iconic imagery. Textual narrative includes:

"... turn dreams into memories that will stay with you as long as you live" (Octagon Motorsports brochure, 2002, p. 1)

"Whatever form your two or four-wheeled fantasies take, we can help you turn them into adrenalin pumping reality." (Octagon Motorsports brochure, 2002, p. 2)

Figure 9.67: Octagon Motorsports Ltd Brochure – Connotations of Childhood Fantasy

Source: Octagon Motorsports Brochure, 2002

To support the childhood fantasy theme, and relative to the car driving packages that Octagon offers, the brochure includes a double page iconic photograph of Jenson Button, the current Formula 1 British racing hero (illustrated in Figure 9.68). The image shows Jenson as a child, riding a go-kart and could easily be one of the photographs located on the brochure's cover. For Jenson, his childhood driving fantasy became a reality and this is reflected in his quote, displayed as textual narrative alongside the photograph:

"By the time I started karting at eight years old, I already knew I wanted to be a Formula 1 driver. My first drive at Silverstone in the 2000 British Grand Prix, in front of that unbelievable crowd, was the day it finally sank in that my dream had come true." (Octagon Motorsports brochure, 2002, p. 17)

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Figure 9.68: Octagon Motorsports Ltd Brochure – Jenson Button's Childhood Driving Fantasies

Source: Octagon Motorsports Brochure, 2002, pp. 16-17

Jenson noted that his childhood fantasy became a reality when he drove on the sacred ground of Silverstone racetrack. A message is clearly signified that 'wannabe' racetrack heroes can also fulfil their childhood racing dreams by racing in such contaminated venues and driving in the tyre tracks of their racing heroes; and this is facilitated through Octagon's driving packages. The following linguistic syntagms from the brochure support the theme of racing authenticity gained through driving in the tracks of one's racing heroes on such contaminated racetracks:

"Moss, Clark, Stewart, Mansell, Coulthard, Button [insert your name here]" (Octagon Motorsports brochure, 2002, p. 12)

"For anyone who has grown up with a passion for fast cars, squealing tyres and bumper-to-bumper action on the track, it's a thrill just to visit some of the most famous and historic race circuits in the world... We want you not just to breathe the same air as your racing heroes, but to follow in their tyre tracks – accelerating down the same straights, braking into the same bends. We want you to experience the same kind of exhilaration…" (Octagon Motorsports brochure, 2002, p. 17)

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The communications messages signified throughout Octagon's brochure also focus on the elements of adventure relative to the race driving packages that they offer. This is evident in the above quote, which talks of *thrill, acceleration, skilled heroic performance* and feelings of *exhilaration*. The section featuring the motorcycle track day packages that they offer includes a large double page, iconic action shot of a Ducati supersports motorcyclist, crouched down in a pose of knee-down, high speed, skilled riding performance (as illustrated in Figure 9.69).

Figure 9.69: Octagon Motorsports Ltd Brochure – Iconic Adventure Racetrack Imagery

Source: Octagon Motorsports Brochure, 2002, pp. 20-21

In the linguistic syntagm placed beside the track day participant's face, he reinforces the *performance skill* and *excitement* of the experience:

Octagon Motorcycle Track Day Participant
"Taking my Ducati around Silverstone – getting my knee down – was an amazing experience. The only downside, I think riding home is going to seem a bit tame." (Octagon Motorsports brochure, 2002, p. 20).

Further iconic imagery and linguistic syntagms support the adventurous nature of this kind of packaged experience. This includes both company and 'credible' customer narrative:

"... no speed cameras, no oncoming traffic. Just you and your car or bike, and an expert instructor on hand to help you explore the limits of its performance – and yours – on one of the worlds greatest race circuits..." (Octagon Motorsports brochure, 2002, p. 21)

"Totally high on adrenaline; my hands are still shaking..." (Octagon Motorsports brochure, 2002, p. 13)

"What a buzz. You can just go for it. You just feel invincible." (Octagon Motorsports brochure, 2002, p. 35)

Octagon sums up the *fantastic, adventurous* nature of its track day experiences in the following brochure narrative:

"For many of us, testing ourselves on a racing circuit is the ultimate personal challenge. And if that circuit happens to be one of the Homes of British Motorsport, a fantastic experience becomes simply unforgettable." (Octagon Motorsports brochure, 2002, p. 13)

9.6.2 Communicating the Packaged Adventure Fantasy

If one considers the extrinsic marketing communications messages surrounding other kinds of packaged motorcycle adventure experience, such as on and off-road touring/adventure-sports events/holidays, it is evident that suppliers are, like track day organisers, generating a discourse that represents the self-enhancing, *communitas* building, authentic, *adventurous* nature of the packages they offer. They are using a blend of signs to instil consumer trust in the controlled, *safety* elements of the package, whilst at the same time arousing consumer emotions for the *fantastic* and dream-fulfilling nature of the experience itself. This is certainly apparent if one considers communications discourse included in KTM's adventure tours website. It opens with a series of iconic photographs, illustrated in Figure 9.70.

Figure 9.70: KTM Web Page Iconic Imagery – Packaged Adventure Tours

Source: www.ktmadventuretours.at

The iconic images are combined with linguistic narrative that includes:

www.ktmadventuretours.at
"Adventure to the Max"

www.ktmadventuretours.at
"Our speciality is guided motorcycle trips. And so we've sought out the most beautiful on and off-road regions for our tours, from Scandinavia to South America. We ride in small groups where it's either delightfully dusty, wonderfully twisting, or both. So you can get to know a country, its people and the most magnificent trails in between… Our experienced tour guides, many of them former KTM factory riders, tailor the routes to your wishes, and above all, to your abilities… the most important thing is: we want to ride with you, ride some more and then ride a little further. Roaring through off-road terrain to your heart's content, enjoying the landscape and thereby learning this or that pointed out about how you can ride more safely and/or faster."

The combination of signs employed in the iconic images along with the associated linguistic web page narrative, anchor a number of communications messages. The three highly motivated iconic images feature groups of KTM adventure-sports motorcyclists, fully clad in off-road rider clothing and equipment, riding KTM motorcycles on off-road terrain. More than this, these 'fantastic' images feature a group of riders sharing a skilful riding performance spectacle, and a bond of common, communitas building, riding experience in extremes of off-road terrain associated

with the natural environment. The adventurous nature of KTM adventure tours is further signified by the first statement of linguistic text that states, *"Adventure to the Max."* The textual narrative goes on to describe the wide range of exotic countries, terrains and cultures experienced by involvement in this sort of adventure package.

The role of KTM's 'expert' guides in facilitating the adventure package is also signified. The textual narrative stresses the authenticity of these highly skilled role models, *"many of them former KTM factory (sponsored off-road racing) riders,"* and highlights their function as enthusiastic riding companions prepared to share communitas and credible performance skills advice (in this case relative to safety and speed) with participants. The iconic photographs feature tour guides performing this role. The text *"we want to ride with you, ride some more and then ride a little further"* signifies KTMs enthusiasm to share riding experience and a common bond of communitas with participants; illustrating a desire for companionship between participants and guides such as that highlighted by Arnould and Price (1993).

Overall, KTMs ideological message is that it provides 'fantastic', skilled, off-road, communitas building, self-fulfilling, controlled ('safe') packaged adventure experience for 'wannabe' adventurers.

Aprilia's current homepage opens with an attention grabbing flash image box that states *"Aprilia Adventure Raids."* Clicking on this box activates a number of 'fantastic' iconic images of 'Aprilia Adventure Raid' experiences, including those illustrated in Figure 9.71.

Linguistic narrative placed with the images includes:

www.aprilia.com
"The great adventure is back!... to offer the bike trip you are dreaming! Get on the bike with us! New targets, fresh routes and passionate travel mates are waiting for you! In the last two years, lots of bikers like you have discovered the Aprilia Adventure Raids as an ideal proposal to live an extraordinary riding and life experience: take a look at the archive area and find out all the tales of the trips."

Figure 9.71: Web Page Iconic Imagery – Aprilia 'Adventure Raids'

Source: www.aprilia.com

Similar to KTM's packaged adventure experience web page discourse, the combination of iconic and linguistic signs employed here creates a communications discourse of 'fantastic', shared (communitas), skilled, supported and packaged (safe) adventure experience. The highly motivated images use fantasy appeal to connote the romantic and extreme adventurous nature of Aprilia's range of on and off-road riding packages. This is achieved through use of rich, deep orange (sunset-like), fantasy colours that feature riding experience on dramatic environmental landscapes (particularly here desert landscapes), and experience of exotic cultures, illustrated with the Bedouin featured, sitting on the desert sand.

The *adventurous* nature of Aprilia packaged riding experience is supported with the first sentence of textual narrative stating, *"The great adventure is back… to offer the bike trip you are dreaming!"* Continuing with the dreamlike, fantasy appeal, Aprilia connects its packaged experiences with ones' desire for self-enriching adventure experiences consistent with the ideal self. The linguistic text continues, *"lots of bikers … have discovered the Aprilia Adventure Raids as an ideal proposal to live an extraordinary riding and life experience."* It introduces the 'archive area' where consumers can submit their post-experience, renewed, and authentic adventure-self narratives.

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Communitas is signified through the photographic images, which clearly feature groups of motorcyclists riding together, sharing the performance experience. The textual narrative invites consumers to ride with *"passionate travel mates."* It also invites riders to choose to ride with Aprilia, the tour supplier, by stating *"Get on the bike with us."* Aprilia is inviting consumers to share the experience with its team, and is also signifying its role in facilitating the adventure package. The support structure put in place by Aprilia to increase the chances of *'safe – adventure'* is evident if one considers the lower photograph of Figure 9.71; the support vehicles can be spotted in the background.

As part of is customer involvement/activity programme, BMW Motorrad has a well-established base for offering consumers packaged adventure experiences. Through 'World of BMW' (its customer involvement programme), it offers a wide range of packages from 'speedy' track day events, to short and long haul, road going tours and off-road 'GS' tours and training packages. It even offers a package to its annual BMW Motorrad Biker Meeting in Germany, where the key focus for participants is involvement in BMW subcultural communitas:

www.worldofbmw.com
"Imagine a stunning location, long winding roads, thousands of motorcyclists, the latest bikes and displays, and a beer tent that rivals the Oktoberfest. That's the BMW Motorrad Biker Meeting… For the past five years, tens of thousands of bikers have descended on the small and idyllic location of Garmisch in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps in the first weekend of July to celebrate the annual BMW Motorrad Biker Meeting…"

Communications discourse surrounding its packaged adventure experiences again combines iconic and linguistic signs to generate a discourse of packaged, fantasy adventure experience. World of BMW particularly focuses on the myth of *freedom* in its web page communications discourse. This is evident in the following syntagm, which reflects the role of both the motorcycle and the tour operator in providing worldwide adventure experiences:

www.worldofbmw.com/travel/tours

"Ride the new world… Pack the panniers, open the garage door and start your freedom machine. The world is waiting… experience it… the motorcycle tour programme has seen adventurous motorcyclists visit nineteen countries in all parts of the world."

On entering the 'GS on tour' section of BMWs online GS Magazine (available on www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk), the four brightly coloured, highly iconic images, illustrated in Figure 9.72, consecutively flash up, filling the screen.

Figure 9.72: Myths and BMW GS Tour Experience

Source: www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk/gsworld/gsontour

These images are particularly effective because they work directly at an ideological level, pinpointing and encapsulating the core-mythic elements that BMW signifies GS ownership and riding experience is all about; the same key elements used for the construction and signification of BMW GS brand personality (seen in Section 9.5.2). Each mythic element, '*adventure'*, '*freedom'*, '*dreaming'* and '*wanderlust'* is placed in a separate box, and signified by bold, linguistic text in combination with a selection

of highly emotive iconic images that represent that particular myth relative to BMW GS ownership and riding experience.

The '*adventure*' box includes images that connote the *performance spectacle, skill* and *mastery* of off-road and track riding GS experience. Also signified are the *enjoyment, satisfaction* and *achievement* of reaching the destination and *communitas* of sharing the experience with others. The '*freedom*' box features a single motorcyclist riding alone on a wide, flat expanse of off-road terrain. The '*dreaming*' box uses images that capture the romantic and 'fantastic' nature of GS adventure riding experience that appeals to the motorcyclists' ideal, desired-self. Images feature a self-sufficient lone rider, at one with the natural environment, skilfully performing on off-road terrain and achieving his performance goal, sitting alongside his GS motorcycle at the peak of the mountain range, admiring the dramatic, fantastic, natural mountain scene around him. The '*wanderlust*' box includes images that connote the *adventure* to be found in exploration of exotic locations and cultures. The overall message is signified that through ownership of a BMW GS motorcycle and involvement in BMW facilitated packaged adventure experience.

9.7 Significance of the Retail Outlet

The role of the motorcycle related retail outlet as more than merely a product distribution channel member was identified in Section 8.3.1, where its significance as a venue for social gathering, narrative exchange and subcultural role authentication was identified. The days of the greasy, back street, biker shop are slowly giving way to more customer-friendly, increasingly 'sacred' venues where customers meet to enjoy shared subcultural ideology, gaining role contamination and a sense of *communitas* from each other, and from 'expert' members of staff. The significance of the retail outlet in contributing to the total leisure experience and specifically, in generating a narrative of 'extraordinary experience' relative to the Great Outdoors was noted previously (in Section 5.4.1) by Featherstone (1991), Arnould and Price (1993) and Varley and Crowther (1998).

For manufacturers and resellers alike, the retail outlet represents a point in time and space where the elements of mass marketing can be orchestrated to leverage a brand's values, to signify a brand's identity (noted by Gordon and Valentine, 1996). Retail outlets carry cultural meanings that are communicated through semiotics of design and merchandising, and it is important to set up a discourse aura where a brand can clearly communicate it's positioning and separate itself from mass competitors. For retail outlets selling products for the Great Outdoors, a discourse aura carrying myths relative to *adventure* experience is constructed and signified particularly through sources that include point-of-sale displays, merchandise assortment and sales staff narrative (noted by Varley and Crowther, 1998). It is possible to explore the role and effectiveness of these tools, employed in motorcycle related retail outlets, for the generation, purveyance and signification of brand, and ultimately subcultural mythic meaning and identity.

9.7.1 Sales Staff

The significance of retail outlet sales staff as credible role models for enacting subcultural narratives, generating *communitas* with, and contaminating customers with subcultural role authenticity has been recognised. But the role of the motorcycle related retail outlet salesperson is more than this. Sales staff serve as a very powerful tool for communicating messages relative to brand discourse and identity, and for guiding customers in their purchase decisions. As noted by a member of staff at a retail outlet and several consumer interviewee respondents, sales staff narrative and advice plays a highly significant role in influencing consumer purchase decisions:

Retail Outlet Salesperson (informal interview at retail outlet site)
"I think it's down to the guys that are working in the stores (key influencer in consumer purchase decisions), more than anything else."

279. Chris
"… the first thing I'll do is I'll go straight behind the counter and ask someone… the people behind the counter tend to be knowledgeable…"

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554. Helen

"… I believe in everything that you can't get a better impression of things than people who actually use them. I mean Lisa, who we bought the helmets off in *** (retail outlet name), she says, 'oh, I wouldn't ever wear anything else,' she says, 'I wouldn't put anything else on my head'… she's superb, she's brilliant…"

If the consumer perceives a salesperson to be 'authentic' and 'credible' then he/she is likely to perceive that person's narrative and advice regarding brand choices and brand discourse as authentic and credible. Consumer interviewee respondents in the study identified a number of factors that they believe attribute sales staff with a status of authenticity/credibility. Firstly, they must be fellow members (brothers), who prescribe to the ideology of dominant motorcycle subcultures, and who have a genuine passion for motorcycle experience, and associated motorcycle brands:

440. Adam

"They do tend to go into that line of business because they like motorcycles and because they like bikers… So, I think you are off to a good start really, you've more chance of having an affinity with someone who works in a bike shop than someone who works in Debenhams."

385. Tracey

"… I just find them so friendly… Because there just seems to be that something about bikes that's different doesn't there."

289. Chris

"… it's interesting that the culture seems to pervade inside the store… the impression I got at *** (retail outlet name) was that the people behind the counter were behind the counter not because they were looking for a job, you know what I mean. They were behind the counter because they were interested in biking… I think there's certainly a lot less… involved in bike retailing that is about selling, it's about communicating and empathy really, and I guess I kind of like that."

As noted by Chris, authentic retail outlet staff contribute to the enactment of dominant subcultural ideology that pervades inside the store. Respondents suggested that

authentic staff, who share a genuine passion for motorcycling appear not to be primarily outwardly concerned with 'making a sale', but with developing friendly relationships with customers, communicating and empathising with them and recommending brands that signify a whole 'package' representing subcultural ideology:

433. Tom

"There's a difference between, there's a salesman, and then there's a guy that, you know, rides bikes and sells them. I think you can't beat, the salesman who is experienced in riding a bike, rather than someone who's just, you know, come in and been told, 'right, you know, this is what we want you to sell'..."

269. John

"Them being interested in you, sharing the same passion that you've got, and they're not just interested in selling another piece of metal..."

364. Bill

"I find them so much better than car dealers. I've bought new cars regularly now for the last thirty years and I find that... there's so much difference between going in and buying a bike and buying a car. There's a warmth and friendliness more in the bikes that you don't get with the car. The car salesman wants to sell you a car, the bike salesman wants to sell you more the whole package"

Respondents noted that their purchase decisions are particularly influenced by advice and recommendations made by sales staff who they respect as well experienced, knowledgeable, 'expert' role models:

291. Chris

"... the fact is that they know what they're talking about, they've been there, they know what they're doing... in general bike retailers give good service because they like what they're doing."

Tom enthusiastically described the member of staff who influenced him when purchasing his motorcycle clothing:

425. Tom

"He's a fantastic rider, racer, track day, oh he's so fast, and he's very knowledgeable you can tell…"

Finally, respondents noted an amount of 'friendliness' common to motorcycle subcultures that they expect from credible sales staff, a friendliness that contributes to their perceptions of retail outlet service quality:

258. Angela

"… the thing about biking is that everybody is normally so friendly and helpful, so the staff's normally pretty much the same as well…"

435. Tom

"… I tend to use places where I'll get good service, where they're friendly and where they're knowledgeable…"

Perceived as 'authentic' and 'credible' members of motorcycle subcultures, sales staff achieve a recognised status and there are signifying values for the brands that they recommend. Effectively, through their recommendations, they contaminate brands with associated 'authenticity' and 'credibility' with regards to both intrinsic and extrinsic brand qualities. For product manufacturers, positive sales staff recommendation provides a powerful tool for signifying brand discourse and influencing consumers in their purchase decisions.

In reality, sales staff are 'people' and the level of service quality that they provide in relation to motorcycle related retail outlets can vary. They constitute the 'face' of the outlet and if consumers perceive them as unapproachable, unfriendly, or unauthentic, there are potential negative consequences for brand recommendations and the signification of brand personality. A number of consumer interviewee respondents were very vocal about their negative retail outlet experiences where they perceived the sales staff as uninterested or 'false':

590. Adam

"I just found that I hated the shop, we went into the Harley dealership at *** and I thought it was stand offish…"

595. Kirstie

"… it seems to be false…"

267. John

"They vary a lot, from being extremely good and helpful, they want to look after you as a customer to… where you're just a number and they couldn't care less. I had a bad experience… at a company I went to. The salesman that I initially dealt with, seemed to be very friendly, but then he had to refer it to somebody higher up… the chap higher up basically didn't give me the time of day. So I decided I wouldn't deal with that company…"

Even in retail outlets where sales staff are well-trained, enthusiastic, experienced and passionate about motorcycles and involvement in motorcycle subcultures, manufacturers have to battle hard with the barrage of competing products/brands that the retailers offer; these brands create noise in the communications channel, filtering, distorting, or even blocking brand signification that the consumer receives. Sales staff are more likely to recommend products/brands that they personally have an affinity with and, as observed a number of times during retail outlet observation, they occasionally openly degrade those products that they have sent to the penalty box marked 'loser.' As such as powerful communications tool this has dire consequences for the manufacturer as it blocks, or distorts the signification of brand personality that the manufacturer has worked so hard to create. A number of manufacturers do implement rigorous training schemes that aim to instil retail outlet staff with positive, desired signifying discourse relative to their brands.

9.7.2 Store Design, Merchandise Assortment and Point-of-Sale Displays

As motorcycle related retail outlets are becoming more customer oriented, friendly, social venues, this is reflected in outlet store design. Recognising the importance of motorcyclists subcultural communitas needs, retailers are increasingly attempting to include their 'sacred' venues in the motorcyclists' social circuit.   Stores are increasingly designed with physical facilities such as seating areas, coffee machines, cafes, bike magazines and clean customer toilet facilities.   Consumer respondents showed a positive response when probed about retail outlet store design:

376. Bill
"… Well I think they've come on a lot. I think the newer showrooms are getting better in that you've got more access to look at the bikes in a less crowded space, rather than having them all just jammed together… I think they have, certainly over recent years cottoned on to the fact that you're not just buying the bike but you want to buy lots of things that go with it…"

439. Tom
"... on the whole yeah, they're very good."

268. Katie
"Yeah, again that's getting a lot better. I mean, bike shops used to be sort of little dusty back street things that were crammed in so you couldn't move and there are still some like that, absolutely crammed where you can't move and I think this sort of, the more modern idea, where you can sit down and have a cuppa, where you can look at all the latest bikes, where you can go on test rides and that sort of thing, where you're kind of welcomed in no matter what you're expecting to buy, is really important. Again I think that's part of a lifestyle thing…I know a lot of people that come here (retail outlet) on a Saturday, they're not gonna buy anything, they just come here to talk to people, you know and it's a kind of social thing. And I think that's important that it's gotta be part of the biker's social circle as well."

Katie went on to describe the response of motorcycle related retail outlets to general lifestyle trends, and to consumer involvement in motorcycle subcultures as a social and lifestyle choice:

276. Katie

"I think it is, you know, the fact that it's open sort of, weekends, Sundays, reasonably late in the week, it's gotta fit in with people's lifestyles hasn't it… It accepts the fact that you might ride a bike as a social and lifestyle choice, and that you might want a bit more of a social atmosphere when you go to buy your bike and buy your bits and your helmet and what have you. So I think it has, it's kind of moved along with that."

But when probed specifically about merchandise assortment and point-of-sale display, respondents admitted to feeling an amount of confusion whilst interacting with products in the store:

439. Tom

"… *** (retail outlet name) can be a bit confusing because there's so many clothes and different sorts and… it's quite confusing I think…"

277. John

"…if you're looking for a particular manufacturer because you like that manufacturer, you have to go all over the place…"

Retail outlets are often set up by enthusiastic motorcyclists who have a passion and a great knowledge of motorcycling, but not a great idea about the importance of specialist semiotics of design and merchandising for effective signification of brand discourse, identity and competitor differentiation. This was a point strongly noted by company interviewees:

136. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager

"…I think we have to understand the retail limitations that our bike dealers have, because, if you speak to most of them, they'll tell you 'I became a motorcycle dealer because I'm interested in bikes, not because I like the clothing' (laughing)…"

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138. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager

"Because most of the brand areas, most of the investment that are in motorcycle dealers is put in by the distributor or the brand. Our units are put in at our cost, so we will say 'right we are going to do this,' and… because I think most of the dealers don't yet see brand identity, or their retail space as being key at the moment. I think that's only because there are limitations to them as retailers."

260. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"…I've gotta say… the in store presentation is really quite pathetic, they're in the Dark Ages when it comes to making the image look right in the shop…you'll find that instead of being brand orientated, which it's my personal belief that shops should be, they're product orientated. So, for example, if you're looking for a leather jacket, they will put all the brands together in one corner, of leather jackets. Whereas if you go to a department store and you walk into a men's fashion part, you will see all the Calvin Klein together, you will see all the Armani stuff put together. And that to me is the correct way to merchandise it… they're (motorcycle retail outlets) kind of stuck in the Dark Ages…"

By displaying products by product category (as illustrated in Figure 9.73), brands become mixed up and the opportunity for creating and signifying an effective, consistent brand discourse aura is diffused. Phoenix Distribution's Commercial Director appeared to be very frustrated by this lost communications opportunity:

262. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"It's really sad because they haven't cottoned on to the need for brands at all… and yet everybody buys everything by brand. You know, even down to your washing machine… but I've found that in general in motorcycling, it is quite slow to change. You know a lot of things that have been in the sports arena for a long time, you know, kind of drift very slowly into motorcycling, which is a shame…

Figure 9.73: Retail Outlet – Merchandise Display by Product Category

Product manufacturers appear to be much more aware of the significance of careful and creative merchandise assortment and point-of-sale displays for the construction and signification of brand discourse and identity. In an attempt to push their branding strategies into stores, they themselves provide retail outlets with carefully designed, brand labelled display units for their products that aim to draw consumer attention to them and create a much desired brand discourse aura. Triumph's Clothing and Merchandise Manager described the company's 'eye-catching,' 'yellow' retail units that aim to add value to the 'stylish,' but 'functional' Triumph clothing brand:

124. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"Point-of-sale displays, well we think that's pretty important… we try and put our retail units in, cause we think that presentation of a product on the hanger is almost as important as it is when it's on the customer. Because if it doesn't look good in the retail environment, probably the customer's not going to go and touch it."

126. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"I think first of all, well… the first impact, say with our units is that we've done them in yellow, they're really eye catching and they really reflect the light. So that all the product, comes very much to the forefront, so you can really notice this area. I would hope that they would think it's stylish, I would hope that they wouldn't think it's too fashionable, and I'd hope that the functional element of it comes across very well…"

Phoenix Distribution's Commercial Director described their recent introduction of wooden display stands and hangers (illustrated in Figure 9.74), which aim to differentiate the Belstaff brand from competitor's:

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260. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"We've only recently had, the wooden hangers and stands came in, in November and they've made a significant difference to the view because, nobody else has got a wooden hanger for a start, so that immediately a big impact. Most of the shops have got metal fixtures and fittings so that immediately makes it look different. So that's good because it's standing out…"

Figure 9.74: Wooden Display and the Belstaff Brand

When probed specifically about the semiotic meaning behind their choice of wood, the Commercial Director described its connotations relative to the *natural environment,* connotations of *freedom* for riding out in the open elements that is consistent with Belstaff's brand repositioning (described in Section 9.4.2) as the 'ultimate adventure brand.' She then went on to describe the design features of a particularly sophisticated glove stand (illustrated in Figure 9.75) that was designed to add value to a 'unique' brand, and constructed out of ceramic coated metal with a jagged edge to signify the glove's functional tough and abrasion resistant intrinsic qualities:

264. Sarah

"… That was to encourage the sales of a very expensive glove, or a perceived very expensive glove. I mean one hundred pounds is quite a lot for a pair of gloves, and so

therefore you've got to get the uniqueness of that product across, and sometimes you have to do something a bit special and that in-store merchandising stand needed to fit with what the glove was. So the ceramic coating, the fact that it was made out of metal meant that it was substantial, you know that it was abrasion resistant, that it was tough. The fact that it had a jagged edge suggested that it was quite tough..."

Figure 9.75: Belstaff Glove Stand – Signifying Intrinsic Brand Attributes

For all their efforts and best intentions, the effectiveness of merchandise assortment and point-of-sale displays in motorcycle related retail outlets for the signification of brand identity and brand differentiation is currently very limited. It is often left to manufacturer salespeople to set up displays in retail outlets and, according to Phoenix's Commercial Director, they do not recognise the significance value of careful brand display:

268. Sarah

"... I mean we don't have a full-time merchandiser to go and look after the stores, we're very reliant on the salesmen to go in and do the job, when non of them are merchandising trained and they wouldn't necessarily recognise the value of why its so important to have those things looking like that..."

During retail outlet observation, manufacturer's branded display units were regularly seen holding a range of other manufacturer's products. If one looks closely at the right hand side image of Figure 9.73, a Frank Thomas branded boot stand can be

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spotted displaying, amongst others, Sidi branded boots! Noted above, this reflects the retailers' lack of understanding with regards to the significance of creating unique brand discourse auras. Discussing this, Lloyd Lifestyle's marketing manager contended that it is not possible for the manufacturer to 'police' all of these units:

149. Lloyd Lifestyle – Marketing Manager
"We do certain shop fittings, which is obviously for the display of our goods… Obviously the display unit is for our gear.. you can't police them all, I'm sure there's other products on your fittings, but what can you do? … and it's down to like I say our salesmen are there to help the dealer to go and display stuff the best way he can."

Again, Lloyd Lifestyle relies on salespeople rather than merchandising specialists to set up, or provide advice to retailers in setting up display.

The evidence shows that with regard to merchandise assortment and display, specialist motorcycle related retailers are currently not recognising the key signifying opportunities to be gained from the creation of brand discourse auras; notably, this represents a commercial opportunity.

Swing Tickets – The Silent Salesperson

A key element of packaging that manufacturers of motorcycle clothing and equipment products believe carry highly significant brand communication opportunities are swing tickets. Company interview respondents recognised this:

122. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"… We're looking to redesign all our swing tickets because we think as a silent salesman it's very important…"

278. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"Freda (Product Design Manager) states that the more swing tickets that you put on a product, the more they're (consumers) likely to look at yours…"

Swing tickets are attached to manufacturers brands and represent a great signifying opportunity to communicate that product/brand's intrinsic and extrinsic qualities and personality. Attached in an visually eye-catching position at the front of garments (as illustrated in Figure 9.76), multiple tickets, labels, stickers, badges and leaflets invite the consumer to directly interact with that product/brand and consume its identity.

Figure 9.76: Swing Tickets – Eye-Catching Positioning

Swing tickets commonly include a combination of iconic, graphic and linguistic signs to signify a product's detailed intrinsic features; generally focusing on *technologically advanced,* licensed materials, leather and armour for *comfort, safety* and *protection*. The labels provided in Figure 9.77, which belong to an 'Akito' branded touring motorcycle jacket illustrate this.

Company interview respondents went on to describe the importance of intrinsic product features signified through their swing tickets:

122. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"... (referring to new swing tickets) we will have a lot more of our features on there, and we'll do that graphically and in text as well..."

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278. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director

"… we tend to have wads and wads and wads of tickets explaining what the fabric is, what this does… you know… and in fact we're taking it much further than that in that the swing ticket now is going to be actually a big parcel, literally a parcel. And on the front of it it's gonna have a picture that actually describes every feature that's on it…"

Figure 9.77: Swing Tickets Signifying 'Akito' Intrinsic Brand Functionality

Through creative use of swing ticket design, manufacturers aim to capture consumer attention and ensure signification of desired product discourse that possibly cannot be guaranteed from retail outlet sales staff narrative. Swing tickets also aim to involve consumers in the discourse of a brand's extrinsic identity. Iconic imagery and graphic brand logos do this as well as linguistic narrative describing a brand's identity, heritage, company mission and increasingly, company websites to encourage further consumer interaction with the company and brand. Brand stickers are commonly included in swing ticket packages, and are clear labels of extrinsic brand identity. When picked up and used by customers, they ultimately contribute to the construction and signification of one's own motorcyclist self-identity.

Interview respondents from Triumph and Phoenix Distribution described the importance of swing ticket design to encourage consumer awareness of, and involvement in the company's total extrinsic brand personality:

122. Triumph – Clothing and Merchandise Manager
"… and we're also gonna look to do things like doing a company mission statement within it, to give some background to who we are and to build the brand in the customer's mind when they're looking at the product…"

278. Phoenix Distribution – Commercial Director
"… Then when you turn it over it's the old Belstaff picture, and with a Perspex sticky label which you peel off, and then you open it up like a flower, it opens up like a flower and then inside it says 'thank you for buying Belstaff' and it tells you a bit about the history… and they can join the Belstaff Club on the email so we will contact them then…"

9.8   Chapter Summary

This chapter has focused on the role and significance of motorcycle related manufacturers, service suppliers and marketers in contributing to the meaningful world of motorcyclist adventure subcultural consumption. Recognising the strong interrelatedness that exists between brands, brand communications, culture and the consumer (identified by Alexander, 1999), it was possible to explore manufacturer/supplier contribution to, and purveyance of meaningful cultural messages within this subculture, through the construction and signification of brand personality. It became evident that motorcycle related manufacturers' brands play a key-influencing role in the purveyance of subcultural meaning/messages, and in constructing the categories of motorcycling subculture.

Investigation focused on three specific, diverse motorcycle market sectors (namely, supersports, touring and adventure-sports) as well as the configuration of packaged motorcycle adventure experiences, to identify, illustrate and explore the key subcultural myths/communication codes that drive the development/communication

of brand personality. Specifically, the role of manufacturers and packaged adventure motorcycle experience suppliers in picking up myths/communication codes from motorcycle subcultures, from other sports subcultures and from wider popular culture, and incorporating them into the intrinsic and extrinsic design/signification of brand personality was investigated.

The central role of motorcycle related manufacturers in constructing categories of motorcycle subculture and in purveying subcultural meaning was highlighted in analysis of the construction/signification of brand identity in the supersports market sector. Manufacturers' involvement with professional racing team/racer sponsorship not only contributed to the inception of this market sector, but today, contaminates their brands with technologically innovative, performance capable, heroic, adventure racing authenticity, desired by the highly discerning, fashion-conscious, 'affluent' supersports rider. Through the intrinsic and extrinsic design and communication of the constellations of products that they offer, manufacturers effectively build and transfer authentic racing subcultural imagery/identity from the professional racing scene to the consumer; thus, they 'commodify' professional racetrack experience.

Technologically innovative motorcycle design in the supersports sector was noted to reflect the wider European cultural design trend towards sporty, aerodynamically shaped products. More than this, technologically innovative motorcycle, clothing and equipment design was found to have cascaded into other motorcycle market sectors. Certainly, whether racetrack inspired or not, manufacturers from across the range of market sectors studied, use technological innovation as a communication code to signify the intrinsic performance capabilities of their motorcycles, and the comfort, safety, and protection features of their clothing and equipment products, that offer consumers 'safe – adventure' and generate consumer trust in successful motorcycle adventure performance outcomes.

A number of common, key subcultural myths/communication codes were identified that are integrated into the construction/signification of extrinsic brand personality across the range of market sectors studied; namely these are: adventure, freedom, masculinity, power and strength. Adventure and freedom are, of course, the key overarching myths that drive consumer involvement in motorcycle activity and its

associated subculture. Extrinsic brand personality built on masculinity, power and strength not only drives consumer trust in a product's intrinsic performance, safety and protection capabilities, but it is commonly used by manufacturer's to attribute their brands with a personality that reflects residual outlaw/bad boy mythology (i.e. the Kawasaki Ninja brand).

Analysis of manufacturer construction/signification of brand personality within the touring market sector revealed the power of manufacturers/marketers in purveying cultural messages through their brands. Recognising the need of the diverse range of touring motorcyclists for 'real' motorcycling experience that allows them to strive towards the ideologies of travel, freedom of travel and touring adventure, manufacturers claim to produce technologically innovative, practical brands for a comfortable, luxurious, smooth, powerful, safe and protective ride. They exploit 'subtle' extrinsic discourse that reflects dominant touring ideologies, and connotes the kind of luxury, 'regality' and sophistication associated with 'living life to the fullest.' Functional and stylistic design attributes included in touring motorcycle clothing and equipment brands were noted to be influenced by highly performance capable intrinsic attributes included in the design of other high-risk adventure sports brands, and in the 'subtle' stylistic, fashion-conscious design included in other sports brands and popular high-street fashion discourse.

Focusing on the emergent adventure-sports market sector, it was possible to highlight the significance of motorcycle related manufacturers in responding to wider popular cultural trends along with changing subcultural trends, to successfully turn these into commercial opportunities through the creation of a new market sector (category of motorcyclist subcultural consumption). Recognising consumer desire for involvement in adventure experience, and associated lifestyles and identities, it was found that manufacturers are building/signifying adventure-sports brands that create a clear and unequivocal semiotic connection between motorcycling involvement and adventure. They are increasingly developing eye-catching, fashion conscious codes of products that drive consumer brand discrimination, and 'commodify' adventure experience. Consumer ownership, use and symbolic display of these brands spells out a motorcyclist self-identity that says, 'I'm an authentic adventurer.'

This is achieved through the development of brand personality that combines key myths/communication codes of the touring sector with those of off-road, enduro/trails motorcycling. The outcome, manufacturers claim, is technologically advanced, versatile, 'all-rounder' products with extrinsic personality that signifies travel and freedom of travel of touring, combined with off-road adventure. It was found that brand communications discourse widely employs fantasy/dreamlike appeal that focuses on extremes of off-road adventure motorcycle experience to appeal to the aspirations and emotive levels of consumers' desired 'adventure' self-identity. Through extrinsic brand development, manufacturers are effectively making tangible, and bringing highly skilled physical, and intense adventure experience to a broad customer base.

The significance of BMW, with its GS brand, as a contributor to the adventure-sports subcultural category was highlighted; particularly it's highly sophisticated marketing strategies that included celebrity sponsorship/product endorsement of the all-influencing Long Way Round adventure, and its continued comprehensive interactive customer activity programme. It was found that motorcycle related manufacturers in general, are increasingly developing customer adventure lifestyle programmes that include sophisticated, interactive web pages. In a two way relationship, these programmes encourage customer involvement in the ideologies of their chosen motorcycle adventure subcultures, with opportunities for 'virtual' adventure consumption and communitas associated with involvement in 'brand communities.' For the manufacturer, they provide opportunity to gather intelligent (subcultural) customer information to integrate into future design of brand attributes/personality, as well as commercial advantage gained from customer retention and brand loyalty.

It was identified that specialist suppliers and increasingly, manufacturers are offering fully configured 'parcels' of packaged adventure experience for consumers desiring to convert adventure fantasies into reality. These packages provide *'safe – adventure'*, allowing participants to experience adventure fantasies associated with the ideologies of their chosen subcultural riding experience, whilst putting in place a physical and human support structure to facilitate successful outcomes, and reduce physical and psychological risks of adventure breakdown. Packages are configured to represent/purvey key subcultural myths/communication codes (i.e. motorcycle racing

track day packages configured to represent 'heroic' racing authenticity and heritage, and safety), and wrapped in a communications discourse that employs a blend of signs to instil consumer trust in the controlled, safety elements of the package, whilst arousing emotions for the fantastic, romantic, dream-fulfilling, communitas building, adventurous nature of the experience.

Finally, the significance of the motorcycle retail outlet in carrying subcultural messages, and in orchestrating the elements of mass marketing to leverage a brand's values and signify its identity was considered. It was found that through increasingly customer friendly store design, and the employment of 'credible' and 'authentic' motorcyclist staff, outlets are becoming increasingly important, and 'sacred' venues for social motorcyclist consumption (communitas). Sales staff, who represent the 'face' of the retail outlet, provide a very powerful tool for communicating (either positive or negative) messages relative to brand discourse and identity, and for guiding customers in their purchase decisions.

Analysis revealed a lack of retailer awareness of the importance of specialist semiotics of design and merchandising for effective signification of brand discourse, identity and differentiation. They showed no appreciation of the significance of creating in-store 'brand discourse auras'. Manufacturers currently use swing tickets as a 'silent salesperson' to encourage customer involvement/attention with their products, and to signify the key subcultural myths that surround their brands.

Figure 9.78 provides a detailed summary of the key findings from this chapter.

Figure 9.78: Signification and Manufacturer/Supplier Construction of Motorcycle Related Brand Personality

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Supersports Brands

Commodifying the racetrack experience

Intrinsic Motorcycle Development:
Built on **technological innovation** and **performance capabilities** - Influenced by professional racing scene – technical expertise from rider/team sponsorship
Production bikes replicate professional racing bikes
Communications discourse: Signifies **technical racing** authenticity
Technological innovation influences and cascades into other motorcycle market sectors
Design reflecting wider European trend towards sporty, aerodynamically shaped products

Extrinsic Motorcycle Development:
Built on **racing and speed** for authentic, fashion conscious consumer identity construction
Reflects consumer desire to be 'associated with the winners'
Extrinsic motorcycle design imitates that of professional sponsored racing teams/riders (**racing heroes**)
Communications discourse: Professional racing rider/team sponsorship key to signifying messages of authentic **racing** brand identity
Further key myths employed in extrinsic motorcycle design = **freedom, masculinity, strength** and **power**

Intrinsic Clothing and Equipment Development:
Spanning all motorcycle market sectors, brands built to resolve cultural contradiction and provide **'safe – adventure'**
Focus on **technological innovation** for **comfort**, **safety** and **protection**. Innovation inspired by professional racing scene – materials, armour
Intrinsic attributes for 'extrinsic purposes' – highly visible, bulky body armour for symbolic signification of authentic subcultural **racing** motorcyclist role identity

Extrinsic Clothing and Equipment Development:
Maximum visual impact, 'loud and proud' extrinsic styling to provide syntagms of props that make up full code of fashion conscious, authentic **racing** consumer identity
Communications Discourse: Heavy use of racing rider sponsorship for signification of authentic **racing** identity
Advertising signifies emotive messages of **racing and speed** and authentic **racing** motorcyclist identity, combined with rational messages of **safety, life** and **success**. Further myths employed for extrinsic development – **freedom, masculinity, power** and **strength**

Touring Brands

'More about dirty bikes than clean ones!'

Intrinsic Brand Development:
Motorcycles:
Technological innovation combined with **practical features** for highly **performance capable, comfortable, 'luxurious', smooth, powerful, safe** and **protective** ride over long, road-going distances.
Clothing and Equipment:
Technological innovation for **comfort, safety** and **protection (safe-adventure)**
Technically advanced, highly performance capable licensed textile fabrics
Communications Discourse: focus on linguistic syntagms and graphic detail to signify intrinsic product benefits, instilling consumer confidence to ride towards ideologies of **adventure, travel** and **freedom** of the open road
Crossover and influence of intrinsic design features from other high-risk adventure performance sports (focusing on **'safe – adventure'**)

Extrinsic Brand Development:
More subtle than supersports brands but 'consumers do really care what it looks like!'
Extrinsic design to subtly and succinctly reflect dominant touring ideologies
Motorcycles:
Names to reflect **travel** and **freedom of travel** connotations as well as **luxury, power, strength** and **success**.
Communications discourse: signifies **comfort, luxury, sophistication, 'regality'**, allowing rider to 'live life to the fullest'
Clothing and Equipment:
Names connote intrinsic product features as well as extrinsic brand identity relative to mythic values of **travel** and **freedom of travel** and **adventure**
Stylistic influence of other sports brands for **adventure** look, and influence of popular fashion discourse

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Red Text = Communication Codes/Myths

Adventure-Sports Brands

Commodifying adventure experience

Intrinsic Brand Development:
Motorcycles:
Versatility – designed to be tough, reliable, all-rounder machines capable of performing on any surface or terrain – 'As good in Paris as it is in Dakar'
Technological innovation – off-road trail/enduro innovation combined with **safety, protection** and ergonomic design (**comfort**) features specific to touring motorcycle innovation
Communications Discourse: Links the functionality of the machines with their capability to facilitate **adventure** experience
Clothing and Equipment:
Manufacturers increasingly offering codes of functional equipment and clothing products for **comfort, safety** and **protection** – **'safe – adventure'**

Extrinsic Brand Development:
Increasing development of eye-catching, fashion conscious codes of products to drive consumer brand discrimination within the sector
Motorcycles:
Extrinsic brand personality built on core myths of **travel, freedom of travel** associated with touring combined with **adventure** myths specific to off-road, enduro type motorcycling – reflected in product names
Motorcycles styled to represent large, trail/enduro machines
Communications Discourse: 'Feeding the **adventure fantasy'** – fantasy/dreamlike appeal to focus on extremes of **adventure experience** that appeal to aspirations and emotive level of consumer's desired self-identity

BMW GS success story – not such 'an old man's bike' after all
Highly sophisticated marketing strategies combined with comprehensive interactive customer activity programme
Celebrity sponsorship/product endorsement - **The Long Way Round Adventure** – an authentic story of epic **adventure** achieving unimaginable success – changing the shape of the UK motorcycle market, spiralling the adventure-sports sector into significant period of growth, changing public perception of BMW motorcycles, demonstrating the power of media as a communications tool for signifying communications/cultural messages within this market
Benefits of continued celebrity sponsorship/product endorsement

Clothing and Equipment:
Coordinated range of equipment products to match motorcycle styles
BMW Rallye 2 syntagm – signification of total, authentic **adventure** identity relative to desired self-identity

Customer Involvement in Motorcycle Adventure Lifestyles:
Manufacturers providing mechanism to facilitate consumer involvement and role acquisition into ideology of this, and wider motorcycle adventure subcultures
Increasingly sophisticated and interactive websites offering high levels of customer involvement with adventure-sports motorcycling subcultural discourse (virtual **adventure, communitas**), with 'brand communities' and vicarious consumption of whole world of adventure motorcycling lifestyle
Two-way relationship – manufacturer gaining customer retention, customer brand loyalty and sophisticated customer (subcultural) information to integrate into brand development)

Supplier Configuration of Packaged Motorcycle Adventure Experiences

Making the Fantasy a Reality

Fully configured 'parcels' of packaged adventure experience offered to consumers desiring to convert adventure fantasies into reality
Packages provide **'safer – adventure'** converting adventure fantasies into reality whilst putting in place physical and human support structure to facilitate successful outcomes and reduce physical and psychological risks of adventure breakdown

Signs, Signification and Supplier Configuration of the motorcycle adventure track day package:
Package configured to represent **racing authenticity and heritage** and **safety**
Communications Tools and Discourse: Limited communications spend, focus on 3rd party 'credible' motorcycle media publicity, rational, small box advertising in MCN with arbitrary messages signifying authentic **racing** packages. Increasingly sophisticated and interactive supplier websites encouraging consumer subcultural involvement, and including iconic imagery to feed consumer **racing adventure fantasies**. *Octagon Motorsports brochure* - signifying **emotive, fantastic** and **adventurous** nature of racetrack driving experience

Communicating the Packaged Adventure Fantasy:
Communications Discourse surrounding wider packaged adventure experience brands –
Represents self-enhancing, **communitas** building, authentic nature of **adventure** packages suppliers offer
Employ a blend of signs to instil consumer trust in controlled, **safety** elements of packages whilst arousing emotions for **fantastic, romantic, dream-fulfilling, adventurous** nature of the experience

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Significance of the Motorcycle Related Retail Outlet

Sacred Venues for Motorcyclist Subcultural Consumption

Increasingly becoming 'sacred' venues for social, subcultural gathering for motorcyclists to indulge in narratives of shared subcultural ideology, for **communitas/brotherhood**, for gaining role authenticity from each other and role contamination from 'expert' members of staff

Retail Outlet Staff:
Represent the 'face' and 'personality' of the retail outlet – very powerful tool for communicating brand discourse and identity and influencing customers in purchase decisions
Perceived as 'authentic' and 'credible', achieve iconic status – great contaminating and signifying values for brands they recommend
Perceived as unapproachable, unfriendly or unauthentic – potential negative consequences for communication of brand discourse
Narrative/recommendations often made based on personal preferences – negative comments, open defiling of manufacturers brands likely to distort or block desired manufacturer brand signification

Store Design, Merchandise Assortment and P-O-S Displays:
Increasingly including physical facilities that reflect consumer social, **communitas** needs
Retailers lacking awareness of importance of specialist semiotics of design and merchandising for effective construction and signification of brand identity – no appreciation of significance of creating 'brand discourse aura' - products displayed by 'product category' - brands mixed up and signification of identity diffused/lost
Manufacturers aware of this importance – trying to push 'branded' display units into stores – current limited effectiveness
Swing Tickets: 'The Silent Salesperson' – key packaging element used by manufacturers for signification of product/brand personality

Chapter 10

Conclusion

Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

In a popular culture where engagement with extreme, high-risk adventure activities, or products and services that 'commodify' adventure experience is increasingly sought, a semiotic investigation has been successfully completed that focuses on meaningful consumption processes within, and relative to, the UK adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption. Recognising the strong interrelatedness that exists between culture and consumption, and the central role of consumers, marketers and wider popular cultural media in constructing and purveying messages relative to the cultural world, pioneering methodological techniques have allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the movement of meaning within, and relative to, the motorcycling adventure subculture, and to fulfil the research aim and objectives of the study.

This chapter provides concluding remarks relative to each specific research objective. It continues by outlining theoretical implications and contributions to knowledge, practical implications for the UK motorcycle and related industries, and finishes with directions for further research.

10.2 Conclusions for Each Objective

10.2.1 Objective 1

To employ semiotic methods to identify the key myths/communication codes that drive the construction, signification and movement of meaning relative to the adventure subculture of motorcycling consumption.

This objective was achieved through employment of the semiotic audit as well as the core-values exercise. The semiotic audit, an 'outside-in' approach, proved to be an effective technique to enable a broad insight to be gained into the historic movement

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of cultural meaning relative to motorcycling subculture. Through analysis of a wide range of subcultural, and wider popular cultural discourse, it was possible to unlock a number of key residual, dominant and emergent communication codes/myths that drive the construction, signification and movement of meaning within the subculture, and to contextualise these codes/myths relative to wider popular culture.

It became evident that UK motorcycling subculture is enshrined with a very rich cultural heritage. In the post Second World War years, what were minimalist factions, were projected by the local, national and international media as non-conformist, outlaw rebels, who threatened the dominant cultural hegemony of the time. Attracted to this somewhat romantic and escapist outlaw ideology, youths on an international level adopted codes of motorcyclist behaviour and identity. Residual codes today are increasingly weakening (notably UK newspaper media appears to be determined to hold on to them!), but a number of codes which still significantly represent motorcycling subculture (residual and dominant codes) include the determined quest for freedom, adventure, communitas/brotherhood and highly iconic and symbolic scantily-clad women, black leather jacket and motorcyclist heroes.

Today, the concept of motorcyclists as outlaw, folk-devils is slowly giving way to more positive public attitudes towards motorcycling. This is influenced by communication supported by motorcyclist groups and organisations, wider popular cultural media representation of motorcyclists (as seen in the movies) and manufacturers' quest to provide something for everyone, and thus fragment the market. Extremely significant in influencing the dominant era is manufacturer/marketer involvement in motorcycle sports sponsorship and 'commodification' of the racetrack experience; this has bred a range of celebrity racing heroes par excellence.

It was found that emergent codes are likely to develop as a manufacturer/cultural response to the modern technological age, to increasing political concern of congestion constraints as well as political/social concern for the environment and green issues. Certainly, manufacturers are recognising the commercial potential to be gained from wider popular cultural desire for engagement with adventure activities

and identities. This is represented in the 'commodification' of adventure through the birth of the fastest growing, adventure-sports market sector.

Overall, the semiotic audit and core-values exercise proved to be successful techniques to identify and provide an outline of the key communication-codes/myths that represent the historic movement of meaning within and relative to UK motorcycle subculture. Certainly, the interrelatedness that exists between brands, brand communications, culture and the consumer was illustrated, and the significance of consumers, manufacturers/marketers and wider popular cultural media in contributing to this subcultural world was identified.

10.2.2 Objective 2

To explore the motorcyclist consumer psyche, specifically focusing on consumer relationships with, and use of signifying props, spaces, and stories for the construction and signification of meaningful subcultural 'motorcycling' self-identity.

Depth exploration of the motorcyclist consumer psyche revealed an illuminating insight into the levels of meaning that form the constructs of motorcyclist self-identity, and the motorcyclists' contribution to this consumption subculture. Employment of traditional 'inside-out' methodological approaches that included pioneering semiotic and narrative techniques provided a rich level of information that allowed this objective to be successfully achieved.

Analysis revealed that respondents in the study desire engagement with motorcycle adventure activity and subculture because it provides self-enriching, performance opportunities that allows them not only to escape the fetters and constraints of everyday life, but also the development of unique, sovereign self-identity, quite different from the norms of mass culture. By prescribing to ideologies of what they perceive as marginalised motorcycle subcultural groups, they are free from mass-cultural hegemony, whilst finding personal and social group meaning within these ideologies. They prescribe to unique motorcyclist codes of 'behaviour,' 'dress,' 'product' and 'language' to become authentic, adventurous motorcyclists.

It was found that props play a central and highly significant role in motorcyclists' engagement with their chosen adventure activity, and with the development and signification of the meaningful 'motorcyclist' self. At a functional extrinsic level, motorcyclists trust their brands' safety and protection features, perceiving a kind of 'safe – adventure' which allows them to sometimes push their own, and their motorcycle's performance envelopes to, or beyond, the edge. At an intrinsic, symbolic level, constellations of props create syntagms of motorcyclist identity consistent with subcultural ideals. More than this, respondents reported a particularly strong 'embodied passion' that develops for their motorcycles, where they attribute them with a specific personality, often associated with the ideal and extended self. These motorcycles are regarded as sacred and treated with the love and respect of a family beloved.

Motorcyclists commonly use highly motivated, emotive photographs and stories to signify desired, authentic motorcyclist self identity. Photographs serve as tangible evidence of often 'heroic' and authentic subcultural behaviour. Spontaneous stories that respondents broke into during their formal interviews consistently reflected the central importance of motorcycling within key life-changing events of their lives.

The self-assembly collage exercise proved to be an extremely effective, pioneering semiotic technique that demonstrated how consumers purchase and use constellations of products to construct codes of motorcycling self-identity. It enabled consumer respondents to build, explore and describe levels of meaningful subcultural identity, through the construction of syntagms of signifying props and spaces. It was evident from this that motorcycle subculture as a whole is made up of a number of quite specific subgroups, each representing diverse and distinctive strands of subcultural identity; prescribed to through ideological codes of looking, behaviour and language. However, deeper analysis (supported by results from the narrative picturing exercise) showed that on a mythic level, motorcyclists across the range of sub-groups ultimately seek personal meaning and self-fulfilment in their lives through engagement with 'freedom' and 'adventure' associated with motorcycle activity and subcultural involvement/experience.

Overall, this objective not only allowed for the development of pioneering semiotic and narrative techniques, but it allowed for a very rich understanding to be gained into the motorcyclist consumer psyche, specifically the use of signifying props, spaces and stories for the construction and signification of meaningful subcultural self-identity.

10.2.3 Objective 3

To investigate the role and significance of motorcycle related manufacturers/service suppliers/marketers in constructing and signifying brands that purvey cultural messages and construct categories of motorcycling subculture.

'Outside-in' semiotic techniques combined with 'inside-out' approaches generated data that revealed depth insight into manufacturer, supplier and marketer contribution to this subcultural world of meaningful consumption. The research objective was successfully achieved and the influencing role of motorcycle related manufacturers'/suppliers' brands in purveying and constructing subcultural meaning and categories of culture was explored in depth.

Particularly, the study focused on three diverse motorcycle market sectors, namely supersports, touring and the emerging adventure-sports sector, and investigated the key communication codes on which brand identity within these sectors is built and signified. A number of codes were unlocked which originate from wider popular culture, from wider sports culture, and more specifically from other adventure sports subcultures and motorcycle subgroups that influence manufacturer construction and signification of brand identity. Ultimately, consumers purchase and use these brands, and the codes that they represent, for subcultural role-acquisition and for the construction of their own motorcyclist self-identities.

Taking the supersports market sector as an example, it was found that manufacturer involvement with professional racer/team sponsorship not only contributed to the inception of this market sector, but today, contaminates their brands with technologically innovative, performance capable, heroic adventure racing authenticity, desired by the highly discerning, fashion-conscious, 'affluent'

supersports rider. Through the intrinsic and extrinsic design and communication of the constellations of products that they offer, manufacturers effectively build and transfer authentic racing subcultural imagery/identity from the professional racing scene to the consumer; thus they commodify professional racetrack experience.

The power of the manufacturer/supplier in constructing and signifying cultural messages that shape this subculture was demonstrated through close analysis of the emergent communication code of 'adventure.' It became evident that manufacturers/suppliers have responded to wider cultural trends and, recognising the implicit adventurous nature of motorcycling experience, have created a significant market development and growth opportunity through commodifying of adventure experience; achieved by creating a clear semiotic link between motorcycle product/service brands and the elements that make up adventure. With the instigation of the adventure-sports motorcycle market sector, they are increasingly developing eye-catching, fashion conscious codes of products which drive consumer brand discrimination and spell out an identity of authentic adventure.

The role of manufacturers and suppliers in creating consumer lifestyle brand communities, and configuring and communicating packaged adventure motorcycle experiences was considered. Fully configured 'parcels' of packaged adventure experience are increasingly offered to consumers who desire to convert motorcycle adventure fantasies into reality. They provide 'safe – adventure,' allowing participants to experience adventure fantasies associated with the ideologies of their chosen subcultural riding experience, whist putting in place a physical and human support structure to facilitate successful outcomes, and reduce physical and psychological risks of adventure breakdown.

The significance of the motorcycle related retail outlet as a sacred venue for subcultural consumption and as a medium for the signification of brand discourse and identity was analysed. It was revealed that, through increasingly customer friendly store design, and the employment of 'credible' and 'authentic' motorcyclist staff, outlets are becoming increasingly sacred venues for social motorcyclist consumption. However, there is still much work to be done for retailers to recognise the importance

of specialist semiotics of design and merchandising for the creation and communication of brand discourse auras.

Overall, this objective again not only allowed for the use of semiotic techniques, but a very rich understanding was gained into motorcycle related manufacturer, service supplier and marketers' significance in contributing to the meaningful world of motorcycling consumption, through the construction and signification of their brands.

10.3 Theoretical Implications and Contributions to Knowledge

A number of theoretical implications and contributions to knowledge can be identified from this study:

- The study provides a contribution to the growing field of adventure-leisure research and theory. It builds on previous work which aimed to investigate the 'meaning' and definition of adventure, and on work that focuses on the social psychology of specific subcultures of adventure such as mountaineering, river rafting, sky-diving and motorcycling. This is particularly significant at a time when popular cultural trends recognise a move towards increased consumption of high-risk adventure activities, and increasing consumption of products and services which commodify adventure experience and reflect an associated discourse of adventure.

  This study, specifically, focuses on the UK adventure subculture of motorcyclist consumption, and provides a rich insight into the constructs of meaning in this adventure subculture. It takes a holistic cultural approach to investigate the depths of the social psychology and cultural processes which underpin the construction and movement of meaning within the subculture. Concepts developed and applied can be used cross-culturally, to gain an insight into the social psychology of international motorcycle adventure subgroups, and thus, can be used to explore any kind of adventure subgroup (ie, from 4x4 desert safari groups in the Sahara to trekkers in the Himalaya).

- In terms of its contribution to the field of consumer research, this study contributes to the development of consumer behaviour constructs. Specifically, it demonstrates the importance of subcultures of consumption as a very useful analytic category for understanding the cultural dimensions and underlying cultural meaning processes that influence and drive consumer and market behaviour. By identifying one subculture from the greater whole, namely the adventure subculture of motorcyclist consumption, it is possible to take that consumption subculture as a single, holistic measurable system. This is because, by itself, the subculture exists with its own holistic meaning processes and single ideology.

Previously, Schouten and McAlexander (1995), in their directions for future research, highlighted the opportunity that exists for researchers to take subcultures of consumption as a single unit of analysis for understanding the meaning processes that underpin consumer and market behaviour. This study does exactly this; focusing on the adventure subculture of motorcyclist consumption as an analytic category and achieving extremely rich theoretical and practical outcomes.

A key contribution gained from this study is a better understanding and illustration of the interrelationship that exists between culture and consumption, and the significance of consumers, marketers and wider popular cultural media in constructing and purveying messages relative to the culturally constructed world. The study illustrates that what exists is a kind of cyclical relationship whereby the construction and signification of cultural meaning is influenced by consumers, marketers, the media, and their relationship with each other.

Within British motorcyclist subculture, consumers become involved in motorcyclist lifestyles and purchase and use motorcycle related products/services for both their intrinsic (performance related) and extrinsic benefits. Extrinsic benefits are often built around discourse signified by subcultural and wider popular cultural media that symbolises characters of 'desired' motorcyclist self-identity. The study clearly illustrates the power of marketers in both constructing

and purveying cultural messages, and the influence of wider popular cultural media within this.

Whereas the majority of consumer research focuses on the role of consumers and their contribution to the cultural world, this study, expanding on the work of Penaloza (2000), identifies and highlights the importance of marketers in contributing to this cultural world. Specifically, the research expands theoretical understanding of the role of marketers in constructing and purveying subcultural and wider cultural discourse and ideological effects, achieved through commodification of cultural myths in strategic brand and communications development. The study dedicates a full section to exploring the role of the marketer in contributing to the holistic subcultural world of meaning and construction of categories that relate to the UK adventure subculture of motorcyclist consumption.

- Linking constructs of adventure with those of consumption, this study makes a specific theoretical contribution by exploring the generation and movement of meaning in adventure subcultures of consumption, specifically UK motorcycling subculture. Previous work on motorcycle subculture focused on one specific motorcycle subgroup (Harley Davidson motorcyclists in America), but this study takes a holistic semiotic perspective to investigate cultural meaning processes with regard to the UK motorcycle subculture as a whole. This is particularly significant in the modern day, with increasing wider cultural trends towards involvement in, and acquiring/signifying self-identities consistent with adventure pursuits and subcultures. As mentioned above, constructs developed within this study can, and should, be applied fruitfully to investigate any kind of adventure consumption subculture.

- A particularly significant contribution that this study makes in terms of theoretical and methodological contribution is through employment of the interpretive semiology philosophy. This philosophy, which is relatively untouched in consumer research, drives both the theoretical and methodological development of the study. Whereas many consumer research studies use the term 'semiotics' at a

surface level to define 'symbolic' consumption, this study gets involved with depth semiotic processes from a social constructivist/symbolic interactionist perspective, thus defining the 'interpretive semiology' approach.

The interpretive semiology philosophy drove the methodological development of the study and allowed for pioneering data collection techniques to be employed. Whereas most consumer research takes an 'inside-out' approach that focuses on consumers and their experiences from the inside, this study takes an 'outside-in' approach, taking a holistic cultural perspective to first analyse motorcyclist subculture from a range of different sources that make up its discourse (ie. motorcycle magazines, local and national newspapers, films, web pages, books, photographs, advertisements and non-participant observation data). This is a non-intrusive approach which enabled the key communication codes that drive the subculture to be identified prior to further focused, 'inside-out' investigation.

The interpretive semiology philosophy also allowed for the development of a number of pioneering semiotic techniques which provide a methodological contribution to knowledge in this field. These include the semiotic audit, which was built around the sources of cultural discourse mentioned above, the core-values exercise, which was built on principles of semiotic philosophy (specifically, the concept of universal binary oppositions), and the self-assembly collage exercise, which was based on the semiotic premise that the analysis of stage settings and props provides codes from which it becomes possible to explore the human quest for meaning.

Certainly this research philosophy and these developmental semiotic methods provide a very rich and interesting insight into the cultural aspects of motorcyclist self-identity and cultural consumption behaviour. They have great power in understanding the depths and cultural meaning processes that relate to any subculture or phenomenon of investigation.

- This study also makes a methodological contribution to consumer research through the use of narrative techniques. Over the past twenty years these techniques have flourished in the fields of psychology, sociology, health and

education research, but have been relatively unrecognised in consumer research. The study employs the narrative picturing technique, originated by Stuhmiller and Thorsen (1997) in therapeutic health research, and story elicitation techniques.

The narrative picturing technique proved to be a particularly effective method to elicit participant stories and fantasies of the ideal, imagined motorcyclist self. This allowed for the probing of multiple and rich levels of meaning relating to the motorcyclist consumer psyche and elicited data which otherwise would have been difficult to collect. Moral tales and epiphanies from respondent interviews were analysed, which provided excellent indicators of respondents self and subcultural definition. Use of these techniques demonstrated the power of the potential that they hold for use in consumer research.
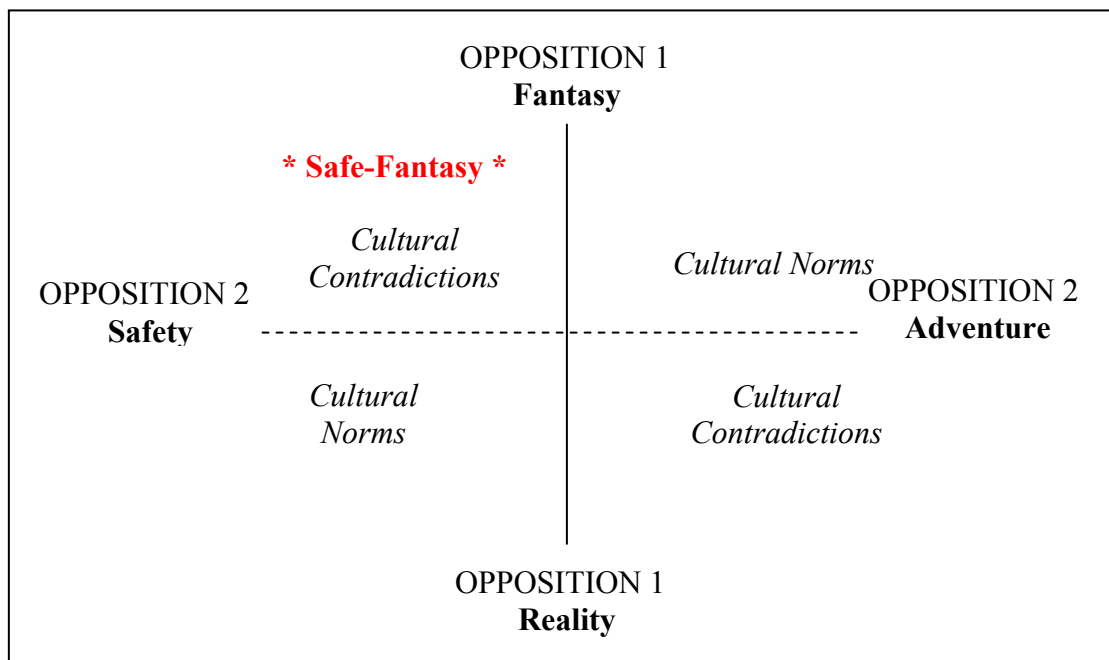
10.4 Practical Implications

The semiotic methodology employed in this study is based on rich theoretical groundings, but it has very effective practical implications for companies operating within the UK motorcycle, and related leisure industries. An understanding of the cultural myths/communication codes that underpin and drive the construction of meaning within British motorcycle subculture, and depth knowledge of the motorcyclist consumer psyche, can help companies both strategically and tactically. Strategically it can aid the development of clear, actionable guidelines for market positioning, new product development, branding and communications strategies. Tactically, it can be used to understand and replicate the secrets of successful communications, and to bring communications discourse inline with established brand propositions.

For companies operating within, and associated with the UK motorcycle industry, this kind of semiotic study, that demystifies the cultural meaning world of the motorcycle subculture, offers potential for the development of focused, effective branding strategy; ultimately companies seek the Holy Grail of customer retention and brand loyalty that brings with it long term profitability and market share. Commercial branding implications that can be identified as outcomes of this study include:

➢ The opportunity to build brand communities and company customer lifestyle involvement programmes - competitive advantage to be built not only on product/brands and their positioning, but on the 'experience' of ownership and consumption. Customers gain a strong (loyal) emotional attachment with a company and its brands. Certainly the major manufacturers such as BMW, Honda, Aprilia and Dainese are taking advantage of this opportunity with much investment in interactive consumer lifestyle programmes which range from active involvement in motorcycle adventure experiences to vicarious, interactive website involvement. Opportunity still exists for smaller manufacturers to benefit from this; particularly motorcycle track day suppliers and retail outlets can benefit commercially from further investment in this area.

➢ The potential to build strong brands that resolve cultural contradictions – can be achieved through the application of mythic quadrant models based on key communication codes identified from the study. For example, if one plots 'adventure versus safety' on one axis and 'reality versus fantasy' on the other, as illustrated in Figure 10.1, it is possible to see a cultural contradiction of 'safety and fantasy'. Here one can see the opportunity for the building of brands that signify a discourse of fantasy and even adventure, but in reality are safe. Brands built to commodify adventure certainly achieve this. It is evidenced in the 4x4 vehicle market and even the adventure-sports motorcycle market, where primarily road-going machines are wrapped up with a discourse of off-road fantasy and adventure. People purchase relatively 'safe' products that signify a discourse of 'fantasy' and 'adventure'. This is also the case if one considers the vicarious consumption of adventure through the internet; today a consumer can experience vicarious adventure consumption from the comfort of their armchair.

Figure 10.1: Mythic Quadrant Model

```
                          OPPOSITION 1
                            Fantasy

          * Safe-Fantasy *

                  Cultural
                  Contradictions        Cultural Norms
                                                    OPPOSITION 2
OPPOSITION 2                                          Adventure
  Safety      - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

                  Cultural                 Cultural
                  Norms                    Contradictions


                          OPPOSITION 1
                            Reality
```

Through their communications techniques and discourse, companies have the power to help maintain the conventionally accepted meanings of a sign, to help it become lapsed, or even to push it in the direction of meaning something new. This has certainly been evidenced in the study by manufacturers who, through their power of communication, have instigated shifts in cultural communication codes that have brought about the dominant era of supersports motorcycling and are currently influencing an emergent era of adventure motorcycling.

Communication implications relative to the UK motorcycle and related industries that can be identified from this study include:

> Identification of the powerful role of advertising, website design and positive publicity for the communication of 'authentic' subcultural messages and brand identity.

> Identification of the power of sponsorship as a tool for signifying 'authentic' subcultural messages and brand identity – opportunities exist for the

development of sponsorship agreements that communicate desired, authentic codes of communication and brand identity. Semiotic techniques allow a company to ascertain what potential partnership companies are communicating about themselves and their brands, and to decide if the partnership would constitute a fruitful two-way signifying relationship.

➢ The opportunity for signifying effective brand communications through the use of celebrity endorsement (as seen with the BMW, Boorman/Mcgregor partnership).

➢ The retail outlet as a sacred venue for subcultural motorcycling consumption – significant opportunities exist to use sales staff narrative, merchandise assortment and point-of-sale displays as a more effective communication tool for the creation of brand discourse auras, and for signifying brand messages that are inline with manufacturers established brand propositions. As evidenced in the study, this is an area which is currently weak and presents much commercial opportunity.

➢ The commodification of adventure – commercial advantages are to be gained from further penetration and exploitation of the adventure-sports market, to build brands that signify a discourse of 'adventure-fantasy'. Certainly opportunity exists for motorcycle related clothing and equipment manufacturers to penetrate and further develop this market.

The dynamic and visionary methodology applied in this study has produced data that can help companies look to the future as well as the past. Particularly important for the realisation of maximum commercial potential, this kind of semiotic study can allow companies to spot emergent codes in relevant market sectors, backed up by knowledge of developments that are taking place elsewhere. It can help companies to gain a depth understanding of specific consumer culture/subcultures, to track cultural changes and the key drivers that are affecting those changes. This has rich implications for a company to anticipate how consumer behaviour might change in response to some new product, service or technological development, or indeed for the development of their own new products, brands, communications strategies and

the exploitation of new market niches. The arrival of new, emergent cultural communication codes indicates a different way of thinking about product/service brands or indeed a whole market category.

As an outcome of this study, companies operating within the UK motorcycle industry could consider opportunities to make marginal motorcycle subculture more accessible to mainstream consumers, thus increasing the size of their market share. They should however, tread very carefully with this opportunity as it indiscriminately runs the risk of corrupting the subculture, alienating its highly-involved members and diluting its original appeal.

Communication codes identified from this kind of study can prompt incisive and relevant questioning for companies' conventional consumer research. In fact, the employment of this type of methodology has significant implications for any company operating within adventure subcultures, other subcultures, or indeed any type of organisation that harnesses a research problem.

10.5   Directions for Further Research

A number of important directions for further research can be identified as an outcome of this study:

- Whilst this study provides a comprehensive perspective, illustrating and analysing the construction and movement of cultural meaning relative to UK adventure subculture of motorcyclist consumption, opportunity exists for further depth semiotic investigation into the subculture. Specifically:

  ➢ Further depth investigation of a wide range of motorcyclists could be carried out to allow for greater validity seeking and generalisation of the results.

  ➢ Further investigation of manufacturer/supplier/marketers' contribution to this cultural world beyond the three market sectors focused on in this study. Beyond the scope of this investigation, a research team could be employed to gain an even greater understanding of the role of the supplier in constructing and signifying cultural messages that influence and build categories of motorcyclist subculture. It is possible to focus on other market sectors that include sports touring, custom, naked, scooter and trail/enduro. This would provide a complete analysis that spans all motorcycle market sectors.

- An interesting insight would be gained by applying the results of this study, which focuses on motorcycling related subcultures of consumption in the UK, to other cultural contexts (such as motorcyclists in Germany or Australia for example). The full cross-cultural implications of a subculture of consumption are not yet known, but as Schouten and McAlexander (1995) suspect, the outward symbols of a subculture are likely to be transferred fairly intact, but they are likely to be overlaid on a new system of referents more relevant to the host culture. An understanding of how the dominant myths/communication codes of subcultures of consumption are used, altered, or reinterpreted when embedded in a non-native

host culture with differing cultural categories and principles would provide a rich insight for consumer researchers and practitioners alike.

- Opportunity exists to apply the interpretive semiology research philosophy and methodological techniques used in this study to other adventure subcultures of consumption, and indeed to any other kind of consumption subculture. This indeed would provide a contribution to semiotic consumer behaviour research, providing opportunities for further development of interpretive semiological techniques in a consumer research setting, and allowing a greater depth of understanding to be gained into cultural meaning processes and consumption subcultures.

  Certainly huge potential exists to use and further develop the mythic quadrant models that were discussed in the study. Grounded in interpretive semiology philosophy, these models demonstrate a huge potential for unwrapping the layers of cultural understanding that influence and drive consumption behaviour. It is possible to dedicate a single doctoral research study to the development, understanding and implications of the use of such models in any subcultural consumption setting.

- This study identifies and illustrates the significance of developmental narrative techniques when applied to a consumer research study. Brought from other research fields, the study demonstrates the potential power of these techniques in a consumer research context. Whereas this study employs certain narrative techniques as part of its developmental interpretive philosophy, namely narrative picturing and spontaneous story analysis, huge potential exists for the development of consumer research studies that focus purely on narrative techniques as a basis of their philosophical and methodological development.

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* Note:

([date] date) = date in [square brackets] = original publication date

(date/date) original and subsequent (used) edition

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WebPages:

* Note – references for web pages and other materials used in the semiotic audit are provided in APPENDIX C

- http://academic.mintel.com - report – Motorcycles and Scooters, UK, April 2006, Marketing Intelligence, UK
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- www.990adventure.com

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- www.creativeclub.co.uk

- www.dainese.com

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- www.emapbikes.com

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- www.harley-davidson.com

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- www.ktm.co.uk/news
- www.ktmadventuretours.at
- www.lloydlifestyle.com
- www.mcia.co.uk
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- www.nolimitstrackdays.com
- www.phoenix.co.uk
- www.planetbikers.org
- www.sidisport.com
- www.speedfreaktrackdays.com
- www.suzukicycles.com
- www.timberwoof.com
- www.tracktimepromotions.co.uk
- www.triumph.co.uk
- www.worldofbmw.com
- www.worldofbmw.com
- www.worldofbmw.com/news
- www.worldofbmw.com/travel/tours
- www.yamaha-motor.co.uk
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- www.yamaha-motor-europe.com/designcafe/

Appendices

Appendices

APPENDIX A

Detailed Demographic Figures for the UK Motorcycle Market – April 2006

Demographic Profile of Motorcycle Ownership, by Engine Capacity or Type, 2005

	All adults	Scooter/moped	51-125cc	126-500cc	Over 500cc
	%	%	%	%	%
All	100	100	100	100	100
Men	48	76	83	88	94
Women	52	24	17	12	6
15-24	16	37	27	23	5
25-34	16	11	7	16	17
35-44	19	23	21	26	40
45-54	16	10	24	15	24
55-64	14	9	11	10	11
65+	20	10	9	10	4
AB	26	13	11	19	27
C1	29	37	22	32	29
C2	21	32	42	23	31
D	16	12	19	18	9
E	8	7	5	8	4
Single	23	37	26	30	15
Married/living as married	63	55	63	62	74
Separated/divorced/widowed	15	8	10	8	11
Full-time	37	49	70	63	76
Part-time	16	15	9	12	6
Not working	47	36	22	25	18
Greater London	13	6	3	8	6
South East/East Anglia	24	26	33	31	32
South West	9	15	19	11	12
Wales	5	3	8	6	5
East & West Midlands	16	15	15	23	16
North West	11	9	4	3	10
Yorkshire & Humberside	9	14	7	11	8
North	5	4	2	5	5
Scotland	9	9	9	3	6
Pre-/no family	27	56	40	44	34
Family	28	18	23	25	34
Third age	25	16	28	21	28
Retired	20	10	9	10	4

Source: Mintel (April 2006)

Trends in the Demographic Profile of Motorcycle Ownership, by Engine Capacity or Type, 2001-2005

	Scooter/ moped			Motorcycle: 51-125cc			Motorcycle: 126-500cc			Motorcycle: Over 500cc		
	2001	2003	2005	2001	2003	2005	2001	2003	2005	2001	2003	2005
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Men	69.9	75.6	75.8	80.8	82.2	82.9	91.1	85.2	88.2	91.6	91.4	94.1
Women	30.1	24.4	24.2	19.2	17.8	17.1	8.9	14.8	11.8	8.4	8.6	5.9
15-24	19.3	29.1	36.6	17.5	29.0	27.2	6.6	4.5	22.5	2.3	4.0	5.2
25-34	20.2	19.0	11.0	23.8	14.7	6.6	22.5	29.0	15.8	25.5	19.6	16.7
35-44	21.4	19.5	22.8	15.7	20.0	21.2	34.9	32.7	26.3	41.9	44.3	39.6
45-54	20.3	14.4	10.3	20.9	16.2	24.4	20.6	19.4	15.0	18.7	21.8	23.5
55-64	6.7	12.3	9.3	10.1	13.7	11.3	10.1	7.7	10.1	8.9	7.6	10.7
65+	12.1	5.7	10.1	12.1	6.4	9.3	5.2	6.7	10.3	2.7	2.8	4.3
AB	14.0	22.8	13.1	16.2	19.6	11.0	24.1	21.2	19.4	25.8	31.2	27.3
C1	29.8	33.3	36.7	31.1	26.0	22.2	32.3	37.1	31.6	24.4	25.4	28.9
C2	27.1	25.1	31.6	21.9	35.0	42.4	29.0	24.0	23.4	34.9	22.1	30.6
D	20.5	15.4	11.6	25.5	15.8	19.1	9.8	13.1	17.9	10.3	18.2	9.1
E	8.7	3.4	7.0	5.3	3.6	5.3	4.8	4.7	7.7	4.5	3.2	4.1
Single	21.7	36.1	37.0	27.7	24.3	26.5	15.0	15.4	29.7	13.7	17.0	15.1
Married/ living as married	70.0	58.9	54.9	62.3	69.2	63.2	80.2	79.1	62.3	78.5	73.3	73.9
Separated/ divorced/ widowed	8.4	5.0	8.2	10.0	6.5	10.3	4.7	5.5	8.0	7.8	9.6	10.9
Full-time	58.3	58.3	48.7	61.2	62.8	69.6	71.3	68.5	63.0	76.0	75.1	76.3

Part-time	8.5	14.4	15.1	7.9	7.6	8.5	8.4	15.5	12.3	4.1	6.5	6.1
Not working	33.2	27.2	36.2	30.9	29.6	21.9	20.3	16.0	24.7	19.9	18.5	17.6
Greater London	6.3	8.7	5.7	8.8	9.3	3.3	4.0	5.6	8.2	12.2	11.6	5.9
South East/East Anglia	30.6	34.1	25.9	28.5	38.8	33.1	23.4	29.6	30.9	23.3	32.2	31.8
South West	10.4	22.8	15.4	13.4	7.6	18.6	15.4	7.9	10.8	11.2	9.7	12.4
Wales	1.8	.4	2.9	5.7	5.5	7.7	5.6	1.5	5.7	3.6	3.9	4.9
East & West Midlands	13.8	14.4	15.0	9.9	15.5	15.0	20.3	27.2	22.5	23.0	16.1	16.4
North West	12.0	8.0	8.8	9.9	0.9	4.0	7.6	6.7	3.3	12.1	10.2	9.6
Yorkshire & Humberside	20.2	5.9	13.7	11.7	9.0	7.1	10.1	8.2	11.1	8.2	8.2	8.0
North	1.6	1.1	4.0	9.0	10.2	2.3	6.2	2.0	4.7	2.7	2.1	4.7
Scotland	3.3	4.7	8.5	3.1	3.3	9.1	7.5	11.3	2.8	3.8	6.1	6.2
Pre-/no family	30.7	45.0	56.3	39.7	34.0	39.9	28.3	26.6	43.9	37.3	31.0	34.2
Family	36.3	27.8	18.0	25.6	34.4	22.6	42.7	54.0	24.9	39.5	41.6	33.9
Third age	20.9	21.8	15.6	22.6	25.2	28.1	23.8	12.7	20.9	20.4	24.6	27.6
Retired	12.1	5.5	10.1	12.1	6.4	9.3	5.2	6.7	10.3	2.7	2.8	4.3

Source: Mintel (2006)

APPENDIX B

Research Methodologies Associated with Positivistic and Interpretive Philosophies

Positivistic Methodologies

Cross-Sectional Studies

Cross-sectional studies are a positivistic methodology designed to obtain information on variables in different contexts, but at the same time. Normally, different organisations or groups of people are selected and a study is conducted to ascertain how factors differ. Cross-sectional studies are conducted when there are constraints of time or resources. The data is collected just once, over a short period of time, before it is analysed and reported. Thus, cross-sectional studies take a snapshot of an ongoing situation.

Experimental Studies

Experimental studies are conducted either in a laboratory or in a natural setting in a systematic way. They permit causal relationships to be identified. The aim of them is to manipulate an independent variable in order to observe the effect on a dependent variable. There are a number of approaches to designing an experimental study. Included are *repeated-measures* design*, independent-samples* design*, matched-pairs* design and *single-subject* design. To select the most appropriate design, the factors that must be considered are the number of groups within the study, the nature of the groups and the time scale of the experiments.

Longitudinal Studies

A longitudinal study is a study, over time, of a variable or group of subjects. The aim is to research the dynamics of the problem by investigating the same situation or people several times, or continuously, over the period in which the problem runs its course. This is often many years. Repeated observations are taken with a view to

revealing the relative stability of the phenomena under investigation; some will have changed considerably, others will show little sign of change. Such studies allow the researcher to examine change processes within a social, economic and political context. Therefore, it should be possible to suggest likely explanations from an examination of the process of change and the patterns that emerge.

Surveys

A survey is a positivistic methodology whereby a sample of subjects is drawn from a population and studied to make inferences about the population. When the total population is small, it is normal to collect data about each member of the population. When the population is large, it would be too time consuming and expensive to collect data about every member, and therefore only a sample of the whole population is used. If the sample is representative, it is possible to use statistical techniques to demonstrate the likelihood that the characteristics of the sample will also be found in the population.

The first stage of the survey is to select the sample. It is important to ensure that the sample is not biased and is representative of the population from which it is drawn. It is then necessary to decide if the survey questions will be asked in face-to-face or telephone interviews, or in questionnaires. As far as possible, all participants will be asked exactly the same questions in the same circumstances. The two major types of survey are *descriptive* survey and *analytical* survey.

Interpretive Methodologies

Action Research

The assumptions on which action research are based place it within the interpretive paradigm. It is an approach which assumes that the social world is constantly changing, and the researcher and the research itself are part of this change. Action research is a type of applied research designed to find an effective way of bringing about a conscious change in a partly controlled environment. Its main aim is to enter

into a situation, attempt to bring about change and to monitor the results. It requires close collaboration between the researcher and that being researched.

Case Studies

A case study is an extensive examination of a single instance of a phenomenon of interest. Robson (1993, p. 146) states that case study is a "strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life contest using multiple sources of evidence." A *unit of analysis* is the kind of case to which the variables of phenomena under study and the research problem refer, and about which data is collected and analysed. A case study approach implies a single unit of analysis such as an individual or a group of people with similar characteristics. It involves gathering detailed information about the unit of analysis with a view to obtaining in-depth knowledge.

Case studies are often described as *exploratory* research, used in areas where there are few theories or a deficient body of knowledge. A *multiple case study* approach may be used when opportunity exists to form a replication strategy by researching more than one participant. The main stages within case study research are; *selecting the case, preliminary investigation,* the *data* stage, the *analysis* stage and the *report* stage. Within the report stage it is important to quote extensively from the data which has been collected through interviews and other means. Also diagrams may be useful to illustrate emerging patterns.

Ethnography

Ethnography is an interpretive methodology which stems from anthropology. Anthropology is the study of people, especially of their societies and customs. Ethnography is an approach in which the researcher uses socially acquired and shared knowledge to understand the observed patterns of human activity. *Ethno-* means folk and *–graphy* means description. Ethnography is therefore any full or partial description of a group. The main method of collecting data is *participant observation,* where the researcher becomes a member of the group being studied, participating in the activities of that group. The aim of the methodology is to be able

to interpret the social world in the way that the members of that particular group/society do.

Feminist Perspective

In its broadest sense, feminism is about change for women and parity with men in society. At a methodological level, a feminist perspective is concerned with challenging the traditional research paradigm from the point of view of the politics and ideology of the women's movement. Thus it challenges the methods by which knowledge is currently generated and the source of the views of the world it reflects. The feminist perspective follows the principle that knowledge is grounded in the experience of women, that research benefits women, and that the researcher immerses herself or himself in, or exhibits empathy for the world being studied.

Grounded Theory

The methodology of grounded theory was first conceived within the field of medical research, but has now been developed in many disciplines. It uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon. The findings of the research constitute a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation, rather than consisting of a set of numbers, or a group of loosely related themes. Thus, the theory is generated by the observations rather than being decided before the study. With grounded theory, the data collection takes place first, and through a process of induction/deduction and constant reference to the data, theory is developed.

Hermeneutics

The methodology of hermeneutics involves paying particular attention to the historical and social context surrounding an action when interpreting a text. It is assumed that there is a relationship between the direct conscious description of experience and the underlying dynamics or structures. Whilst a text can provide an important description of the conscious experience, analysis and interpretation of the underlying conditions which led to the experience are also required. Thus, the

hermeneutic process involves interpreting the meaning of a text through continual reference to its context. The method can be applied to any situation in which one wants to recover historical meaning. The data within this technique is relabelled and reanalysed in a hermeneutic circle.

Participative Enquiry

Participative enquiry is a methodology which is concerned with research with people rather than research on people. The participants in such a study are involved as fully as possible in the research which is conducted in their own group. Participants are involved in the data gathering and analysis. They also debate and determine the progress and direction of the research, thus enabling the researcher to evolve questions and answers as co-researchers. By involving the participants within the study, it is believed that better quality data may be produced. Also, some concern about the democratic rights of individuals to participate within research has led to the use of this methodology. Three different approaches to participative enquiry which have been identified are *co-operative* enquiry*, participatory action research* and *action science.*

APPENDIX C

Sources of Evidence Used in Semiotic Audit

Secondary Sources	
Books:	Brown, R (2000) *Classic Motorcycles: The complete Book of Motorcycles and their Riders,* London, Hernes House Publishing Harris, M. (1985), Bikers: *The Birth of a Modern Day Outlaw*, London, Faber and Faber Ltd.
General Magazines:	Life Magazine (21 July 1947), Time Incorporated.
Motorcycle Magazines:	*Back Street Heroes* (January 2001), Issue 201, London, Inside Communications Ltd. *Bike* (August 2004), Issue 376, Peterborough, UK, Emap Automotive *Bike* (October 2004), Issue 376, Peterborough, UK, Emap Automotive *Bike* (November 2005), Issue 391, Peterborough, UK: Emap Automotive *Classic Bike* (June 2003), Issue 281, Peterborough, UK, Emap Automotive *Motorcycle News* – MCN (1 September, 2004) *Motorcycle Voyager* (2003), Issue 4, Bristol, UK, Motorcycle Voyager Ltd. *Performance Bikes* (February 2005), Peterborough, UK, Emap Automotive *Performance Bikes* (September, 2005) Peterborough, UK, Emap Automotive *Performance Bikes: Readers Special* (2005) Peterborough, UK, Emap Automotive *RIDE* (January, 2001) Peterborough, UK: Emap Automotive *RIDE* (September 2005) Peterborough, UK: Emap Automotive *Streetfighters* (March 2003), Issue 109, London, Inside Communications Ltd. *The International Motorcycle and Scooter Show*, NEC Birmingham (November 2001): Official Show Guide
Web Pages:	http://groups.msn.com/TheSixtiesPleasureZone http://teamsuzuki.com/RoadRacing www.ace-café-london.com www.azsbk.com www.bikemenu.com www.bikesafe.co.uk www.bmwmotorcycles.com www.creativeclub.co.uk www.harley-davidson.com www.home.aone.net.au.csd/calssics/classics.html www.iomtt.com www.kawasaki.com www.ktm.com www.mcia.co.uk www.motorbiker.org

	www.motorbikestoday.com
	www.mypeugeot.com
	www.phoenixnw.co.uk
	www.rossimerchandise.com
	www.squires-café.co.uk
	www.suzukicycles.com
	www.triumph.co.uk
	www.yamaha-motor.co.uk
MCIA Published Press Information (taken from www.mcia.co.uk):	May 2004
	August 2004
	October 2004
	November 2004
Films Viewed:	Angel Unchained (1987)
	Beyond the Law (1992)
	Biker Boyz (2003)
	Blade II (2002)
	Catwoman (2004)
	Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle (2003)
	Daredevil (2003)
	Easy Rider (1969)
	James Bond: Tomorrow Never Dies (1997)
	Kill Bill Vol II (2003)
	Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (2001)
	Point Doom (1999)
	Terminator (1984)
	The Final Alliance (1990)
	The Wild One (1953)
	Top Gun (1986)
	Torque (2003)
Newspapers (Taken from Motorcycle related search on Proquest database):	Sunday Times (26 September, 2004)
	Sunday Times (10 October, 2004)
	The Guardian (25 June 2004)
	The Independent (10 February 2004)
	The Independent (10 May 2004)
	The Independent (9 August 2004)
	The Independent on Sunday (26 September 2004)
	The Scotsman (15 June 2004)
	The Star, Sheffield (18 May 1964)

	The Times (9 October 2004)
	Time and Tide (21 May 1964)
Primary Source	
Retail Outlet Observation:	Approximately 45 hours retail outlet observation as detailed in Methodology Chapter - **Table 6.9**

APPENDIX D

Consumer Interviews – Guidance Notes

Note: These are flexible guidance questions only. Respondents are to be given maximum flexibility and encouragement to respond and open relevant discussion whilst researcher makes conscious effort to keep the interview 'on track.'

Introduction:

- Ensure Confidentiality
- No right or wrong answers – feel at ease

General opening/Ice-Breaker Questions:

- For how long have you been motorcycling?
- What bikes have you owned in the past, what do you own now?
- What sort of motorcycling do you do? Where do you go?
- Do you go with other people, alone?
- Where do you go to meet other bikers?
- Do you own a car?

Projective/Semiotic Techniques:

- **Core-Values Exercise:** Administer core-values exercise table – give respondents time to fill it in at ease.
    - ♦ Probe answers – let respondents speak freely – particularly probe 'very important' answers
    - ♦ Are there any words which you think have been missed off the list?

- **Self-Assembly Collage Exercise:** Explain the board… different scenes on left, bikes, clothing, and accessories on right.
    - ♦ I would like you to build up picture on each scene, putting in anything from the options on the right…. The most relevant options on each scene (no right or wrong answer)
    - ♦ Feel free to speak out loud as you go along and take your time.
    - ♦ I'd like you to go through the scenes that you've built and describe them individually. Possible probing questions –
        - - Tell me what's happening on this scene
        - - What type of motorcycling is it?
        - - Where could it be, what is happening?

- Why these choices (bike, clothing etc)?
- Who is the typical person underneath this clothing/helmet, owns this type of bike…. Describe to me (sex, age, job, lifestyle etc)
- Why do they ride a motorcycle?
- What are their aspirations in life, and as a motorcyclist?
- Why have they chosen this bike/clothing/equipment?
- What does owning it mean to them (how do they feel when togged up, what is their self story)?
- What image does it give to others – motorcyclists and non-motorcyclists?

♦ Personal questions relative to their board –
- Which scenes do you (as a motorcyclist) fit into now (actual self), are there any you aspire to fit into (ideal/semiotic self). Which would you definitely *not* get involved with, and why?
- Why do you own/ride a motorcycle – what is it about motorcycling that draws you in, that makes you want to do it more?

Narrative Picturing Exercise:

♦ I would like you to sit back, close your eyes, take your time, and imagine your absolute ideal motorcycling dream/experience. When you are ready, describe this image to me.

♦ Possible probing questions – what do you see?, how do you feel? Who is with you? What bike are you on? What are you wearing? What is the weather like? Where are you?

Questions about Purchase Decisions, Brand Choices and Response to Marketing Communications:

Brand Choices:

♦ What motorcycle, clothing, and equipment do you own?
♦ Which brands do you prefer to buy, do you have a favourite brand, why?
♦ What is your favourite biking possession – from everything you own?
♦ What would you definitely NOT own/wear?
♦ Does fashion play a role in your choice of clothing/equipment?
♦ How do you feel when you ride the bike with all the gear on?

Purchase Decisions and Marketing Communications:

♦ When you want to buy something new - bike, clothing, equipment how do you go about it?
♦ What influences your decision (company ads, brochures, web pages, past experience, word-of-mouth)?

♦ **Retail Outlet:** Why do you go to retail outlets? Just to browse, or with specific requirements? Do you visit more than one or loyal to one? Generally how do you feel you are treated in the outlets? Do you build

relationships with the staff? What do you think about how products are displayed, could this be improved? What is your opinion?

♦ **Brochures:** do you use, take note of brochures? What sort of brochures do you own? What makes a good brochure?

♦ **Web pages:** do you use the Internet? Do you use motorcycle web pages? If so what types, what do you use it for? (ie. chat rooms, latest news, advertising, owners clubs).

♦ **Advertising:** What about company advertising, would you say you notice it, where do you see it? What's your opinion in general about it? Does it influence your decision to look into/buy something?

- **12 Selected campaigns** – show them and leave them to respond.
- Possible probing questions - Do you recognise/remember this ad? What do you think is the message of this ad, what's it trying to say? What is happening and what's the story of this ad? Does it appeal to you? How does it make you feel?

Thank them for their time, ask if any questions or issues they would like to discuss

CLOSE

APPENDIX E

Have a look at the words below…. How important do you think they are in motorcycling experience?

Please tick relevant answer

	Very Important	**Reasonably Important**	**Unimportant**
Freedom			
Old			
Emotional			
Individual			
Death			
Hate			
Happiness			
Reality			
Sacred			
Adventurous			
Conformity			
Rational			
Planned			
Male			
Skilled			
Appearance			
Sadness			
Strength			
Pleasure			
Female			
Love			
Transgression			
Away			
Fearful			
Inclusion			
Spontaneous			
Constraint			
Satisfaction			
Danger			
Pain			
Villain			
Order			

	Very Important	Reasonably Important	Unimportant
Excitement			
Taboo			
Disorder			
Exclusion			
Artificial Environment			
Home			
New			
Boredom			
Unskilled			
Playful			
Natural Environment			
Hero			
Life			
Safety			
Desire			
Serious			
Good			
Young			
Similarity			
Collective			
Bad			
Dissimilarity			
Weakness			
Confidant			

APPENDIX F

Images Used for the Self-Assembly Collage Board

Scene 1

Scene 2

Scene 3

Scene 4

Scene 5

Scene 6

Scene 7

Scene 8

Motorcycles

Adventure-Sport

Luxury Tourer

Sports Tourer

Trails/Enduro

Supersports

Scooter

Cruiser

Sports Tourer – Semi-Naked

Clothing and Equipment

One-Piece Racing Leathers　　　Waterproof Suit

Tassled Black Leather Jacket　　Scooter Jacket　　BMW Adventure Jacket

Textile Touring Jacket　　Classic Wax Jacket　　Black Leather Jacket

Black Leather Pants

Blue Denim Jeans

Scooter Pants

Textile Touring Pants

BMW Adventure Pants

Waterproof Touring Pants

Race Replica

Off-Road Peaked

Plain

Open-Faced

Race Replica

Textile Touring

Scooter Glove

Off-Road   Trainers   Race-Replica

Classic Style   Touring

Tank Box   Aluminium Tank Box   Goggles   Intercom

Knee Sliders   Wind Shield   Racing Exhausts   Racing Exhaust System

Satellite Navigation   Performance Bikes   Classic Motorcycle
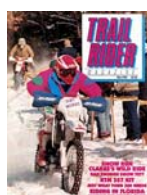
Trail Rider   BMW Magazine   RIDE Magazine

APPENDIX G

Company Interviews (Product Designers, Manufacturers, Marketers, Advertising Agencies, Motorcycle Related Magazine Publishers, Racetrack Owners) – Guidance Notes

Note: These are flexible guidance questions only. Respondents are to be given maximum flexibility and encouragement to respond and open relevant discussion whilst researcher makes conscious effort to keep the interview 'on track.'

The Company and the Motorcycle Market Environment

- What are the key trends/changes in today's motorcycle market environment?
- How does the company recognise and respond to key market trends?
- What are the core values of (company name) motorcycling?

The Customer

- Tell me about the (company name) customer?
- How do you profile specific customer segments, ie. on what characteristics?
- Who are you specifically targeting now?
- Why do people buy your products?
- Gain insight into company perceptions of customer profiles/lifestyles/concepts of construction of self-identity. Use visual images of Triumph motorcycle market sectors (provided on following page) if necessary, to stimulate discussion. Possible questions/areas for discussion:
    - What sort of person owns each type of motorcycle? Is it possible to classify?
    - How are motorcyclists grouped together?
    - What similar characteristics do these motorcyclists share?
    - What does it mean to this person to own a particular type of motorcycle and what sort of self-image are they trying to signify to others?
    - What is each person's self-story?
    - What are their motorcycling aspirations and fantasies?
    - How does the ownership of constellations of products help build desired consumer self-image?

Visual Stimulus Images – Motorcycle Market Sectors
(May need to be landscape or 2 pages?)

SPORT

| TT600 | Daytona 955i | Sprint RS | Speed Triple |

TOURING

| Sprint ST | Trophy 1200 | Trophy 900 | Tiger |

CLASSIC

| Bonneville | Legend TT | Thunderbird | Adventurer |

Product Design and Development

Use company brochures, leaflets and magazines as visual stimulus material to highlight specific products

- What are the key influencers that drive new product design and development?
- How does the company make creative design decisions for specific products? Illustrate using examples from the brochure (or visual examples from the show room).
- Fashion/Function balance? Intrinsic/functional features vs. extrinsic/fashion?
- What are the key design differences between motorcycles, clothing and equipment for the different market sectors? Illustrate with examples.
- Using specific product examples, provide an insight into choices of design features such as names, logos, materials, shape, colour, motifs and others. What does the company believe these features signify about the consumer who chooses to purchase, use and wear these products?
- Try to gain a clear insight into the key influences which drive the design of constellations of products targeted at different consumer segments.

Marketing Communications

Gather evidence through specific examples

- What are the key marketing communication objectives of the company?
- How does the company communicate with its customers? (ie. what communication tools are employed?)
- What are the most important marketing communication tools that the company believes generate awareness/response from its customers (ie. brochures, web pages, sponsorship, retail outlets – POS, staff, merchandise assortment, swing tickets)?
- How does the company make creative content and design decisions when developing marketing communications?
- What are the key themes/narratives/cultural myths that the company aims to signify through its communications to appeal to its target audiences?
- Ask the company to illustrate the above using specific examples.
- At what point does the company believe the customer actually makes the decision to purchase: Is it on exposure to marketing communications? Is it whilst in the dealership/retail outlet? Is it whilst talking with friends, opinion leaders or experts?
- Find out about the company's perceptions of the significance of the dealership/retail outlet, and members of service staff in influencing customer purchase decisions and signifying brand identity. How effective are they currently in achieving this?
- Company response to the 12 magazine advertising campaigns (illustrated in APPENDIX H), specifically detailed interpretation of key narrative themes built around their own ads.
- Phoenix Distribution and Cogent Advertising Agency – depth analysis of Belstaff 'Real Stuff' advertising campaign.

Specific to Motorcycle Related Magazine Publishers (EMAP)

- Depth discussion about current trends in the motorcycle market environment.
- Depth discussion about the role and significance of the motorcycle media in creating and purveying communication codes/myths of motorcycle subculture.

Questions Specific to Racetrack Owners – Regarding the Configuration and Communication of Motorcycle Track Day Packages

The Motorcycle Track Day Customer

- Describe the motorcycle track day customer.
- Why do motorcyclists get involved with track day packages? What are their motives for involvement?
- What do customers expect from the track day package/experience?
- What do customers expect from the track day organiser?
- What do customers perceive are the self-identity implications of involvement in track day packages/experiences?
- How do customers behave/act/interact with each other and members of service staff during the experience?
- Describe customer codes of looking, language and behaviour during track day experiences?
- Do customers bring unrealistic expectations/myths to the track day performance arena?
- What do customers perceive contributes to successful outcome of the track day experience? What do they expect to take away with them?
- What do customers post-experience narratives reflect?

Supplier Configuration and Communication of the Package

- Describe the track day packages that you offer.
- How does the track day supplier go about configuring and packaging the track day experience (a parcel of adventure)?
- What are the key elements involved in packaging the track day experience? Go into detail in each of these elements.
- What motorcycling cultural myths are signified through each of these elements?
- How does the company go about meeting and exceeding customer expectations?
- What key marketing communication tools are used to appeal to target audiences?
- Describe in detail each of these tools. Collect examples.
- What are the key narrative/mythic themes the company aims to signify through its communications material? Give specific examples (from brochures, leaflets etc.).
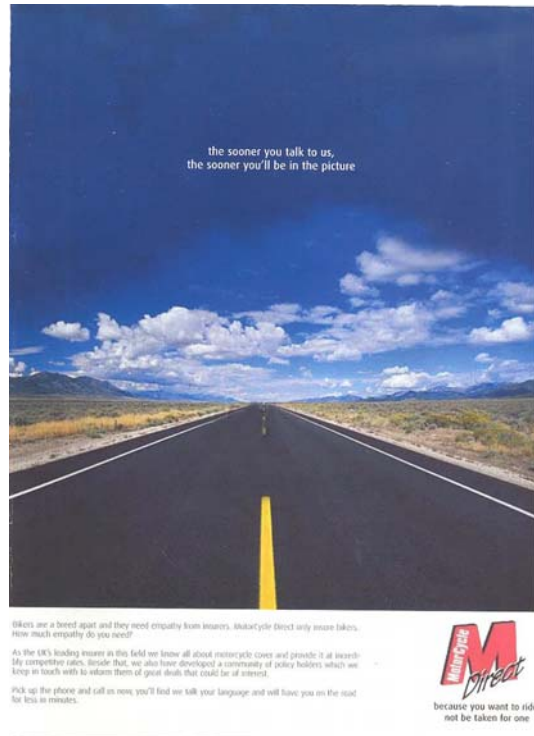
APPENDIX H

12 Motorcycle Related Magazine Advertisements used in Formal Consumer and Company Interviewing
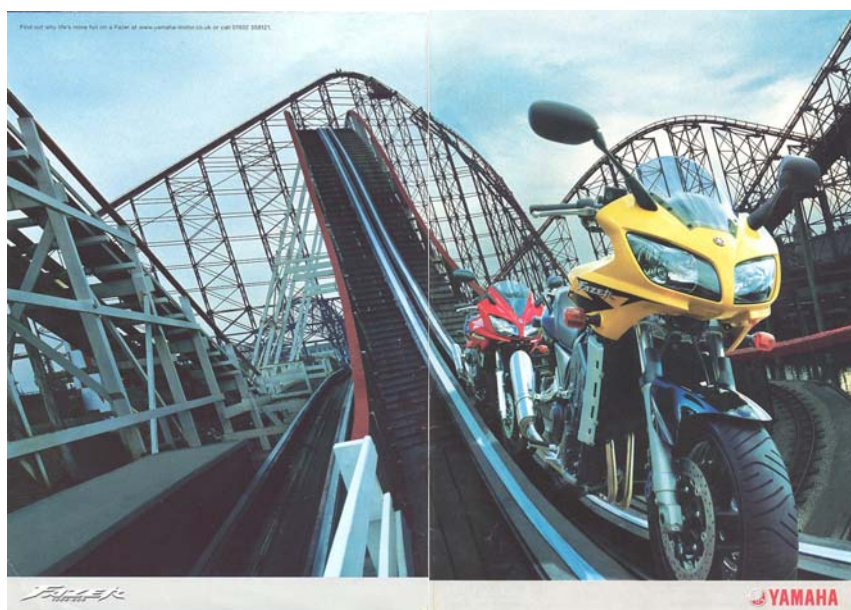
Advert 1: BMW R1150 GS Adventure
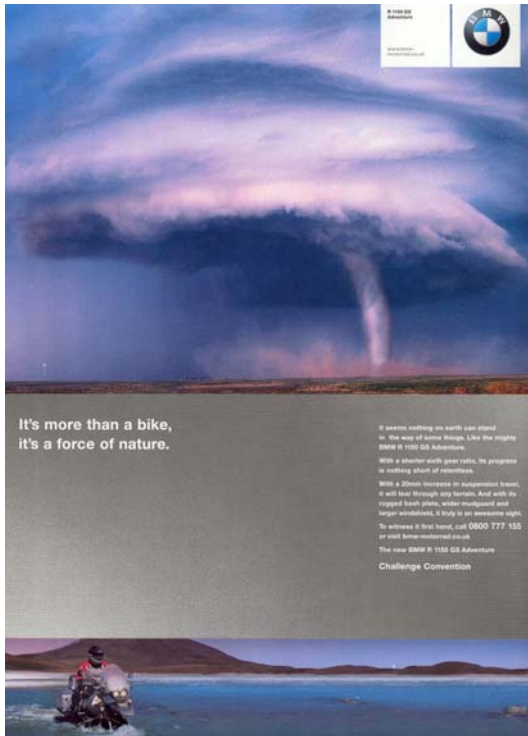
Source: Motorcycle Voyager (2003), Issue 4, Bristol, UK, Motorcycle Voyager Ltd., p 116
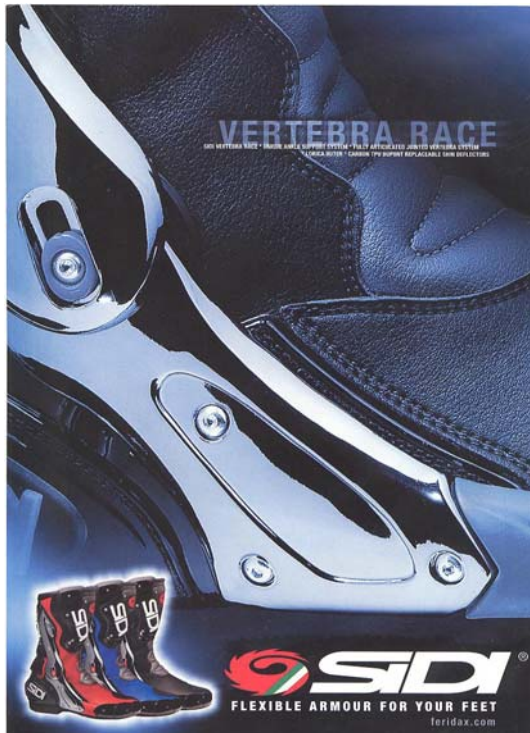
Advert 2: MCN Direct Insurance

Source: Motorcycle Voyager (2003), Issue 4, Bristol, UK, Motorcycle Voyager Ltd., p. 115
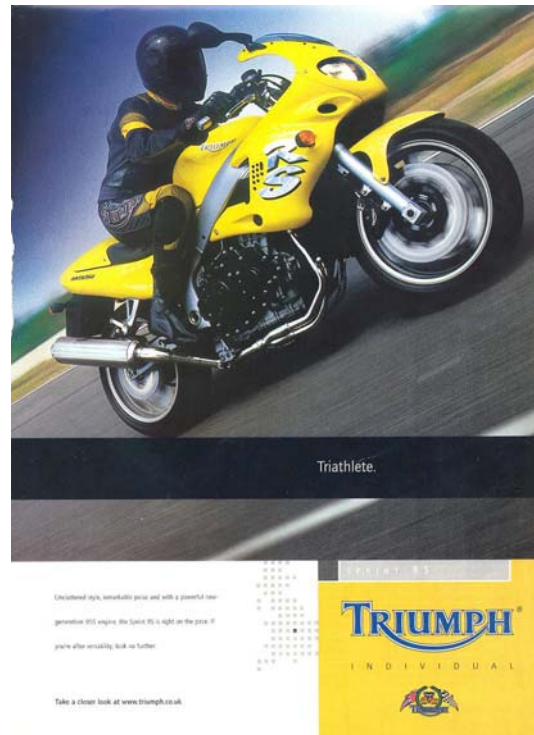
Advert 3: Yamaha Fazer

Source: RIDE (May 2003), Issue 97, Peterborough, UK: Emap Automotive, pp. 2-3

627

Advert 4: Sidi Boots

Source: RIDE (May 2003), Issue 97, Peterborough, UK: Emap Automotive, pp. 122
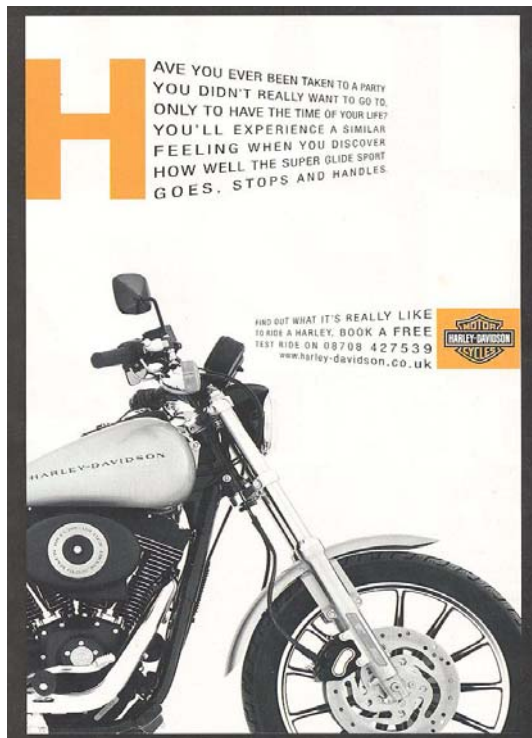
Advert 5: Triumph Triathlete

Source: Bike (February 2002), Issue 346, Peterborough, UK: Emap Automotive, p. 33

Advert 6: Kawasaki Ninja ZX-6R

Source: RIDE (January 2000) special 'Power' Issue, Peterborough, UK: Emap Automotive, pp. 2-3
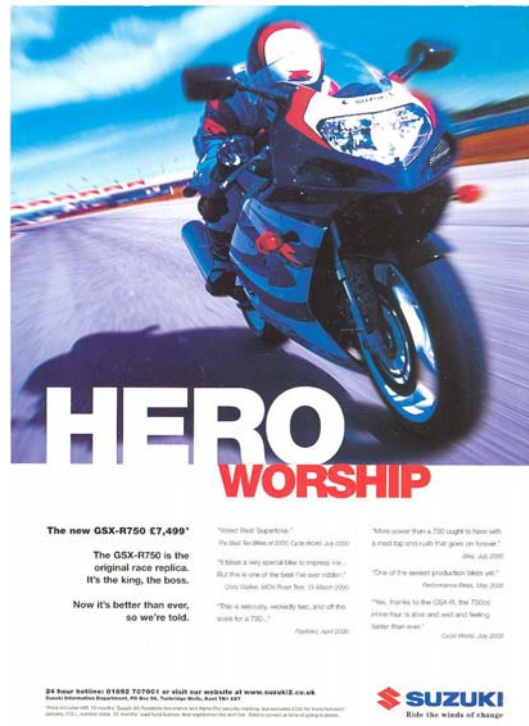
Advert 7: Harley

Advert 8: Suzuki Hero Worship

Source: RIDE (January 2000) special 'Power' Issue, Peterborough, UK: Emap Automative, p. 31
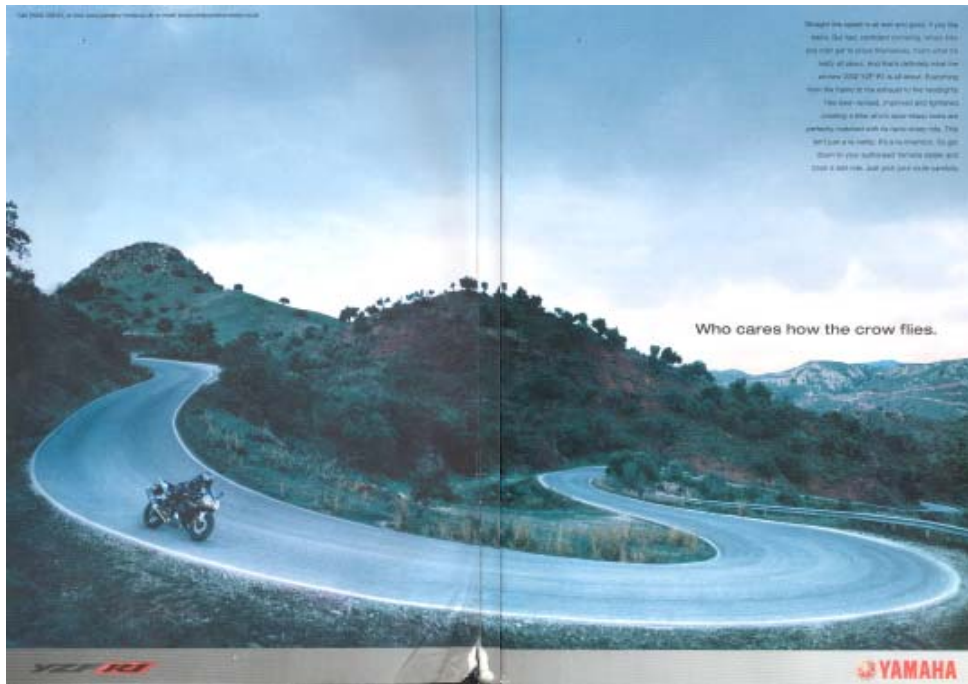
Source: RIDE (January 2000) special 'Power' Issue, Peterborough, UK: Emap Automative, p. 172

Advert 9: Suzuki Bandit

Source: RIDE (July 2002), Issue 87, Peterborough, UK: Emap Automotive, p. 2

Advert 10: Yamaha YZF R1

Who cares how the crow flies.

Source: RIDE (July 2002), Issue 87, Peterborough, UK: Emap Automotive, pp. 4-5

Advert 11: Suzuki Hero Worship

Real Stuff

Source: Suzuki 2 Magazine (November 2001), p. 13

Advert 12: Suzuki V-Strom

Look no further
the adventure begins here
V-Strom
Suzuki stand T18, Hall 19

The all new DL1000 V-Strom. Explore 1000cc of adventure and our entire new 2002 range on the Suzuki stand

Call 01892 707001 or visit www.suzuki2.co.uk

SUZUKI
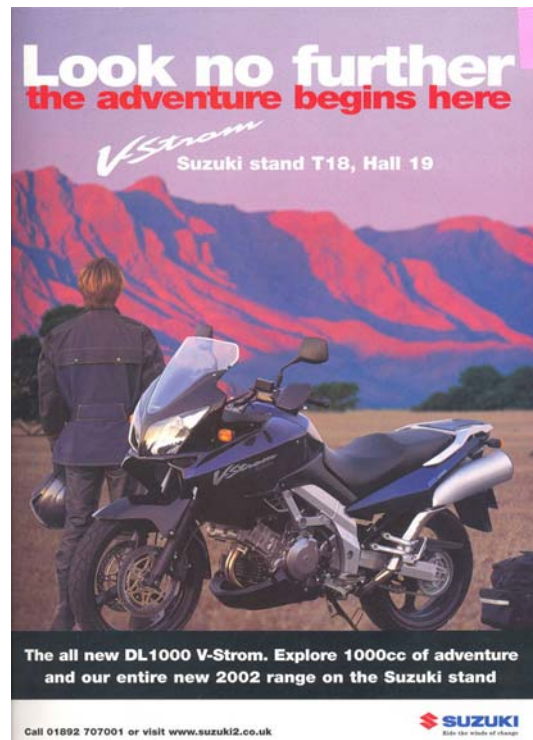
Source: The International Motorcycle and Scooter Show (2001) Official Show Guide, NEC Birmingham, p. 23.

APPENDIX I

Data Analysis in NVivo – Initial Node Trees Developed

* Note – This was initial noding and subject to further layers of analysis

Free Nodes

- Adventure
- Bike Magazines
- Biker Birds
- Biker Language
- Car
- Communitas and Social
- Confidence
- Control
- Freedom
- Hero and Role Model
- Icon
- Information
- Internet
- Loner
- Macho
- Media
- Method
- Participant info. & Usage info.
- Police
- Reality
- Responsibility
- Risk
- Ritual
- Safety
- Skill
- The edge
- Track day
- Wives [Partners]

Node Trees

```
Products & Brands ─┬─ Functional
                   ├─ Symbolic [Self]
                   ├─ Personality and Relationship
                   └─ Would NOT own

Myth Collage      ─┬─ Life
(Core-Values       ├─ Safety
Exercise)          ├─ Desire
                   ├─ Pleasure
                   ├─ Freedom
                   ├─ Death
                   ├─ Reality
                   ├─ Skilled
                   ├─ Appearance
                   ├─ Female
                   ├─ Spontaneous
                   ├─ Satisfaction
                   ├─ Home
                   ├─ Natural Environment
                   ├─ Good
                   ├─ Individual
                   ├─ Adventure
                   ├─ Conformity
                   ├─ Emotional
                   ├─ Happiness
                   ├─ Sacred
                   ├─ Love
                   ├─ Transgression
                   ├─ Fearful
                   ├─ Pain
                   ├─ Excitement
                   ├─ Exclusion
                   ├─ Confident
                   └─ Hero
```

Retail Outlet
— Staff
— Store Design and Ambience
— Products
— Social Place

Self-Assembly Collage Exercise

Scene 1
┌ Activity
├ Products & Brands
└ Identity &

Scene 2
┌ Activity
├ Products & Brands
└ Identity &

Scene 3
┌ Activity
├ Products & Brands
└ Identity &

Scene 4
┌ Activity
├ Products & Brands
└ Identity &

Scene 5
┌ Activity
├ Products & Brands
└ Identity &

Scene 6
┌ Activity
├ Products & Brands
└ Identity &

Scene 7
┌ Activity
├ Products & Brands
└ Identity &

Scene 8
┌ Activity
├ Products & Brands
└ Identity &

Aspirations [Ideal Self]

Comments

Would 'not' do

Narrative Picturing
- Activity, Weather and Environment
- Company
- Ideal self-Image
- Feeling

Self
- Image Consciousness
- Image
- Personality
- Possessions

Riding Experience
- Danger
- Excitement
- Feeling
- Power

Purchase Choices
Key Influencers
- Functional
- Image
- Brochures
- Internet
- Word-of-Mouth
- Reviews
- Product & Brand
- Retail Outlet
- Test-Ride and Try
- Advertising
- Personal Experience
- Bike Shows and Meets

```
                                 ┌─── Advert 1
                                 ├─── Advert 2
                                 ├─── Advert 3
                                 ├─── Advert 4
                                 ├─── Advert 5
Advertisement Analysis ──────────┤─── Advert 6
                                 ├─── Advert 7
                                 ├─── Advert 8
                                 ├─── Advert 9
                                 ├─── Advert 10
                                 ├─── Advert 11
                                 └─── Advert 12


                       ┌─── Stories
Narrative ─────────────┤
                       └─── Narrative Exchange


                         ┌─── Non-Motorcyclists
Perceptions ─────────────┤─── Motorcyclists of Motorcyclists
                         └─── Motorcyclists of Non-Motorcyclists


                       ┌─── Advertising
Marketing ─────────────┤─── Word-of-Mouth
                       └─── Brochures


Track Day   ───────── Sacred
```

APPENDIX J

UK Motorcycle Market Statistics

Annual New Motorcycle Registrations by Type

MOTORCYCLE TYPE	2000	% Change	2001	% Change	2002	% Change	2003	% Change	2004	% Change	2005
Scooters	28,300	13.6	32,151	-10.0	28,929	0.7	29,122	-26.0	21,549	-14.8	18,350
Trail/Enduro	5,244	3.0	5,403	46.6	7,923	43.9	11,401	-5.0	10,830	2.9	11,141
Naked	16,602	16.6	19,363	-1.9	18,999	-2.3	18,562	-9.1	16,877	16.9	19,737
Sport/Touring	16,692	-5.6	15,760	7.3	16,907	-8.7	15,429	-23.4	11,817	-12.6	10,332
Supersport	38,138	-13.8	32,890	-11.0	29,267	-12.9	25,499	-0.4	25,388	-0.9	25,166
Touring	3,092	-7.6	2,856	33.4	3,811	-17.4	3,146	3.3	3,249	-1.4	3,204
Custom	7,803	-4.2	7,477	4.6	7,822	14.9	8,990	-7.8	8,285	7.9	8,938
Adventure	3,760	31.1	4,929	17.9	5,810	14.4	6,648	18.8	7,898	28.2	10,124
Unspecified	2,359	28.7	3,037	28.9	3,914	-86.4	531	-8.7	485	119.8	1,066
Total Motorcycles	121,990	1.5	123,866	-0.4	123,382	-3.3	119,328	-10.9	106,378	1.6	108,058

Source: www.mcia.co.uk

Two Wheeled Vehicles in Use (PARC) in Great Britain

MOTORCYCLES	2000	% Change	2001	% Change	2002	% Change	2003	% Change	2004	% Change	2005
0 - 100 cc	84.1	-6.3	78.8	-5.3	74.6	-5.6	70.4	-8.8	64.2	-8.9	58.5
101 - 125 cc	125.1	14.6	143.4	7.5	154.2	7.5	165.7	5.1	174.2	6.4	185.3
126 - 500 cc	233.6	-5.3	221.3	0.1	221.6	2.0	226.0	-1.6	222.3	-0.2	221.9
501 - 700 cc	214.8	7.4	230.6	5.4	243.0	5.0	261.4	5.0	268.9	5.0	275.4
701 - 900 cc	147.7	1.2	149.5	1.0	151.0	1.2	152.8	1.0	154.3	0.1	154.4
Over 900 cc	189.4	10.7	209.6	11.0	232.6	9.7	255.2	8.5	277.0	7.6	298.0
Total Motorcycles	994.7	3.9	1033.2	4.2	1077.0	5.1	1131.5	2.6	1160.9	2.8	1193.5
Scooters + (moped or motorcycle)	INCL		INCL		INCL		INCL		INCL		INCL
Total Mopeds	163	9.7	178.8	0.0	178.8	2.1	182.5	-2.8	177.4	-2.1	173.6

** Data in thousands, PARK = Number of vehicles currently licensed including vehicles previously licensed in the preceding 6 months

Source: www.mcia.co.uk

APPENDIX K

Motorcycle Industry Association Recognises Positive Public Attitudes to Motorcycling

Press Information From The Motor Cycle Industry Association

THE
MOTOR CYCLE
INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION

Public Perceptions of Motorcycling Challenge Widely Held 'Bikeist' Beliefs According to MCI Research

PUBLICATION EMBARGOED: 4TH November 2004

As the acclaimed International Motorcycle and Scooter Show opens, the Motor Cycle Industry Association has today published the key results of research to investigate how people who don't ride feel about motorcycling. The findings suggest that public perceptions of motorcycling are more positive than is suggested by anti motorcycle campaigners and those people who use key public positions to criticise biking.

Interest in motorcycling is continuing to grow according to measures which including the number of bikes on the road, total distance travelled, used bike transactions through DVLA, and attendance at events. Because of this, MCI was keen to find out if claims of negative public views towards biking had any real foundation if properly researched.

Key areas of analysis reviewed comparisons including gender, region, and age and analysed attitudes to a number of issues including safety. 1,000 non riding individuals were surveyed in locations across the UK.

Research indicated that public attitudes to motorcycling were positive or neutral for the majority of men and women. Over 40% were neutral and 23% were positive.

Attitudes to motorcycling tend to be more positive in cities such as Bristol and London where significant motorcycle-friendly policies have been adopted. But this was also true of Cambridge where no such policy exists and other non-car modes are favoured.

Craig Carey Clinch, MCI Director of Public Affairs commented; "The research has highlighted important issues for the industry and shown us more about what the public really feels about motorcycling.

"At a time when people are frustrated with congestion and are seeking alternatives to public transport, motorcycling is a viable option and the public are demonstrating that they have a more favourable view of biking than some campaigners with an anti-motorcycle, 'Bikeist', viewpoint would suggest.

"The research has shown that the bikeist rhetoric that we often hear is misguided and can be a real barrier to developing a safer, more accessible and more secure environment for those who chose to ride as an alternative to the car".

To find out more about motorcycling and gender, age, politics, the environment, safety and the market; review the report which can be found at www.mcia.co.uk in the download section.

End

Editor's Notes

Five Favourite facts

1. Attitudes to motorcycling were positive or neutral for the majority of men and women
   Very Positive – 6.5%, Positive – 17%, Neutral – 43.8%

2. Men (9.2%) were more likely than women (3.8%) to have a very positive attitude to motorcycles/scooters

3. Men (12.6%) were nearly twice as likely to say yes, they would consider buying a motorcycle compared to women (7%).

4. Young people aged 18-25 years are most likely to consider buying a bike (21%)

5. Between 6 - 18% of the UK adult population might be willing to think positively about riding based on past personal experience

Motor Cycle Industry Association

Consumer Survey – Non-Rider's Attitudes to Motorcycling

The Survey

MCI commissioned this consumer survey to find out more about the non-riding public's attitudes and opinions about bikes, scooters, people who ride, social, environmental and political issues related to motorcycling.

The survey was carried out amongst 1,000 people in ten regions across the country; London, Edinburgh, Belfast, Cardiff, Cambridge, Bristol, Newcastle, Southampton and Nottingham and Manchester. The age groups were divided into 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65 years There was an even split between the regions, age groups and socio-economic groups (SEG).

Questions were posed to try and find out what people think about people riding a bike or scooter, what factors would influence them to get involved in motorcycling, attitudes to safety, the environment and political issues and knowledge of the industry, training etc.

With interest in motorcycling continuing to grow by most available measures (number of bikes on the road, total distance travelled, used bike transactions through DVLA, attendance at events, etc.) the question is why do new motorcycle registration volumes continue to decline?

Key areas of analysis reviewed comparisons by gender, region and age to try to establish how the industry can best communicate with non-riders, the messages that need to be communicated and who the potential new markets are.

For more information or photos please contact **Samantha at the MCI Press Office on Tel: 02476 250809 Mobile: 07769 681166, email samantha@mcia.co.uk. or MCI Director of Public Affairs Craig Carey-Clinch: 07979 757484 or craig@mcia-pa.com**

More press releases, industry statistics and photos are available on the website www.mcia.co.uk.

APPENDIX L

Top Five Motorcycle Registrations by Style – 2006

Style	Rank	Model	Number of New Registrations
Adventure Sport	1	BMW R 1200 GS	1468
	2	BMW R 1200 GS Adventure	809
	3	Honda XL 125 V Varadero	595
	4	Suzuki DRZ 400 SM	493
	5	Suzuki DL 650 V-Strom	371
Custom	1	Suzuki GZ 125	1047
	2	Harley Davidson FXD	778
	3	Jinlun JL 125-11	564
	4	Harley Davidson FXS	374
	5	Harley Davidson XL 883 L Sportster	316
Naked	1	Yamaha YBR 125	1708
	2	Honda CG 125	1288
	3	Suzuki GSF 650 Bandit	817
	4	Suzuki GSR 600	737
	5	Suzuki GSX 1400	688
Scooter (excl. moped)	1	Honda SCV 100 Lead	1539
	2	Honda SES 125 Dylan	1019
	3	Piaggio Vespa LX 125	999
	4	Yamaha NXC 125 Cygnus	965
	5	Piaggio Vespa PX 125	834
Sport/Touring	1	Suzuki SV 650 S	1161
	2	Honda CBF 1000	1093
	3	Triumph Sprint ST 1050	972
	4	Suzuki GSF 650 S Bandit	953
	5	Kawasaki ER 6F	885
Supersport	1	Honda CBR 1000 RR	2067
	2	Suzuki GSXR 600	1970
	3	Suzuki GSXR 750	1953
	4	Suzuki GSXR 1000	1934
	5	Yamaha YZF R6	1926
Touring	1	Honda NT 700 V	767
	2	BMW R 1200 RT	573
	3	Honda ST 1300 Pan European	553
	4	Yamaha FJR 1300	366
	5	Harley Davidson FLH	215
Trail/Enduro	1	Honda XR 125 L	873
	2	Suzuki RV 125 (Van Van)	361
	3	Urban DZ 125	314
	4	Lifan LF 125 GY-3 Magellan	313
	5	Yamaha XTZ 125R	311

Source: www.mcia.co.uk